

WGSS 494TI, Spring 2018: UnThinking the Transnational

Professor K. Asher (kasher@umass.edu) **Office:** W467 South College
Class time: TuTh 10:00-11:15am **Meets in:** 400 Herter (and W465 South College)
Office Hours: By appointment until Feb 15, thereafter on Tuesdays: 2:15-3:15pm; Thursdays 11:30am- 12:30pm, (appointments only if you cannot make it during regular office hours).
Check Moodle for updates. Course mailing list: wgss-494ti-01-spr18@courses.umass.edu

Course description: This course is about the framework of transnational women's and gendered scholarship and activism. We will critically engage a range of transnational feminist theories and movements and praxis to analyze structures of power and practices of resistance, and their histories and geographies. Mainstream transnational feminist research mistakenly assumes that it is about adding differences (of race, sexuality, “third world”, indigenous, black or “of color”) to “feminism.” In such understandings “feminism” like “modernity” is conflated with the West and takes the experience of white, Anglo-American, middle class women as a point of departure of theory and struggle. This course requires students to decenter such premises and “unthink” Eurocentric imaginaries of feminist theories, politics and praxis. We will critically interrogate such representations to develop a “transnational” sensibility, i.e. learn how the West and the Rest, the local and the global, tradition and modernity, metropole and colony, heterosexual and queer, culture and nature emerge in relation to other peoples, places, genders, and sexualities across histories and geographies. Such critical perspectives will also inform our reading of transnational feminist projects and activism to recognize how they are always already linked to anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-sexist, economic, environmental and other struggles for social change. Thus, the course readings and approach will not only focus on cases and issues from different parts of the world and highlight the experience of different women, it will emphasize the connections between places and peoples. The course then is transnational and global in essence and substance.

Pre-requisites: Although this course is open to juniors, it is intended as a culminating integrative learning experience for WGSS seniors (see below). Ideally students will have completed most of the requirements for the major, but at the very least 301 (the theory requirement) and two other required WGSS courses (an introductory WGSS General Education Course should be one of these). Without these pre-requisites, students will be unable to keep up with the term of the course. _____

Capstone and Integrative Experience:

This is a *four-credit* WGSS Capstone course, which fulfills the major's Integrative Experience (IE) requirements in a variety of ways. Specifically, it will help you to:

- Reflect and integrate your learning and experience from the broad exposure in General Education courses and the specific foci in your major
- Practice the learning objectives of General Education such as oral communication, collaboration, critical thinking and interdisciplinarity at an advanced level
- Engage in intensive discussion, reading, writing, and shared learning
- Apply this shared knowledge critically and self-reflexively to new situations, challenging questions, and real-world problems

WGSS majors will work together on a shared intellectual project, and situate their general education coursework and scholarly studies into conversations with each other. It will also emphasize a collective learning process from student led discussions; creating a Portfolio of required course work; written assignments; a final research paper or project; and possibly a final in-class presentation (open to students, faculty, and community outside class). As an IE requirement, the course will provide WGSS seniors with the opportunity to reflect on and make use of the knowledge base they have acquired in the major and *UMass General Education Courses*.

- Integrate and synthesize acquired breadth of knowledge in a variety of scholarly modes and contexts as well as information technology.
- Demonstrate (a) knowledge of self in diverse cultural contexts, (b) recognize diverse disciplinary viewpoints, (c) understand diverse perspectives, and how different cultures and groups relate in a diverse global and transnational context, (d) and work effectively and collaboratively in groups.
- Communicate clearly, concisely, persuasively, and effectively orally and in writing.
- Think critically and creatively, and conduct self-directed projects.

Required Readings (Available via Amherst Books)

- ❖ Amrita Basu, ed. 2017 *Women’s Movements in the Global Era: The Power of Local Feminisms*. Second edition. Westview Press.
- ❖ Monograph TBD
- ❖ Additional Readings on Moodle and via hyperlinks below

Background Readings (on reserve at the DuBois Library and/or ereserve)

- ❖ Hall, S. et al. eds. 1996. *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers. (I especially recommended: Introductions to Parts I, II and III)
- ❖ Lemert, Charles, ed. 2017. *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. (I especially recommend Lemert’s introductory essays to each section)
- ❖ McCann, Carole and Seung-kyung Kim, eds. 2013/2017. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*. 3rd or 4th edition. Routledge.

Assignments, Grades, and Ground Rules:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • Attendance and Participation (incl. how you engage your peers) | 20% |
| • Reading reviews (3 or 4) | 20% |
| • Two essays (due Feb 19, Mar 21) | 30% |
| • Final Assignment (due May 9) | 30% |

Attendance and Absences: The success of the class depends on the instructor and students being physically and intellectual present in class. Being a little late occasionally is understandable. However, if you are more than 10 minutes late, you will be marked absent. If you have to miss class because of legitimate reasons (illness, injury, death of a loved one), excuse your absence in writing within a week of the missed session. Over three absences will result in the lowering of your overall grade, as even excused absences will affect your participation grade. So try not to miss class.

If missing class is unavoidable, know that it is your responsibility to catch up on what you missed. Set up a “study buddy” with whom you can exchange notes, review material, and check in about intellectual or logistical issues related to the class.

Study Buddy 1: _____

Study Buddy 2: _____

Preparation and Reading: Good participation and great conversations rest on good preparation. So do the assigned work, including the readings, before coming to class. Develop a practice of reading closely to identify main theme(s) and examine the premise of an argument critically. Close reading fosters critical dialogues.

Participation: Good participation means active and mindful engagement with the course material and class participants, including your peers. Active and mindful engagement goes beyond agreements and disagreements to foster collective learning through critical dialogues about the topics and ideas generated by the course material. Critical dialogues entail listening, thinking, talking, and asking questions of the material and of each other. The best classrooms conversations are ones that expand your knowledge and understanding, and bring the intense pleasure of critical intellectual inquiry. It is a skill that requires practice and like other academic skills it is useful far beyond the classroom.

Notes: Learn to keep notes (digitally or in paper notebooks) on what you read, highlight key quotes (if you write the quotes in your notes, make sure you to write down the full citation with page numbers), on how an author makes an argument, how the terms of one article relate to the broader course themes. If you don’t understand something or are confused, make notes to prompt you to ask questions about them in class. Bring your readings and notes to class! And don’t forget to set up a study buddy.

These notes are for your own use (or to share with your peers). You may NOT sell these notes to outside vendors, nor make audio or video recordings of class lectures and discussions without my permission.

Using smart phones in class is decidedly un-smart as it invites me to fail you. When in class **turn OFF your mobile devices**. You may seek permission to use your computer in class to refer to readings and notes, and to take notes. However, please do not connect to the Internet.

Online communications and Email etiquette: Instructions, study questions, and updates about the course will be posted on **Moodle** and/or sent through the class lists (see above). So make sure that your university email (yourname@umass.edu) is functional, and check Moodle regularly. I welcome appropriate email queries and will respond to them within a reasonable amount of time (24-48 hours is normal). For a distinction between appropriate and inappropriate email, familiarize yourself with [Emails as Professional Correspondences or Email Etiquette](#).

Office Hours are listed above and updated on Moodle. I strongly encourage you to stop by with questions about class material, brainstorm research ideas, talk about topics that sparked your intellectual curiosity, or discuss your performance in class. However, keep in mind that, office hours are not the space to review course material you missed or entertain inquiry such as “I was absent, what did I miss?” Talk to your study buddy first and then follow up with me to discuss specific queries.

Research: Go beyond wikipedia and google! [UMASS libraries \(click the Menu button on the upper right\) have excellent resources and amazing professional staff to help you meet your learning goals. So learn to use them and to do](#) library research.

Writing is a crucial tool for learning and an invaluable skill for communicating what you learn. So learn to write well. Check out some of the excellent resources available to you, including <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/> (one of the most extensive lists of handouts on writing and research help). You can also get free writing help at the [Writing Center](#), and from the WGSS writing tutor ([Check Moodle for the tutor’s office hours](#)). Take a copy of the assignment instructions and your draft response to your session. Engage your editing process by articulating what you want the tutor to focus on in addressing your work.

Finally, all **written assignments**:

- ❖ May be discussed with your peers or with me during my office hours
- ❖ Must be submitted **by the stated deadlines**. By handing in assignments late you forfeit your right to comments and lose half a letter grade for every day that your work is late. So learn to manage your time.
- ❖ May be revised and resubmitted accepted within two weeks of receiving comments back from the instructor. Submit hardcopies of your substantially revised written work along with the original submission(s). Note that resubmitting a paper does not guarantee a higher grade. In fact, cursorily rewritten work may receive a lower grade than the original.
- ❖ Should comply with the **Checklist of Written Work guidelines** (see below).
- ❖ Will be graded according to the **criteria** listed below.
- ❖ Sometimes I give slash grades (B/B+). This means that the assignment is tending towards the higher grade but is not there yet. If you do better in the next assignment of a similar nature, the prior one will automatically be graded higher.

CRITERIA FOR GRADING WRITTEN WORK

- A = a well organized, lucidly written paper free of mechanical errors (or oral argument) that indicates your thorough understanding of the material and your interesting insights or critical responses to it. In a phrase, an A paper is a “perfect 10” paper.
- B = a paper (or presentation) that offers evidence of your understanding of the material, but in which your points are obscured due to mechanical errors, lack of organization, inadequate evidence and/or insufficiently developed arguments.
- C = a paper in which the student’s understanding and response to the material is unclear or largely obscured due to any one or more factors listed under B.
- D, F = indicate that students are submitting unacceptable work.

GRADE CHART

	Out of 10	Out of 5	GPA
A	9.3 - 10	4.7 - 4.9	4
A-	8.6 - 9.2	4.3 - 4.6	3.7
B+	7.9 - 8.5	4.0 - 4.2	3.3
B	7.2 - 7.8	3.6 - 3.9	3.0
B-	6.5 - 7.1	3.3 - 3.5	2.7
C+	5.8 - 6.4	3.0 - 3.2	2.3
C	5.1 - 5.7	2.6 - 2.9	2.0
C-	4.4 - 5.0	2.3 - 2.5	1.7
D+	3.7 - 4.3	2.0 - 2.2	1.7
D	3.0 - 3.6	1.9 - 1.7	1.0
F	2.7 - 2.9		

Accommodation Statement: Disability Services (DS) on campus keeps documentation on file of physical, psychological, or learning disability and provides services to students with disabilities: <http://www.umass.edu/disability/>. They also act as a liaison between students and professors. If you need accommodations related to disabilities, please contact DS and me within the first two weeks of the term (before the add/drop period ends) so that we can work together to meet your learning needs. *A letter from Disability Services is not sufficient excuse for late or missed work or absences.* If, after consulting the syllabus, you anticipate missing classes or think you will need alternative formats and timelines for assignments, please communicate with me in person during office hours so that we can make mutually agreeable 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 UMass. 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/).

Pronoun Statement: I will gladly address you by the name you prefer and use the gender pronouns that correspond to your gender identity. Please advise the class and me on your name and pronoun preference, and the proper pronunciation of your name.

Checklist for Written Work for Prof Asher, AKA her 20 COMMANDMENTS!

1. I have a central argument or a main point and I state it clearly.
2. I define the key terms on which my argument is based.
3. I have developed my argument systematically and organized my points clearly. That is, my points follow from each other and speak to my central argument.
4. I substantiate my claims with supporting evidence, and cite relevant sources using a correct and consistent format. Prof Asher prefers the author-date style:
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
5. By the middle of my paper, I have lost neither clarity nor focus.
6. I make clear transitions between my points and between paragraphs and sections.
7. The passive voice has not been used by me. Instead, I use the active voice.
8. I have edited my paper and it is free from repeated errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and I have used short sentences and made sure that my sentences do not run on like this one does.
9. My sources are formatted correctly and consistently, as is my Reference List.
10. In my introductory and concluding remarks, I neither over generalize nor make banal claims. Rather, I begin and conclude with insightful remarks about my topic.

Logistical and Mechanical details checklist

1. My paper has a title. It tells my reader what my paper is about.
2. My name, course name and number, type and number of the assignment, and the date of this paper appear single-spaced in the upper left hand corner of the first page.
3. I have used a legible font, double-spaced my writing, and used 1.25-inch margins.
4. I have numbered all the pages of my assignment
5. I have STAPLED all the pages of my assignment. Prof Asher will not accept paper clipped papers.
6. I am NOT including a cover page or a report cover with my assignments.
7. I have submitted my paper on time and in the format indicated on the assignment. Rubric for naming electronic documents: Your Last Name_Assignment_Course#_Term, e.g. Ash_Final_494_Spr2018
8. I know that Prof Asher does not accept email papers. I know that late papers lose half a letter grade for each day the paper is late.
9. I have NOT plagiarized (<http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/geninfo/plagiarism.html>)
10. I have conferenced my assignment at the Writing Center (<http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/>) if necessary, or at the very least addressed the issues in Section V of Strunk and White's The Elements of Style.

Course Schedule: This is a working course schedule and is subject to change. For example, readings may be added or substituted at the professor's discretion. The readings listed under each week are for that week. That is, please read the listed material before coming to class. **Check Moodle for updates**

Week 1: Introduction to the class, its key terms, and its participants

Tu, Jan 23: Please (re)read the following for the first class

- ❖ McCann, Carole and Seung-kyung Kim, eds. 2013/2017. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*. Routledge. Focus specifically on the introductory essays to each Section of the edited volume, and selections by the Combahee River Collective, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldua, Kimberlee Crenshaw, Andrea Smith, Lila Abu-Lughod and Mrinalini Sinha, Sara Ahmed, Rachel Salazar Parreñas, Amrita Basu, Sue Cobble, Chandra Mohanty, Cathy Cohen, Gayatri Spivak
- ❖ It is highly recommended that you regain a solid understanding of the material covered in WGSS 301 (the syllabus for it is available via the WGSS website)
- ❖ Discussion questions and approach: Most/all the readings above make the case that feminist theory/feminisms have been “transnational” since its inception. However each reading, focuses on a different aspect or element of the transnational. Parse (but don’t judge) the understanding or parameters (explicit or implicit) of the transnational in at least three of the selections above. Focus on the readings that most contribute to or challenge your understandings of transnational or global feminism. Make note of your zones of “comfort” and “discomfort,” but again do so without judgment. Our task is analytical not normative. It is from the former that we develop an ethics and politics.

Th, Jan 25: Guest session on *Black feminist soundscapes as "geographic acts"* (McKittrick 138)

- ❖ McKittrick, Katherine. 2006. "Introduction: Geographic Stories." Pp. ix-xxxi in *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (Moodle)

Week 2:

Tu, Jan 30: Guest session on *Cartographies of knowledge and power in feminist art*

- ❖ Alexander, M. Jacqui, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. “Cartographies of knowledge and power: Transnational feminism as radical praxis.” *Amanda Lock Swarr and Richa Nagar*, eds. *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*. Suny Press, 2012, 23-45.
- ❖ Deutsche, Rosalyn, Aruna D'Souza, Miwon Kwon, Ulrike Müller, Mignon Nixon, and Senam Okudzeto. “Feminist time: A conversation.” *Grey Room* 31 (2008): 32-67.
- ❖ Reilly, Maura, “Introduction: Toward transnational feminisms,” in Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin, eds. *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art*. Merrell, 2007, 14-47.
- ❖ Watch: Tracey Rose, performance-lecture, for *Global Feminisms* at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art Forum, March 2007).
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OX5iLPLWzPM2>

Th, Feb 1: Guest session on black feminism and "transnationalism."

Does black feminism imagine itself (or is it imagined in the context of women's studies) as a project tied to the US national project? What does it say about canonizing women's/feminist studies?

- ❖ Jordan, June. 1982/2003. Report from the Bahamas. *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*. 3 (2): 6-16.
- ❖ Crenshaw, Kimberley. 1991. Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review* 43(6): 1241-1299
- ❖ Walcott, Rinaldo. 2005. Outside in Black Studies. Pp. 91-105 in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*. Henderson, Mae G. et al, eds. Duke University Press.

Week 3:

Tu, Feb 6: Guest session on ***Trans* Nationalism***

Read the following in the order listed

- ❖ Sears, Clare. 2014. Problem Bodies, Nation-State. Pp. 121-138 in *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco*. Duke University Press.
- ❖ Shakhari, Sima. 2013. Shuttling Between Bodies and Borders: Iranian Transsexual Refugees and the Politics of Rightful Killing. In *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, ed. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura, 565-79. New York: Routledge.
- ❖ Bailey, Marlon M. 2011. Gender/Racial Realness: Theorizing the Gender System in Ballroom Culture. *Feminist Studies* 37 (2): 365-386. (Optional but highly recommended)

Th, Feb 8: Guest session on ***Telling to Transform***

- ❖ Latina Feminist Group. 2001. Introduction: Papelitos Guardados: Theorizing Latinidades Through Testimonio. Pp. 1-24 in *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* Duke UP.
- ❖ Govinden, Devarakshanam. 2008. The Politics of Identity and Difference (Chpt 2, pp. 31-53) and Auto/biography as Identity in the Writings of Phyl Naidoo (Chpt 12, pp. 295-313) in *Sister Outsiders: The Representation of Identity and Difference in Selected Writings by South African Indian Women*. University of South Africa Press and Brill Publishing.

Recommended

- ❖ Latina Feminist Group. 2001. The Body Re/members (Chpt 3, 263-285, 331-335) in *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* Duke University Press.
- ❖ [a 1972 speech from Angela Davis following her release from prison](#)

Week 4:

Tu, Feb 13: *Transnational feminisms and African American feminisms: Convergences and Divergences*

- ❖ Everyone revisit at least two pieces from the past two weeks to chart the weeks ahead
- ❖ Think about the following themes around which to structure the rest of the semester
 1. Gender, Race, Sex and Neoliberal Economic Globalization or Feminist Pol Economy
 2. Reproductive nationalism/transnationalism
 3. Decolonial/Postcolonial/Settler Colonialism
 4. Queer and Trans*nationalism
 5. Let's discuss others

Th, Feb 15: Guest session on *Institutionalization and its Conceptual Geographies*

- ❖ Ahmed, Sara. 2011. Problematic Proximities: Or Why Critiques of Gay Imperialism Matter. *Feminist Legal Studies* 19:119–132
- ❖ Nash, Jennifer. 2014. Institutionalizing the Margins. *Social Text* 118 32 (1): 45-65.
- ❖ Wynter, Sylvia. 2006. On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of *Désêtre* Black Studies Toward the Human Project. Pp. 107-169 in *Not Only the Master's Tools: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice*, Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon, eds. Boulder: Paradigm.

Essay 1 (15% of grade) due noon, Monday Feb 19

Week 5: What is transnational feminism? What are its debates and actions?

Feb 20:

- ❖ Readings from *Feminist Studies* 43 (3) (Moodle)
- ❖ Blackwell, Maylei, Laura Briggs, and Mignonette Chiu. 2015. “Transnational Feminisms Roundtable.” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 36(1): 1-24.

Feb 22

- ❖ Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 2003. “Under Western Eyes” Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anti-Capitalist Struggles. Pp. 221-252 in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, Chandra T. Mohanty, ed Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Replace with Alexander and Mohanty above?
- ❖ Basu, Introduction, *Women's Movements in the Global Era*
- ❖ Richa Nagar, Kathy Davis, Judith Butler, AnaLouise Keating, Claudia De Lima Costa, Sonia E. Alvarez, and Ayşe Gül Altınay. 2017. A Cross-Disciplinary Roundtable on the Feminist Politics of Translation, edited by Emek Ergun. In *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives*, Emek Ergun and Olga Castro, eds., pp. 111-136. London/New York: Routledge.
- ❖ Student confirm groups and selections for the next two weeks

WGSS conference: Finding the Queer Radical Past: Scholars and Activists on the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights (Feb 23-24, 2018)

<http://www.queerradicalpast.net/>

Week 6: Women's Movements in the Global Era (student –led discussions on selected chapters)

Feb 27: four chapters led by 4-5 students

Mar 1: four chapters led by 4-5 students

Week 7: Women's Movements in the Global Era

Mar 6: four chapters led by 4-5 students

Mar 8: Finalize themes/groups for second half of the semester

SPRING BREAK (March 12-16)

Week 8:

Mar 20: Peer Workshop of Essay 2 (Analysis of Women's Movements, trace theory-praxis linkages, outline what to read next and how to follow-up or build on the learning)

Essay 2 (15%, upload on Moodle by 5pm, March 21)

Mar 22:

Week 9: Student-led sessions

Mar 27:

Mar 29:

Week 10: Student-led sessions

Apr 3

Apr 5

Week 11: TBD

Apr 10:

Apr 12:

CLPP's 36th annual conference, *From Abortion Rights to Social Justice: Building the Movement for Reproductive Freedom*, April 13-15, 2018, Hampshire College
<https://clpp.hampshire.edu/conference/2018-conference>

Week 12

Apr 17: MONDAY SCHEDULE

Apr 19: Presentation/workshop of final project drafts

Week 13: Discuss Monograph TBD

Apr 24

Apr 26

Week 13.5

May 1: Last class