

Kirsten Leng
WGSS 791B-01
Wednesdays, 4:00-6:30pm
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FEMINIST THEORY

Fall 2019

Course Description

This seminar constitutes a core course for students enrolled in the Graduate Certificate in Advanced Feminist Studies.

Readings reflect feminist theorizing undertaken from a range of locations and time periods, and will focus on a range of topics. Inevitably, the curation of a course such as this one is influenced by the instructor's training and interests. No two theory courses will be the same, nor can any one course lay claim to absolute comprehensiveness or definitiveness. Thus, while aiming to offer a broad survey of feminist thought, this course will not, cannot cover *everything*. Consider this course but one step in your feminist education. If it succeeds, it will whet an appetite to learn more.

Course Goals

- Address the question, “what makes theory ‘feminist’”?
- Understand the multiple genealogies of feminism
- Engage feminist scholarship on subject matter of concern to the field, concentrating on the following issues:
 - Formation of subjectivity
 - Epistemology
 - Labour
 - The State
 - The Law
- Hone close reading skills
- Concisely summarize, compare, and analyze theoretical arguments

Readings

There are no readings to purchase. All readings will be available via Moodle, or will be provided as hard copies in advance of class. There are a lot of readings. Each week amounts to about 100 pages of reading; sometimes more, rarely less. It is crucial that everyone completes the reading so that she/he/they can practice informed participation in the seminar's discussion. Please budget your time accordingly.

Assignments and Evaluative Criteria

Participation: 40%

Summaries: 15%

Paper Proposal: 5%

Paper Outline: 5%

Final Paper: 35%

Participation

Consistent, intensive, attentive engagement is essential to the success of this course. You are expected to do the readings and prepare notes and questions. The objective of this course is not only to learn ideas, but also to gain skills, namely close reading and analysis. For this reason, participation is weighted heavily. Please be in communication with me regarding potential absences.

Summaries

You will submit three 2-3 page papers over the course of the semester wherein you will summarize the argument of one theoretical text from the preceding week's readings. All you have to do is clearly and concisely explicate the text's argument. You are not to include a critique of the theory. These papers will be assessed based on how well they meet the requirements of this assignment.

Paper Proposal

You will submit a one-page project proposal on Friday, November 8 by 11:59pm EST on Moodle. The paper proposal should clearly outline the theoretical concept(s) and/or author(s) you wish to examine in your paper, and explicate how you will deploy them in relationship to your research. You should explain why you chose these particular concept(s) and/or author(s), and how they contribute to your research: What do they enable you to do/see/argue? How do they contribute to/expand/complicate your research? The proposal should also include at least five texts you plan to include as part of your paper, as well as a timeline for the completion of your project.

Paper Outline

We will workshop paper outlines in class on November 20. Please have an outline ready by that date, prepared to share.

Final Paper

In your final paper, you will undertake a detailed exploration of at least one theoretical concept and/or writer discussed over the course of the semester, in relation to a topic germane to your research. We will workshop paper outlines and drafts in class, on November 20 and Dec 4, respectively. Papers should be approximately 15 pages, double-spaced. Extensions will be granted only in the most dire of circumstances.

Emails

I do not answer emails on the weekends. Do not expect answers on weekends.

Statement Regarding Pronouns

There is a long history of dialogue and activism around how we address one another, with respect to both names and pronouns. Students should be referred to by the name they prefer, and with the proper pronunciation, by faculty and other students. I will gladly honor your request to address you by the name you prefer and gender pronouns that correspond to your gender identity. Please advise me of your name's proper pronunciation, and any name or pronouns not reflected by the record in Spire early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Policy on use of Course Materials

Course materials can be shared among classmates, roommates, friends and family. They cannot be shared on social media. Recording of class sessions is not allowed barring special permission; these recordings cannot be shared on social media.

Students with Disabilities

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

Academic Honesty Statement

Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/).

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Date	Readings	Assignments, Dates of Interest
<p>Wednesday, Sept. 4</p> <p><i>Introduction</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who are you? 2. Why study theory? 3. What makes theory different from other kinds of scholarship? 4. How do we read theory? 	<p>*Jonathan Culler, "What is Theory?" <i>Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction</i> (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 1-18.</p> <p>*Charles Lemert, "Social Theory: Its Uses and Pleasures," in <i>Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classical Readings</i> (Westview Press, 2004), pp. 1-11.</p> <p>*texts concerning "How to Read Theory"</p>	
<p>Wednesday, Sept. 11</p> <p><i>Genealogies of Feminist Thought; Narrating Feminist Theory</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is feminist theory? What isn't feminist theory? How do we draw these boundaries? 2. Is there a feminist "canon" or foundational ideas/texts? If so, what are they? Who makes the determination? Is "the canon" static and fixed in time? Why or how should it change? 3. What makes a text "dated"? Why do certain ideas follow by the wayside? 4. What major subjects and concepts have animated 	<p>*Rosemarie Tong and Tina Fernandes Botts, "Introduction," <i>Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction</i>, Tong and Botts, eds, Fifth Edition (Westview Press, 2018), pp. 1-10.</p> <p>*Carole McCann and Seung-kyung Kim, "Introduction," <i>Feminist Theory Reader: Local And Global Perspectives</i>, McCann and Kim, eds, 3rd or 4th edition (Routledge, 2013/2017), pp. 1-11.</p> <p>*Clare Hemmings, "Telling Feminist Stories," <i>Feminist Theory</i> 6, no. 2 (August 1,</p>	

<p>feminist thought? Have they remained consistent or changed over time?</p>	<p>2005): 115-139.</p> <p>*Sara Ahmed, "Introduction," <i>Living a Feminist Life</i> (Duke University Press, 2017), pp. 1-18.</p>	
<p>Wednesday, Sept. 18</p> <p><i>Theorizing Subjectivity, pt. 1</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is subjectivity? 2. How is subjectivity forged? 3. What accounts for different approaches in theorizing subjectivity? 4. What do these theories share? How do they differ? 5. What are the primary animating concepts? Can they be translated across the texts? 6. What are the implications of these approaches to subject formation? 	<p>*Gloria Anzaldúa, "La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness," <i>Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza</i> (Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 77-91</p> <p>*Simone de Beauvoir, "Introduction," <i>The Second Sex</i>, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevalier (Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), pp. 3-17.</p> <p>*Jennifer Nash, "Rethinking Intersectionality," <i>Feminist Review</i> 89 (2008): 1-15</p> <p>*A. Finn Enke, "The Education of Little Cis: Cisgender and the Discipline of Opposing Bodies," <i>Transfeminist Perspectives in and Beyond Transgender and Gender Studies</i> (Temple University Press, 2012), pp. 60-80.</p> <p>*Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," <i>Cultural Anthropology</i> 16 (2001): 202-236</p>	<p>Mon, Sept. 16: last Add/Drop</p> <p>Summary 1 due Friday, Sept. 20 @ 11:59pm on Moodle</p>

<p>Wednesday, Sept. 25</p> <p><i>Theorizing Subjectivity, pt. 2</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is subjectivity? 2. How is subjectivity forged? 3. What accounts for different approaches in theorizing subjectivity? 4. What do these theories share? How do they differ? 5. What are the primary animating concepts? Can they be translated across the texts? 6. What are the implications of these approaches to subject formation? 	<p>*Michel Foucault, <i>The History of Sexuality, V. 1</i> (Vintage, 1990), pp. 75-132.</p> <p>*Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," <i>Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality</i>, Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds. (Monthly Review Press, 1983), pp. 177-205.</p> <p>*Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in <i>Feminist Theory Reader</i>, 415-427</p>	
<p>Wednesday, Oct. 2</p> <p><i>Theorizing Subjectivity, pt. 3</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is subjectivity? 2. How is subjectivity forged? 3. What accounts for different approaches in theorizing subjectivity? 4. What do these theories share? How do they differ? 5. What are the primary animating concepts? Can they be translated across the texts? 6. What are the implications of these approaches to subject formation? 	<p>*Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" <i>Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture</i> (1988), pp. 271-313</p> <p>*Ann Laura Stoler, "Cultivating Bourgeois Bodies and Racial Selves," <i>Race and the Education of Desire</i> (Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 95-136.</p> <p>*Chela Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in a Postmodern World," <i>Genders</i> 10 (1991): 1-24</p>	<p>Summary 2 due Friday, Oct. 4 @ 11:59pm on Moodle</p>
<p>Wednesday, Oct. 9</p> <p><i>Epistemology and Difference</i></p>	<p>*Nancy C. M. Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a</p>	

<p>1. How does subjectivity condition how one knows and understands the world? <i>Does</i> subjectivity condition how one knows and understands the world?</p> <p>2. Do certain subjects enjoy an epistemic advantage? Why? How?</p> <p>3. Why might feminists critique epistemological theories that ascribe primacy to subjectivity?</p>	<p>Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism,” Sandra Harding, ed., <i>The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies</i> (Routledge, 2004), 35-55.</p> <p>*Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” in <i>Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader</i>, pp. 81-102.</p> <p>*Patricia Hill Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought,” in <i>Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader</i>, 103-126.</p> <p>*Uma Narayan, “The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Nonwestern Feminist,” <i>Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader</i>, 213-224</p>	
<p>Wednesday, Oct. 16</p> <p><i>Labour</i></p> <p>1. How have feminists theorized the relationship between gender, race, sexuality, production, and reproduction under capitalism? In particular, how have feminists engaged other political economic theories, above all Marxism?</p> <p>2. What are the relevant categories involved in</p>	<p>*Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity,” in <i>Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures</i>, M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds. (Routledge, 1997), pp. 3-29.</p> <p>*Kathi Weeks, “Introduction,”</p>	

<p>feminist theories of labour; specifically, how do feminists theorize “production” and “reproduction”?</p> <p>3. What is the difference between labour and work?</p> <p>4. What feminist potential do these theorists identify in transformations of labour, work, production, and reproduction?</p>	<p><i>The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Anti-work Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries</i> (Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 1-36.</p> <p>*Catherine MacKinnon, “The Problem of Marxism and Feminism” and “An Attempt at Synthesis” in <i>Toward a Feminist Theory of the State</i> (Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 3-12, 60-80</p> <p>*Jane Jenson, “Gender and Reproduction or Babies and the State,” <i>Studies in Political Economy</i> 20 (1986), pp. 9-46</p>	
<p>Wednesday, Oct. 23</p> <p><i>Sex /Work</i></p> <p>1. How do these authors conceive of sex as a form of labour?</p> <p>2. Is sex a particular kind of labour? If so, why?</p> <p>3. How do these texts on sex as work compare with last week’s reading on labour and work? How does power operate differently in sex work (when compared with other kinds of work)?</p> <p>4. What are the relevant concepts and categories of analysis in feminist theorizations of sex as work?</p> <p>5. How do approaches differ when one’s framework is a) national or international/global? b) contemporary or historical?</p> <p>6. How do theories differ</p>	<p>*Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” in <i>Toward an Anthropology of Women</i>, Rayna Rapp ed (Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157-183</p> <p>*Katherine Franke, “Putting Sex to Work,” <i>Left Legalism/Left Critique</i>, Wendy Brown and Janet Halley, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 290-336</p> <p>*Martha Nussbaum, “‘Whether from Reason or Prejudice’: Taking Money for Bodily Services,” <i>Prostitution and Pornography: Philosophical Debate about the Sex Industry</i>, Jessica Spector, ed (Stanford University Press, 2006), pp.</p>	<p>Summary 3 due Friday, Oct. 25 @ 11:59pm on Moodle</p>

<p>when “women” or “woman” is not their point of reference?</p>	<p>175-208.</p> <p>Kamala Kempadoo, “Introduction: Globalizing Sex Workers’ Rights” in <i>Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition</i>, Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema (eds.), Routledge: New York and London, 1998</p>	
<p>Wednesday, Oct. 30</p> <p><i>The State</i></p> <p>1. How do these authors theorize a) the state, b) women, and c) the relationship between “women” and the state?</p> <p>2. All of these theorists are approaching the issue of the state from advanced capitalist societies. To what degree are their theoretical insights translatable across different state-formations/political economic contexts?</p> <p>3. How might these theories of the state extend to theories of empire?</p>	<p>*Mary McIntosh, “The State and the Oppression of Women,” <i>Feminism and Materialism</i>, A. Kuhn and A. Wolpe (Routledge, 1978), pp. 254-289.</p> <p>*Catharine MacKinnon, <i>Towards a Feminist Theory of the State</i> (1989), pp. ix-xvii; one chapter in Section III “The State” (to be assigned)</p> <p>*Jasbir Puar, “Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots,” <i>Social Text</i> 20, no. 3 (2002): 117-148</p> <p>*Carole Pateman, <i>The Sexual Contract</i> (Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 1-18, 34-42, 52-60, 92-98, 219-234.</p>	<p>Tues, Oct. 29: last day to drop with “DR”</p>
<p>Wednesday, Nov. 6</p>	<p>NO CLASS</p>	<p>Paper Proposal due Friday, Nov. 8 @11:59pm EST on Moodle</p>
<p>Wednesday, Nov. 13</p>	<p>NO CLASS</p>	<p>Work on your papers!!</p>

<p>Wednesday, Nov. 20</p> <p><i>The Law</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How have feminist theorists conceived of the relationship between gender, race, sexuality and the law? 2. In what ways does the law create and discipline categories? 3. To what degree do feminist theorists view the law as a tool for liberation? Or at least, a “tactically polyvalent” weapon? 4. How do analyses differ depending on their use of “women” as a category of analysis? 5. According to feminists, are laws themselves the problem, or is the problem their enforcement? 	<p>*Kimberlee Williams Crenshaw, “Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law,” <i>Harvard Law Review</i> 1331 (1989): 1331-1387</p> <p>*Patricia Williams, “The Pain of Word Bondage (A Tale with Two Stories),” <i>The Alchemy of Race and Rights: Diary of a Law Professor</i> (Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 146-165</p> <p>*Catharine MacKinnon, <i>Women’s Lives, Men’s Laws</i> (Harvard University Press, 2005), 1-12, 32-43, 58-64</p> <p>*Mary Jo Frug, “A Postmodern Feminist Legal Manifesto (An Unfinished Draft,” <i>Harvard Law Review</i> Vol. 105, No. 5 (Mar., 1992), pp. 1045-1075</p> <p>*Anna Kirkland, “Victorious Transsexuals in the Courtroom: A Challenge for Feminist Legal Theory,” <i>Law and Social Inquiry</i> 28, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 1-37</p>	<p>Workshop final paper outlines in class</p>
<p>Wednesday, Nov. 27</p>	<p>NO CLASS</p>	<p>Work on your papers!</p>
<p>Wednesday, Dec. 4</p> <p><i>What Is To Be Done? Pt. 1</i></p> <p>Many of the readings we have done this semester have served to explain or</p>	<p>*Wendy Brown, “Wounded Attachments,” <i>Political Theory</i> 21, no. 3 (August 1993): 390-410.</p> <p>*Nancy Fraser, “Struggle</p>	<p>Workshop paper drafts in class</p>

<p>critique the world as received. These texts offer explicit visions for how the world should be transformed--or at least, how feminism should be transformed.</p> <p>1. How do these texts reimagine the world? How do they reimagine feminism? 2. What common visions are shared across these texts? 3. If the visions of the world put forward are incommensurate, what are the implications for feminism?</p>	<p>Over Needs: Outline of a Socialist-Feminist Critical Theory of Late-Capitalist Political Culture, <i>Women, the State, and Welfare</i>, Linda Gordon, ed. (1990), pp. 199-225</p> <p>*bell hooks, "feminism: a transformational politic," <i>Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black</i> (1989), pp. 19-27</p> <p>*The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," in <i>Feminist Theory Reader: Local And Global Perspectives</i>, McCann and Kim, eds, 3rd or 4th edition (Routledge, 2013/2017), 164-171.</p>	
<p>Wednesday, Dec. 11</p> <p><i>What Is To Be Done?</i></p> <p>Many of the readings we have done this semester have served to explain or critique the world as received. These texts offer explicit visions for how the world should be transformed--or at least, how feminism should be transformed.</p> <p>1. How do these texts reimagine the world? How do they reimagine feminism? 2. What common visions are shared across these texts? 3. If the visions of the world put forward are incommensurate, what are the implications for feminism?</p>	<p>*Linda Zerilli, "Introduction," <i>Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom</i> (University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 1-31.</p> <p>*Shulamith Firestone, <i>The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution</i> (William Morrow and Company, 1970), 232-274.</p> <p>. *Corinne Kumar, "South Wind: Towards a New Political Imaginary," <i>Dialogue and Difference, Feminisms Challenge Globalization</i>, M. Waller and S. Marcos, eds. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 165-200.</p>	<p>Final Paper due in class (Wednesday, Dec. 11 @ 4pm)</p>

