

<b>WOST 201</b>	<b>Critical Perspectives in Women's Studies</b>	<b>Spring 2009</b>
<b>TuTh 9:30-10:45</b>		<b>Professor Arlene Avakian</b>
<b>Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-2:30, and by appt.</b>		<b>208 Bartlett</b>
<b>email: avakian@wost.umass.edu</b>		

This course asks the fundamental questions and introduces the basic concepts in women's studies. Who are the women in Women's Studies? How can we conceptualize the category "women" so that it is reflective of our similarities as well as our differences? What are the relationships among gender, race, class, sexuality, in a global context? What do we mean when we say that gender is socially constructed? What theoretical frameworks have feminists developed to explain women's oppression and what strategies have they proposed for women's liberation? How has feminist activism addressed these issues in the past, and what are some contemporary approaches to change?

We will be analyzing women's lives and theorizing about how to make change, but we will not be merely studying them/us from the outside. Everyone of us is part of the systems we are going to be studying, though our relationships to the power structure differs depending on the social categories we are occupy. Some assumptions about women and gender may be challenged by this approach. When we focus on race, for example, our discussion will not be limited to women of color. Since the beginning of Western colonialism and the African slave trade more than 500 years ago, the world has been organized around a racial hierarchy and race, therefore, is a significant factor in everyone's lives. Thinking about the ways white supremacy has constructed the culture of the United States might be difficult when we are raised to believe the U.S. represents freedom and equality. We need to probe ourselves to discover blocks to our ability to hear new information.

The focus on activism will help us to work through these issues by grounding us in the lived experiences of women and by addressing the ongoing question of "what can we do to change the world to improve women's lives?" Studying women's lives is vitally important, but it is only one part of what needs to be done. We must think about how we can make change, particularly in these times when so many of the gains of past struggles are being eroded. We *can* act, and we can make a difference.

Professor Subramaniam and I are each teaching this course this semester and we decided to try something new. We will each teach a week on our particular areas of expertise in each section. She will be doing a section on science early in the semester and after spring break I will do a section on food studies.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

### **1. SOCIAL POSITIONALITY PAPER**

This is 2-3 page paper will not be graded, but *IS* required. Despite the lack of a grade, I consider this assignment to be vitally important and expect you to give it your very serious attention. You will be graded down if you do not complete this assignment. **Due: 2/5**

## **2. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS (4 assignments – 2 pages each)**

I will be handing out a list of homework assignments that help to connect the class material to your lives. You must choose 4 from this list – 2 **before the midterm. 10% of grade.**

## **3. MIDTERM EXAM – a take home exam. Details soon. 15% of grade. DUE: 3/12**

## **4. ANALYTIC ESSAY1 (5 pages) 20% OF GRADE. DUE 4/2**

***LATE PAPERS WILL BE GRADED DOWN***

## **4. ANALYTIC ESSAY 2 (5-7 pages). I will hand out the topics later in the semester. 20% OF GRADE. DUE: 5/12**

***LATE PAPERS WILL BE GRADED DOWN***

## **5. GROUP ACTION PROJECT – 15% OF GRADE. DUE: 5/12**

After a brainstorming session to identify issues for women on and off campus, students will work in groups on an action project, on or off campus, to address those issues. While groups will have to meet outside of class, I will allow some class time for group meetings and for students to share their progress with and get feedback from each other. Each group will be required to:

- design and implement an action project
- prepare a class presentation on the project
- write a description and evaluation of the project

The last class of the semester is set aside for group presentations. If projects are done earlier than the end of the semester, we will make time for presentations if the groups decides they do not want to wait until the end of the semester. **The grade will be given to *the group* and will be 20% of the grade for the course. The written part of the assignment is due on 5/12 the last day of class. I will hand out guidelines for the evaluations later in the semester.**

***LATE PAPERS WILL BE GRADED DOWN***

## **6. CLASS PARTICIPATION**

The issues we will be discussing this semester have both academic and personal implications. In order to grapple with this material it is vital to read the assignments carefully and on time, come to class with questions, agreements, disagreements--in other words to be prepared to participate in an intellectual debate. Regular and timely attendance will be factored in. **Students will lose points for more than 3 *unexcused* absences. Class participation counts for 10% of the grade.**

## **7. EVENT ATTENDANCE**

Students are expected to attend **two** events over the course of the semester – lecture/panel discussion, art show, concert, theater, dance – on or off campus that addresses issues of gender, race, class, and/or sexuality. Students should choose events that are outside of the groups in which they feel most comfortable. **Review/responses to these events should be handed in within a week of attendance. Papers should: 1. briefly describe the event, 2. discuss what new information or insight the event provided or did not provide, and 3. address what groups and issues were included in the performance and what pertinent issues or groups were**

missing. Papers should be 2-3 typewritten pages with 1 inch margins and 12 point font. **ONE REVIEW SHOULD BE BEFORE MIDTERM AND ONE AFTER. EACH PAPER IS 5 POINTS.** Extra credit will be awarded to students who attend and write response papers to more than two events with a limit of 10 points.

### 8. OCCASIONAL IN CLASS WRITING

These exercises are designed to help you think about the material and will neither be collected nor will they impinge on your grade.

#### REQUIRED BOOKS:

Margaret Andersen & Patricia Hill Collins, *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology* (fifth edition) 2004. Thomson/Wadsworth. NOTE: we are using this older edition because we were to get used copies. The sixth edition is over \$80.

Estelle Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*. 2002. Ballantine Books.

**BOOKS ARE FOR SALE AT: FOOD FOR THOUGHT BOOKS**

**E. PLEASANT STREET – AMHERST**

**ALSO ON RESERVE IN THE LIBRARY**

#### E-RESERVE ARTICLES:

A few articles are on E-reserve. You are **REQUIRED** to print out articles so that you can bring them to class.

**PASSWORD: womlib**

### COURSE CALENDAR

1/27 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

VIDEO: WAR ZONE

#### INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS

1/29 GENDER EMBEDDED IN RACE/ETHNICITY, CLASS, SEXUALITY I

READING:

“Introduction”, Andersen & Collins (A & C) pp. 1-15 and “Shifting the Center” pp. 15-22

June Jordan, “Report From the Bahamas” A & C, pp. 35-43.

2/3 GENDER EMBEDDED IN RACE/ETHNICITY, CLASS, SEXUALITY II – THE BIG PICTURE

READING:

“Conceptualizing Race, Class, and Gender” A & C, 75-98

Cherrie Moraga, “La Guera” A & C, pp. 28-34

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**2/5 THINKING LIKE A FEMINIST**

**READING:**

Freeman, "The Historical Case for Feminism" pp. 1-13  
Enloe, "Crafting a Globalized Feminist Curiosity" ER

***SOCIAL POSITIONALITY PAPER DUE***

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**2/10 PATRIARCHY – A USEFUL CONCEPT?**

**READING:**

Freedman, "Gender and Power" pp. 17-42  
Zinn, *et.al.*, Gender Through the Prism of Difference, A & C, pp. 166-174

**SOCIAL POSITIONALITIES**

**2/12 RACE AND RACISM I**

**READING:**

Freedman, "Race and the Politics of Identity in U.S. Feminism," pp. 73-94 and  
"The Global Stage and the Politics of Location" pp. 95-119  
Gloria Wade-Gayles, "Laying on Hands' thought Cooking . . ." Avakian, p. 95-103

**2/17 RACE AND RACISM II**

**READING:**

Patricia J. Williams, "Of Race and Risk" A & C, pp. 108-110  
Ronald Takaki, "A Different Mirror" A & C, pp. 51-63  
Elizabeth Martinez, "Seeing More Than Black and White" A & C, pp. 111-116  
C. Matthew Snipp, "The First Americans: American Indians" A & C, pp. 354-360  
Ward Churchill, "Crimes Against Humanity" A & C, pp. 321-3228  
Julie Dash, "Rice Culture" Avakian, pp. 19-23

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**2/19 RACE AND RACISM III – WHITENESS**

**READING:**

Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" A & C,  
pp. 103-107  
Abby L. Ferber, "What White Supremacists Taught a Jewish Scholar About  
Identity" A & C, pp. 117-120  
Julia Alvarez, "A White Woman of Color" A & C, pp. 184-189  
Mary C. Waters, "Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only?" A & C, pp. 418-426  
Lillian Rubin, "Is This is White Country, or What?" A & C, pp. 410-417  
Marie Smyth, "Hedge Nutrition, Hunger, and Irish Identity" Avakian, pp. 89-94

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**2/24 Science I**

The next two classes will be taught by Professor Banu Subramaniam.

**READING:**

[WEB] Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes: Why males and females are not enough." *The Sciences* 33(2): 20-25, 1994.

<http://www.neiu.edu/~lsfuller/fivesexes.htm>

[WEB] Eve Sedgwick, "How to bring your kids up gay: The War on Effeminate Boys," (on Google Scholar)

Robert M. Sapolsky, "Testosterone Rules," In *The Gendered Society Reader*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Michael S. Kimmel and Amy Aronson eds., Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 26- 31. ER

Garland Allen, "Science Misapplied: The Eugenics Age Revisited." *Technology Review* 29, Aug/Sep 1996, pp. 23-31. ER

Carole Vance, "Social Construction Theory: Problems in the History of Sexuality" In *An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World*, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan eds., McGraw Hill, 2002, pp. 28-31. ER

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**2/26 SCIENCE II**

**READING:**

Rosalind Coward, "The Body Beautiful" In *Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World*. Inderpal Grewal and Karen Caplan eds., McGraw Hill, 2002, p. 366-368 ER

Nancy Worcester, "Nourishing Ourselves," In *Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World*. Inderpal Grewal and Karen Caplan eds., McGraw Hill, 2002, p. 369-375 ER

[WEB] Michael Pollan, Whole Foods' John Mackey usher Berkeley foodies into 'ecological era:

[http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2007/02/28\\_pollanmackey.shtml](http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2007/02/28_pollanmackey.shtml)

[Web] Alice Water's open letter to the Obama's:

<http://www.gourmet.com/foodpolitics/2009/01/alice-waters-letter-to-barack-obama>

[Web] Healthy Americans, Historical comparison of portion size:

<http://healthyamericans.org/pages/?id=246>

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**3/3 SOCIAL CLASS**

**READING:**

Dalton Conley, *Wealth Matter*, A & C, pp. 149-153

Donna Langston, "Tired of Playing Monopoly?" A & C, pp. 140-148

Gregory Mantsios, "Media Magic: Making Class Invisible" A & C, pp. 329-336

Mary Pattillo-McCoy, "Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class" A & C, pp. 158-165

Trudy Condio, "Making Do With Food Stamp Dinners" Avakian, pp. 206-214

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**3/5 SEXUALITIES AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION I**

**READING:**

Freedman, "Sexualities, Identities, and Self-Determination: pp. 253-275  
Jonathan Ned Katz, "The Invention of Heterosexuality" ER  
Marcia Deihl & Robyn Ochs, "Biphobia" ER  
Martha Ayres, "The Parable of the Lamb" Avakian, pp. 155-161

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**3/10 SEXUALITIES AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION II**

**VIDEO:** *Toilet Training*

**READING:**

Leslie Feinberg, "We Are All Works in Progress" ER  
T. Eve Greenway, "Trans on Campus" ER  
Currah, *et. al.*, "Introduction" *Transgender Rights* ER

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**GENDER AND FOOD I – WHAT’S FOR DINNER AND DOES IT MATTER?**

**READING:**

Avakian and Haber, "Feminist Food Studies: A Brief History" ER  
Barbara Haber, "Follow the Food" Avakian

*MIDTERM EXAM DUE*

**SPRING BREAK – MARCH 14-22**

**3/24 GENDER AND FOOD II**

**READING:**

Avakian, Part One – Inheritance, pp. 13-111

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**3/26 GENDER REVISITED – MASCULINITY**

**READING:**

Enloe, "Wielding Masculinity Inside Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo" ER  
Michael Messner, "Masculinities and Athletic Careers" A & C  
Brent Staples, "Just Walk on By: A Black Man Ponders His Power to Alter Public Space" A & C, pp. 499-501  
Yen Le Espiritu, "Ideological Racism and Cultural Resistance" A & C

**SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

**3/31 STRUCTURAL ANALYSES**

**READING:**

"Rethinking Institutions" A & C, pp. 215-27

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**4/2 COLLECTIVE ACTION**

**VIDEO:** *Women Organize*

**READING:**

“Making a Difference” A & C, pp. 511-518

Freedman, “No Turning Back: Women and Politics” pp. 327-347

What is Activism” Baumgardner and Richards, ER

*ANALYTIC ESSAY 1 DUE*

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**4/7 THE POLITICS OF WOMEN’S WORK**

**READING:**

Freedman, “Never Done: Women’s Domestic Labor: pp. 123-144 and

“Industrialization, Wage Labor, and the Economic Gender Gap”

pp. 145-160

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**4/9 COMMODIFICATION OF WOMEN’S BODIES**

**VIDEO:** *Dreamworlds II*

**READING:**

Freedman, “The Politics of Representation” pp. 222-228.

Susan Douglas, “Pop Culture is Us . . .” ER

Margaret Randall, “What My Tongue Knows” Avakian, pp. 117-133

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**4/14 THE POLITICS OF FAMILY I**

**READING:**

Linda Burnham, “Welfare Reform, Family Hardship, and Women of Color” A & C,  
pp. 371-378

Bonnie Thornton Dill, “Our Mother’s Grief” in A & C, pp. 266-279

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**4/16 THE POLITICS OF FAMILY II**

**READING:**

Reverend Howard Moody, “Sacred Rite or Civil Right: Gay Marriage Shows Why We  
Need to Separate Church and State.” *The Nation*. 7/5/04, 28-31. ER

Kath Weston, “Straight is to Gay as Family is to No Family” A & C, pp. 304-309

Gary David Comstock, “‘Whosoever’ is Welcome Here” A & C, pp. 530-536

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**4/21 – NO CLASS – MONDAY AT UM**

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**4/23 THE POLITICS OF WOMEN’S HEALTH**

**READING:**

Estelle Freedman, “Medicine, Markets, and the Female Body” pp. 203-229

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**4/28 THE WOMEN'S HEALTH MOVEMENT & REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**

**READING:**

Freedman, "Reproduction: The Politics of Choice" pp. 229-252

Ross, *et. al.*, "Just Choices . . ." A & C, pp. 203-213

Charon Asetoyer, "From the Ground Up" A & C, pp. 537-541

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**4/30 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**VIDEO: NO! THE RAPE DOCUMENTARY**

**READING:**

Freedman, "Gender and Violence," pp. 276-302

Jael Stilliman, "Policing the National Body" A & C, pp. 383-392

[WEB] June Jordan, "A Poem About My Rights"

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=178526>

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**5/5 ORGANIZING AROUND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**VIDEO: *V-Day***

**READING:**

Helen Zia, "Where Race and Gender Meet: Racism, Hate Crimes and Pornography" A & C, pp. 502-506

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**5/7 GENDER AND FOOD III**

**READING:**

Urvater, Goek-lin Lim, Ire, Katrak, Allison, Morales; in Avakian

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**5/12**

***FINAL ANALYTIC PAPER DUE***