

WOMENSST 791B - Feminist Theory

Course mailing list: womensst-791b-01-fal15@courses.umass.edu

Term: Fall 2015

Instructor: K. Asher (kasher@umass.edu)

Office: Bartlett 387

Class time: Tu 1:00-3:30pm

Meets in: Bartlett 314

Office Hours: Tu 11:30am-12:30 pm, Th: 11:30am-1pm, or **by appointment**

This graduate seminar in feminist theory constitutes a core course for students enrolled in the Graduate Certificate in Advanced Feminist Studies. The seminar will be organized around questions that emerge for feminisms from multiple locations from the rubrics of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality to debates about economics, trans/nationalism, rights, and postcolonialism. By its nature feminist theory is about understanding and fostering social change. Thus, its debates or conversations are simultaneously analytical, ethical, and political. The goal of this seminar is to enable students to understand these debates and engage in critical dialogue with them through close readings of classic and contemporary feminist writings from across the many disciplines that contribute to the "field."

Students are expected to have some prior grounding in social and political theory, or be prepared to gain it during the first part of the semester. In the first part of the seminar we will focus on the historical and methodological terms of modern feminist debates. In the second part of the semester, we will deepen that understanding and engagement by revisiting key themes of feminist concerns such as the role of the state, the structure of the economy, the governing of sexuality, alternative forms of justice, or others you suggest. Students are expected to take an active and self-reflexive approach to the material and make connections between seminar themes and their own particular research interests.

Required Readings (ordered through Amherst Books unless on ereserve)

- ❖ Morris, Rosalind, ed. 2012. *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*. Columbia Univ Press.
- ❖ Foucault, Michel. 1978. *History of Sexuality: An Introduction, vol I*. Vintage.
- ❖ Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge (Ereserve on Moodle)
- ❖ Additional readings (as Ereserve or uploads on Moodle).

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

- ❖ Chris Weedon. 1997. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. Blackwell
- ❖ Jaggar, Alison. 1983. *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*. Rowman & Littlefield
- ❖ McCann, Carole and Seung-kyung Kim, eds. 2002. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*. Routledge. (FTR below)
- ❖ Lemert, Charles, ed. 1993/2004. *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. (I especially recommend Lemert's introductory essays to each section)

Assignments and Grades

- ❖ Attendance & Participation 25%
- ❖ Short (1-2pages) annotations (three before Fall break) 15%
- For the remaining 60% of the grade, students may choose between**
- ❖ Option A
 - ❖ Two 5-6 page critical reviews (of 2 or more sets of readings, due Oct 16 and Nov 18) 30%
 - ❖ Final Assignment (literature review or final paper, prospectus due Nov 24, final due Dec 14) 30%
- ❖ Option B
 - ❖ One 6-7 page critical review (of 2 or more sets of readings) 20%
 - ❖ Final Assignment (literature review or final paper, prospectus due Nov 24, final due Dec 14) 40%

Attendance & Participation:

A seminar is a collective endeavor and its success depends on our physical and intellectual presence in class, how we engage the seminar readings and each other. So please read the course material closely before class and be prepared to discuss them in class. Class discussions will focus on:

- ❖ understanding the main points and key terms of each reading
- ❖ how each reading connects with or is in conversation with other pieces for that week and prior weeks
- ❖ the contributions, limits, and questions generated by the readings and approaches.

We will be doing a lot of reading and deep thinking. So be patient with yourselves and with each other so that we may grapple productively with important ideas and debates. This may mean learning to disagree respectfully and learning to be comfortable with being uncomfortable

Being a little late for or missing a session because of illness or injury is understandable (but please let me know). More than one absence will affect your learning and your grade. If you have to miss more than two classes, plan to meet with me so we can discuss options to make up for the class or course.

Using smart phones in class is decidedly un-smart. When in class please **turn OFF your cell phones, PDA, or other wired umbilical cords. You may use your computer in class to refer to readings and notes, and to take notes. However, please do not connect to the internet.**

Annotations or short reading reviews are exercises to help you write longer analytical pieces. Write three in the first six (well really five weeks) of the semester. They are frontloaded so that I can give you quick feedback on your reading and writing. In case you need them, there are more details on annotations and general writing guidelines at the end of the syllabus.

Finally, learn to manage your time to meet deadlines. By handing in assignments late you forfeit your right to comments and loose half a letter grade for every day that your work is late.

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.

Week 1:

Tu, Sept 8: **Introductions: Seminar topics, participants and their research**

- ❖ What is feminist theory? Why feminist theory? How did you come to feminism? What is your favorite feminist theory text? Why? What problem or problematic does it engage? How? [Come prepared to discuss this. See Moodle for details]

Suggested:

- ❖ Short stories on Moodle
- ❖ Introduction, and Introduction to *Definitions and Movements* (FTR)
- ❖ Each others submissions on Moodle

Week 2: Theorizing Women, Gender, Oppression, and Freedom

Tu, Sept 15:

- ❖ Truth <http://www.sojournertruth.org/Library/Speeches/AintIAWoman.htm>
- ❖ Jaggar, Alison. 1983. The Politics of Liberal Feminism. Pp. 174-206 in *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*. Rowman and Littlefield. (Ereserve through Moodle)
- ❖ Haraway, Donna. 1991. 'Gender' for a Marxist Dictionary: The Sexual Politics of a Word. Pp. 127-148 in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. NY: Routledge. (Ereserve through Moodle)
- ❖ Anzaldúa, *La Conciencia de la Mestiza*, and The Combahee River Collective, *A Black Feminist Statement* (FTR).
- ❖ Humm, Maggie. 1982. Chronology of Events, and History of Feminism in Britain and America (xv-xx, 1-7), and Second Wave Feminism (53-60) in *Modern Feminisms*. Columbia University Press. (Ereserve through Moodle)
- ❖ Ferguson, Kathy. 1993. Male Ordered Subjectivity. Pp. 36-68 in *The Man Question in Feminism: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory*. Univ of California Press. (Ereserve through Moodle)

Suggested:

- ❖ Chris Weedon, *Feminism and Theory* (Chapter One)
- ❖ Georg Hegel (Master-Slave) hyperlink not working but search on marxists.org/
- ❖ From FTR: Simone de Beauvoir: "Introduction" to *The Second Sex*, Monique Wittig, *One is Not Born a Woman*; Charlotte Bunch, *Lesbians in Revolt*; bell hooks, *Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression*.
- ❖ Scott, Joan W. 1988. Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis. Pp. 28-50 in *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York Columbia University Press.

Week 3: Theorizing Women, Work, Labor, Production, Reproduction

Tu, Sept 22:

- ❖ Engels, Friedrich. 1884. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) 90-93 (find on marxists.org or pp. 734-759 in *The Marx-Engels Reader*)
- ❖ Karen Sacks. 1974. Engels Revisited: Women, the Organization of Production and Private Property. Pp. 207-222, 335-336 in *Women, Culture, and Society*. Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds. Stanford UP. (Ereserve on Moodle)
- ❖ Hartmann, Heidi. 1979. The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more progressive union. *Capital and Class* vol 3: 1-33 (Ereserve)
- ❖ MacKinnon, Catharine. 1982. Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory. (Excerpt from Humm, *Modern Feminisms* on Moodle)
- ❖ Rubin, Gayle. 1974. The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex. Pp. 157-210, in *Towards an Anthropology of Women*. Reyna Reiter, ed. NY: Monthly Review Press (Ereserve on Moodle). (Skim for today)

Suggested

- ❖ For excellent overview of the analytical parameters of the capitalist a mode of production, see Kloppenborg, *First the Seed*, pp. 22-27, and Chapter 3 of Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People without History* (Moodle)
- ❖ Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. Selections from The German Ideology (on www.marxists.org, or reprinted in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 148-175. (The hyperlink to marxists.org does not work but type in the URL to find this website, which has many original Marxist texts and commentaries)
- ❖ <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/marxism/>
- ❖ Nicholson, Linda. 1987. Feminism and Marxism: Integrating Kinship with the Economic. Pp. 16-30, 164-165 in *Feminism as Critique*. Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell, eds. Univ of Minnesota Press.

Week 4: Theorizing Woman, Identity & Difference

Tu, Sept 29:

- ❖ Belsey, Catherine. 1980. Addressing the Subject. Pp. 56-84 in *Critical Practice*. Routledge. (Ereserve through Moodle)
- ❖ Alarcón, The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism (FTR)
- ❖ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume I*
- ❖ Scott, Poovey, Christian, and Lazreg. 1988. *Feminist Studies* 14 (1) special issue on Feminism & Deconstruction. Available via JSTOR
<http://www.jstor.org.silk.library.umass.edu/stable/i359113>

Suggested:

- ❖ Chris Weedon, "Principles of Poststructuralism" and "Language and Subjectivity"
- ❖ Selections from Section II in FTR
- ❖ Althusser, Louis. Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. pp. Pp. 127-186 in *Lenin and Philosophy, and other essays by Louis Althusser*, tr. Ben Brewster.
<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>

Week 5: Producing and Governing Sexualities

Tu, Oct 6

- ❖ Reread selection by Beauvoir, Wittig, Koetz in FTR
- ❖ Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble* (Ebook on reserve)
- ❖ Spillers, Hortense. 1987. Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book, in *Culture and Countermemory: The 'American' Connection*, special issue, *Diacritics* 17(2) 68-81.
- ❖ Freud, Sigmund. 1905 (1990). Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (abridged). Pp. 89-145 in *Freud on Women: A Reader*. Elisabeth Young-Breuhl, ed. W.W. Norton (ereserve), or full text
- ❖ Young-Breuhl, Elisabeth. 1990. Introduction. Pp. 1-47 in *Freud on Women*

Suggested:

- ❖ Freud: <https://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/psychoanalysis/freud.html>
- ❖ Lacan <https://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/psychoanalysis/lacanstructure.html>
- ❖ Irigaray, Kristeva in Humm, *Modern Feminisms*

**Oct 13: Fall Break, Monday schedule so no class
Critical Review 1 due by noon Thursday, Oct 15**

Week 6: Theorizing Representing and Rights - I

Tu, Oct 20:

- ❖ Morris, *Introduction*; Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*; Cornell, *The Ethical Affirmation of Human Rights: Gayatri Spivak's Intervention*.
- ❖ Skim Spivak, Translators Preface and Afterword in *Imaginary Maps: Three Stories by Mahasweta Devi*. Routledge. (Moodle)

*Gita Sen's lecture Women's Human Rights: Promises and Pitfalls of a Globalized World
7pm Mt Holyoke College*

Week 7: Theorizing Representing and Rights - II

Tu, Oct 27:

- ❖ Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak*, and *In Response*; Cheah, *Biopower and the New International Division of Reproductive Labor*; Franco, *Moving On from Subalternity*; any other that strikes your fancy.

Week 8: Possible Topic: Feminism and the State

Tu, Nov 3

Readings TBD together

Week 9: Women, Gender, and the Political Economy of Capitalism

Tu: Nov 10:

Readings TBD together

Week 10: Queer Theory, Sexualities and Bodies

Tu, Nov 17:

Readings TBD together

Week 11:

Nov 24: Prospectus for final Assignment due

❖ Workshop final assignments

Nov 26: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 12: Feminists in movements

Tu: Dec 1 Readings TBD together

Week 13: Feminist actions

Tu, Dec 8: Readings TBD together

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE SEMINAR

Short Annotations hard copies due in class (Three required, others optional)

Brief annotation (1-2 pages) of the week's readings should:

1. Summarize the topics of the week in a few sentences. Quote briefly from the text/s to illustrate the argument or debate. This is NOT the place for an exhaustive summary of all the theories. To write a succinct and clear summary, learn to be a good reader closely
<http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/how-do-close-reading>
2. Next, contextualize (when, why and to whom is/are the authors speaking to?) and assess the argument (how is the argument substantiated? What are the sources and analytical parameters of the author's claims?).
3. Conclude with a statement about the work's relevance for the course themes, and/or pose a question or two about the reading in order to foster discussion. How do these readings enter into conversation with others we have read, or how do they further our understanding of the course's themes?
4. Contain a reference list with full citations of all readings you annotate. Use the ayp (author-year-page style).
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Critical Reviews synthesize and provide critical reflections (**5+ pages each**) on the material discussed over a course of two or more weeks.

That is, they should identify and evaluate the arguments discussed in the week's readings. Reading reviews differ from annotations in that an analysis and thoughtful critique follows a concise summary of arguments. Remember that neither blanket criticism nor untempered praise is a good critical response. Avoid over generalized or banal answers, and make sure you have a fair and clear understanding of the ideas you wish to flesh out or critique. Attach a list of references cited in your review, and make sure to give your review a title. We will discuss these in more detail.

Final Assignment: An Annotated Bibliography, Review Essay, or Research Paper

The final assignment for the semester will involve 10-12 pages of writing in which you describe, review and critically evaluate the debates and topics discussed in the seminar. The form of this assignment will be determined later in the semester after I have read and evaluated your shorter writings.

CRITERIA FOR GRADING WRITTEN WORK

- A = a well organized, lucidly written paper free of mechanical errors 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.

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. There are NO double-returns between my paragraphs.
5. I have numbered all the pages of my assignment
6. I have STAPLED all the pages of my assignment. Prof Asher will not accept paper clipped papers.
7. As per Prof. Asher's instructions, I am NOT including a cover page or a report cover with my assignments.
8. I am submitting a hardcopy of my paper on time. I know that Prof Asher does not accept email submissions and that late papers loose half a letter grade for each day the paper is late.
9. I understand what plagiarism (<http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/geninfo/plagiarism.html>) means and have avoided it.
10. I have conferenced this assignment at the Writing Center (<http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/>) if necessary, or at the very least I have read and addressed the issues in Section V of Strunk and White's The Elements of Style.