

## WOMENSST 301: Theorizing race, gender and power

Instructor: Dr A.L. (Onni) Gust

Office hours: tbc

Tuesday 11.15-12.30

Thursday 11.15-12.30

### **Course description:**

Power is everywhere around and within us, informing our relationships to ourselves and to the world around us in every conceivable way. We may not be able to escape power but we can learn to understand, explore and critique the dynamics of power that underpin the worlds and communities in which we live. This course looks at the many ways in which feminists have sought to understand and theorise power. We begin by considering feminist conceptualisations of power. Thinking about the historical context of key theories of power, we examine feminists' contributions to, and critiques of, frameworks for understanding power relations that have dominated twentieth-century thought. Having surveyed concepts and ways of thinking about power, we then turn to questioning the dynamics of power that operate at multiple and over-lapping levels, from the level of the nation-state to local, issue- and identity-based communities. Drawing on a diverse range of examples and academic debates, our aim is to explore the ways in which structural and personal power informs our everyday lives, identities and future aspirations.

### **Collaborative learning:**

An integral part of this course is the creation of a collaborative learning environment, in which we, as a class, help each other to think deeply and critically and share our knowledge, ideas and insights. In order to enable collaborative learning, everybody needs to read, contribute, listen and engage before, during and after class. All readings will be up on Spire two weeks before the class. Students are expected to have read *before* class. Additional readings are listed below the syllabus and must be consulted when writing papers and preparing presentations.

As the course instructor, I design the course and structure classes in the hope that they will involve and engage everybody who comes prepared to read and think. However, everybody has different ways of learning and so suggestions and feedback will be very much appreciated and acted upon at any point during the semester.

### **Course structure:**

This course meets twice weekly, the first meeting comprises an interactive lecture, to which students are expected to come having read and thought about the topic in advance. The second meeting is a seminar which, after week four, is student led. Students will be split into groups with the responsibility for giving a brief (5-10 minute) presentation on the topic, introducing a case study that compliments the theme and leading the discussion.

This case study can draw on anything that interests the student – a novel, a campaign, a current-affairs issue that is widely reported in the media. The case study forms the basis for paper two and is to be analysed and discussed using a wide range of relevant theoretical and academic readings.

### **Course assessment and grading:**

Assessment will be spread across two written papers, a class presentation and class contribution (including attendance). Deadlines must be adhered to unless a prior arrangement has been made. In exceptional circumstances, extensions may be granted, if requested *at least* three days before the assignment is due.

Paper 1 due on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September (30% of base grade)

Paper 2 due on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December (40% of base grade)

Class presentation (20% of base grade)

Overall attendance and contribution (10% of base grade)

### **Course Structure and readings:**

#### **Part One: Theories of Power**

##### **Week One:**

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> September: Power and embodiment – an introduction

Audre Lorde, 'Power' *The Collected Works of Audre Lorde* (1978),

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/240144#poem>

Adrienne Rich, 'Power' *Reconstituting the World* (1978)

<http://womensstudies.homestead.com/Power.html>

##### **Week Two:**

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September: Marxism and feminism

Juliet Mitchell, 'The Longest Revolution'

<http://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/mitchell-juliet/longest-revolution.htm>

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> September: How have feminists used and critiqued a Marxist framework of power structures to understand gender oppression?

Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (1987), ch.1 'Death of a Good Woman'

Catharine McKinnon, 'Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 7, 3 (1982), 515-44.

### **Week Three:**

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> September: The idea of 'hegemony'

'Gramsci: Everything that Concerns People' (1987), made for Channel4 (Scotland) by Mike Alexander and Douglas Eadie, with Tom Nairn as script consultant  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51DhvS9abyI>

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> September: How have feminists used the concept of 'hegemony' to conceptualise the way power operates in relationship to people marginalized by gendered regimes?

Margaret Ledwith, 'Antonio Gramsci and feminism: the elusive nature of power', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 41, 6 (2009), 684-697.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests and the Politics of Solidarity' in Alexander and Mohanty (eds), *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York, 1997), 3-29.

### **Week Four:**

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> September: Foucault and feminism

Michel Foucault and Colin Gordon (ed), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (New York and Toronto, 1980), chs 6 & 7.

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> September: How has Foucault's perception of power informed the way feminists conceptualise struggles against patriarchal domination?

Jana Sawiki, *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power and the Body* (New York, 1991), ch.1

Amy Allen, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Feminists," in *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault*, Susan Hekman (ed.), (University Park, PA, 1996).

*First assignment due*

## **Part Two: Belonging and the nation-state**

### **Week Five:**

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October: Women, nationalism and the nation-state

Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London, 1997), chs. 1&2.

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October: Student case-study presentations – in what ways is gender used to promote nationalism and allegiance to the nation-state?

Qadri Ismail, 'Constituting Nation, Contesting Nationalism: The Southern Tamil (Woman) and Separatist Tamil Nationalism in Sri Lanka' in *Subaltern Studies 11: Community, Gender and Violence*, Partha Chatterjee and Pradeep Jeganathan (eds), 212-282.

### **Week Six:**

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> October: Gender, race and citizenship

Uma Narayan, 'Towards a Feminist Vision of Citizenship: Rethinking the Implications of Dignity, Political Participation and Nationality' in *Reconstructing Political Theory: Feminist Perspectives*, Mary Lyndon Shanley and Uma Narayan (eds) (1997), 48-67.

Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, ch.4.

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> October: Student case-study presentations – how are discourses of citizenship gendered and racialized?

Alice Conklin, 'Redefining 'Frenchness': Citizenship, Race Regeneration and Imperial Motherhood in France and West Africa' in Julia Clancey-Smith and Frances Gouda (eds), *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville, 1998), 65-83.

### **Week Seven:**

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> October: Outside the nation-state: gender, immigration and the abuse of power

Uma Narayan, 'Male-Order Brides: Immigrant Woman, Domestic Violence and Immigration Law', *Hypatia*, 10, 1 (1995), 104-119.

Annanya Bhattacharjee, 'The Public/Private Mirage: Mapping Homes and Undomesticating Violence Work in the South Asian Immigrant Community' in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies and Democratic Futures*, 308-329.

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> October: Student case-study presentations – in what ways are those who do not belong to the nation-state vulnerable to abuses of power?

‘Cultivating Fear: the vulnerability of immigrant farm workers in the US to sexual violence and harrassment’, Human Rights Watch (2012),  
<http://www.hrw.org/publications/reports?topic=720&region=579>

### **Week Eight:**

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October: Emotions, nationalism and the creation of outsiders:

Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York, 2004), chs. 2 & 3

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> October: Student case-study presentations – how are social norms and emotions harnessed to effect loyalty to the nation?

Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai, ‘Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots’, *Social Text* 72, 20, 1 (2002), 117-148.

### **Part Three: Power and belonging – relationships, communities and identities**

### **Week Eight:**

Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> October: The complexities of belonging - what does it mean to belong?

Nira Yuval-Davis, ‘Belonging and the Politics of Belonging’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40, 3 (2006), 197-214

Bell-Hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place*, (New York, 2008), ch. 1.

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> November: Student case-study presentations – how is belonging imagined, envisaged and described?

Patricia Hill Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism and Feminism* (Philadelphia, 2006), ch. 1.

### **Week Nine:**

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> November: The boundaries ‘within’: belonging and exclusion within marginalized communities

Bell Hooks, *Aint I A Woman? Black Women and Feminism* (1981), ch. 4 ‘racism and feminism’

Emi Koyama, 'Whose Feminism is it Anyway? The Unspoken Racism of the Trans-Inclusion Debate' in *The Transgender Studies Reader* (New York, 2006), 698-705

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> November: Student case-study presentations – how do community identities form and change?

Joan Wallach Scott, *The Fantasy of Feminist History* (Durham and London, 2011), ch. 2.

### **Week Ten:**

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> November: 'Because we do not fit we are a threat' – queerness and the challenge to normativity and belonging

Cherrí Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called my Back* (1983).

Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York and London, 2006), ch. 1.

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> November: Student case-study presentations: in what ways do queer and crip theory challenge normative forms of belonging?

Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating, *This Bridge We Call Home* (New York, 2002), 1-19.

### **Week Eleven:**

Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> November: Rights at whose expense? Discourses of marginality and rights

Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, 1995)

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November: Student case-study presentations: are rights-based movements always implicated in exclusionary structures of power?

Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics and the Limits of Law* (Cambridge, MA, 2011)

### **Week Twelve:**

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> December: What does it mean to be 'home'?

Toni Morrison, *Home* (London, 2012), chs.1-7

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> December: Overview: Power, gender, race and belonging

Toni Morrison, *Home*, chs. 7-16

*Second assignment due*

Dean Spade, *Normal Life*

Visweswaran

Aimee Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines: on the subject of feminist alliances* (2008)

Captive Genders

Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence* (2011)

Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy* (2011)

Scott Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us* (2011)

Kevin Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty* (2007)

Bell Hooks, *Belonging* (2008)

Feminist genealogies, colonial legacies, democratic futures

