

**301--Theorizing Gender, Race, and Power**  
**Fall 2020**  
**Tuesday and Thursday 11:30-12:45**  
**On zoom**

*I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing.* --bell hooks, “Theory as Liberatory Practice”

Starting with the Black feminist revolution taking place in the streets, the Movement for Black Lives, this course moves back and forth between activism and the irreducible work of theory. This is not a history of feminist movements course, but there are moments when feminist theory is given new life and made vital by social movements, including #BLM, #waterislife/#mniwiconi, #mmiw, #NiUnoMas, #MeToo and #TimesUp, and so we will pause our reading of theory at various points to watch video or read interviews with participants and organizers. Theory and activism cannot be collapsed into each other, but they can also be hard to separate.

Feminist theory has been elaborated in relationship to every major theoretical and philosophical system—notably liberalism, Marxism, Foucauldian analysis, poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, Third World liberation—and every significant political movement (in the United States, it was born out of the radical wing of the Abolitionist movement). It has also built independent theories from readings of the body and of sexual violence. One approach to teaching feminist theory is to start from a body of, say, liberal political theory texts and then read feminist theory as a response to them. The trouble with that is that what results is extraordinarily Eurocentric. And, while feminism is a remarkably international assortment of movements, the word “feminism” comes always already marked as the provenance of “the West,” a pernicious development that doesn’t need to be amplified. However, we will read Marx’s *Communist Manifesto*, because the Marxist tradition in feminism is robust and transnational, and of all these intellectual currents, the one you are least likely to encounter in another class.

Instead, this course has chosen a couple of things to focus on. One is what I think of as the “history” problem: the habit of taking something one disagrees with from the 70s or 80s that a feminist said (and it was a wide-ranging movement, there’s always something), and then talking about “70s feminism” or “80s feminism” as uniformly wrong. I want to restore a sense of the deep complexity of these moments, thinkers, and movements. The 90s, the decade of the explosion of queer theory, has been skipped over, perhaps indefensibly, but in hopes you will take a Sexuality/Trans or Queer Theory course. The second emphasis of this course is, as the title suggests, to center the ways feminists--particularly feminists of color--have grappled with questions race, class, and power.

Finally, my hope for this class is akin to bell hooks’: I hope that the writing we grapple with here will tell everyone something that they needed to hear. Feminist theory was written with the hope that it could save someone’s life, which is why we go on teaching it. Of course, zoom would not really be anyone’s first choice of how to have difficult conversations, but it does some

unexpected benefits--political and academic groups are finding higher attendance, and it is easier for people with disabilities and illnesses to attend. We'll try to make it our own.

It must also be said clearly that there are no right answers or political orthodoxies in this course. Universities provide us the privilege and pleasure of reading together and learning from each other. Nothing is on the syllabus because it is "right." Our job in this class is to create an intellectual community, one in which we are all enriched by each others' readings. We will be discussing weighty, critical issues, which is why we need each other's help to think well and to try to understand how the reading can (or fails to) speak to our situation in the world. This imposes on each of us the responsibility of coming to class with the reading done, speaking up about our insights and questions, and listening respectfully to each other (which is not to say always agreeing). It's worth noting that these are not clear left/right or Democrat/Republican issues. Both parties are deeply implicated in the work of imperialism.

For this class to work well, everyone needs to talk and think out loud. In order to facilitate this, we need to exhibit the highest level of respect for each other. Nobody here is disposable (this should go without saying, but sometimes we need to remind each other.) Your class participation grade will rest on how successfully you show engagement with the material and with your classmates. This course is not a competition over who has "good" or "bad" politics (whatever we may consider those to be), it is an honest exploration of various kinds of political and intellectual positions, and the ways these have been historically constituted. Students are encouraged to bring questions, change their minds, make counter-arguments, and voice politically unpopular positions in class. While intellectual and moral passion, as well as lively disagreement (including with the instructor) are valued, ad hominem and ad feminam attacks will not be tolerated, nor will harassment, slurs, or disparagement of any group.

### **Required texts**

Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (University of California Press, 2018).

Keeanga-Yamhata Taylor, ed, *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Haymarket, 2017).

### **Assignments and Grading (detailed assignments on Moodle)**

3-2pp reading response papers due Sept. 3, Sept. 17, and Oct. 1 (10% each)

Midterm paper due October 29 (20%)

Final paper December 1 (25%)

Discussion—25%

### **Week-by-week list of readings**

#### **Black Lives Matter, Born of Black Queer Feminism**

**August 25:** Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (University of California Press, 2018), overview, chs. 1-2, pp. ix-28.

**August 27--**Ransby, *Black Lives*, pp. 29-168.

## **Matrix of Oppression, Grammar, Metalanguage, Presence: Beyond “Intersectionality” in Black Feminist Thought**

**September 1:** Keeanga-Yamhatta Taylor, ed, *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Haymarket, 2017).

**September 3:** Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Summer 1987): 65-81.

Elizabeth Brooks Higginbotham, “African American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race” *Signs* 17:2 (1992): 251-75.

Toni Morrison, “Black Matters” in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Harvard, UP, 1992), 1-28.

**Reading response paper due**

## **What is going on with the Right?**

**September 8:** Lauren Berlant, “The Theory of Infantile Citizenship,” in *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 25-55.

Alexandra Minna Stern, “Cat Ladies, Wolves, and Lobsters: A Menagerie of Biological Essentialism,” ch. 4 in *Proud Boys and the White Ethnostate: How the Alt-Right Is Warping the American Imagination*. Beacon Press, 2019, pp. 71-92.

**September 10:** “Preface,” to Lisa Duggan, *Mean Girl: Ayn Rand and the Culture of Greed* (UC Press, 2019), xi-xvii.

Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai, “Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots,” *Social Text* 20, no. 3 (2002), 117-148.

## **Native/Indigenous Feminisms**

**September 15:** Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill, “Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy” *Feminist Formations* 25:1 (2013):8-34.

J. Kehaulani Kauanui, “Gender, Marriage, Coverture” in *Paradoxes of Hawaiian Sovereignty: Land, Sex, and the Colonial Politics of State Nationalism*. Duke University Press, 2018, pp. 113-52.

Mishuana Goeman and Jennifer Nez Denetdale, “Native feminisms: Legacies, interventions, and Indigenous sovereignties.” *Wicazo Sa Review* 24 (2009): 9-13.

## **September 17—Lakota Activisms**

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, “The Big Pipe Case,” in *Reading Native American Women: Critical/Creative Representations* (2005), 77-92.

Bethany Hughes, *Oka Apesvchi: Indigenous Feminism, Performance, and Protest*. *Theatre Journal* 72:2 (2020): 127-142.

Jennifer Weston, “[Water is Life: The Rise of the Mní Wičóni Movement](#),” *Cultural Survival* (March 2017).

**Reading response paper due**

## **Latinx Feminisms**

**September 22—Third World/Chicana Feminisms**

Gloria Anzaldúa, "Atravesando Fronteras" *Borderlands/La Frontera* . Spinster/Aunt Lute, 1979 (in the Second edition, 1999, it's pp. 23-120).

Chela Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World," *Genders* 10 (1991): 1-24.

### September 24—Hispanophone Caribbean Feminisms

Marisol Lebron, "Security from Below," *Policing Life and Death: Race, Violence, and Resistance in Puerto Rico* (University of California Press, 2019), pp. 202-231.

Lorgia García Peña, "Dominicanidad in ContraDICTION," and "The Galindo Virgins," in *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction* (Duke, 2016), pp. 1-57.

### Asian American Feminisms

#### September 29—In the United States

Lisa Lowe, "Work, Immigration, Gender: Asian 'American' Women," in *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Duke, 1996), pp. 154-171.

Asha Nadkarni, "Eugenic Feminism: Asian Reproduction in the US National Imaginary." In *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 221-244. Duke University Press, 2006.

#### October 1—Empire and Asian 'American' Feminisms

Genevieve Clutario, "Gendering the trans-Pacific world: Pageant Politics Tensions of Power, Empire, and Nationalism in Manila Carnival Queen Contests" in *Gendering the Trans-Pacific World*, pp. 257-283. Brill, 2017.

Judy Wu, "Rethinking Global Sisterhood: Peace Activism and Women's Orientalism," in *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*. Edited by Nancy A. Hewitt (Rutgers University Press, 2010), pp. 193-220.

### Transnational Feminisms

**October 6:** Jacqui Alexander, "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: Feminism, Tourism, and the State in the Bahamas," *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Duke, 2005), pp. 21-65.

Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *boundary 2* 12:3(Spring-Autumn 1984): 333-358.

Jasbir Puar, "A Transnational Feminist Critique of Queer Tourism," *Antipode* (2002): 935-946.

**October 8--** Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271–313. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

### Trans Feminisms

#### October 13: The 70s and 80s

Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* ([1990] 1999), pp. 3-46.

Finn Enke, "Collective Memory and the Transfeminist 1970s: Toward a Less Plausible History." *Trans Studies Quarterly* (2018): 9-29.

#### October 15—After 2000

Riley Snorton, "Anatomically Speaking: Ungendering Flesh and the Science of Sex," *Black on Both Sides* (Minnesota, 2017), pp. 17-53.

Julia Serrano, "Trans Woman Manifesto," *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* (Seal Press, 2007), pp. 10-20.

### **What about the past? Do we know what is meant by 70s feminism? Lesbian feminism? white feminism?**

**October 20**--Claire Hemmings, "Telling feminist stories," *Feminist Theory* 6:2 (2005): 115-139.

Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," "An Open Letter to Mary Daly," and "Man Child," *Sister Outsider* (Crossing Press, 1984), pp. 53-80.

Monique Wittig, "The Straight Mind" *Feminist Issues* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 1980): 103-11.

### **October 22**—Queers and Other Monsters

Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3, no. 4 (May 1, 1997): 437-65.

Saidiya Hartman, "A Note on Method," "The Terrible Beauty of the Slum," and "Minor Figure," in *Wayward Girls: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (Norton, 2019), xv-xx, 7-47.

### **Feminist Studies of Science and Biomedicine**

**October 27:** Donna Haraway, "A manifesto for cyborgs: science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s" *Socialist Review* 80, no. 1 (1985): 65-108.

Paula Trenchler, "AIDS, Homophobia, and Biomedical Discourse: An Epidemic of Signification." *October* 43 (1987): 31-70.

**October 29**—Angela Willey, "A World of Materialisms: Postcolonial Feminist Science Studies and the New Natural." *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 41, no. 6 (November 1, 2016): 991-1014.

Sara Ahmed, "Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the 'New Materialism'" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 15:1 (2008): 23-39.

### **Liberal Feminism, Legal Regimes, and Their Discontents**

**November 3: Election Day holiday!!!** Following the labor movement demand for an election day holiday, we will honor it.

**November 5:** Ruth Bader Ginsburg, "The Need for the Equal Rights Amendment," *American Bar Association Journal* 59: 9 (September 1973), pp. 1013-1019

Pauli Murray and Mary O. Eastwood. "Jane Crow and the Law: Sex Discrimination and Title VII" *George Washington Law Review* 34, no. 2 (1965): 232-56.

Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43:6 (July 1991): 1241-1299.

### **Materialist (Socialist) Feminisms**

**November 10:** Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, [\*The Communist Manifesto\*](#) (linked to Phil Gaspar's *Road Map to History's Most Important Political Document* (Haymarket, 2005). Just read the *Manifesto* and also his annotations if they are helpful.

**Nov. 12**—Feminists wrestle with Marx in the '70s, 80s, and 20-teens.

“Introduction,” and “Downsizing Democracy” *The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon, 2013), pp ix-xxii and 1-21.

Heidi I. Hartmann, “The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class, and Political Struggle: The Example of Housework” *Signs*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Spring, 1981), pp. 366-394.

Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex” in Rayna Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157-210.

### **From Pornography to #MeToo and #NiUnoMas: Radical Feminism and Sexual Violence**

*If you want a trigger warning, thinking through gendered violence is kind of the whole point of radical feminism...*

**November 18:** Michelle Goldberg, “[Not the Fun Kind of Feminist](#),” *New York Times* (February 22, 2019).

Andrea Dworkin, selections from *Our Blood* (1976). In Johanna Fateman and Amy Scholder, eds. *Last Days at Hot Slit*, pp. 77-112.

### **November 20**

Rebecca Solnit, “[In Patriarchy Nobody Can Hear You Scream](#),” *LitHub* (July 10, 2019)

Rebecca Solnit, “[A Rape a Minute, a Thousand Corpses a Year](#),” *Guernica* (January 25, 2013).

Tarana Burke, “[Me Too is a Movement, Not a Moment](#)” TED talk

Ai-Jen Poo and Mónica Ramírez, “[Female Domestic and Agricultural Workers Confront an Epidemic of Sexual Harassment](#),” *ACLU blog* (May 4, 2018).

Mercedes Olivera, “Violencia Femicida: Violence Against Women and Mexico’s Structural Crisis,” in Rosa-Linda Fregoso and Cynthia Bejarano, eds. *Terrorizing Women: Femicide in the Americas*. Durham NC: Duke University Press Books, 2010.

La Tesis, “[Un Violador en Tu Camino](#)” (you can check out the many versions of this anthem/performance piece on YouTube. The linked one is from *Vice News*, with English translation and images from many countries where it was performed.)