

***Feminist Theory***  
SOCI 633 (002)  
WMST 630

Fall, 2017  
W 4:30 - 7:10 pm

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## I. COURSE OBJECTIVES

While feminism has been practiced for over 150 years, the scope of feminist scholarship has expanded exponentially since the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* in 1952. Within nearly every academic discipline, feminist theory has been developed to address specific social problems and problems of knowledge. This course is designed to introduce students to the ideas and projects that have been formative in the development of feminist theory and to engage students in the important intellectual and political debates in which it has played a significant role. The course material is interdisciplinary, drawn from philosophy, sociology, anthropology, art history, political science, biology and law. Students are encouraged to take a critical approach to the material, analyzing it as text and evaluating its ability to illuminate social problems. Throughout the course, attention will be paid to debates within feminism as it has continually reflected on its status as both an epistemology and a social movement.

## II. REQUIRED READING

de Beauvoir, Simone. 1989. *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage).

Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge).

Federici, Silvia. 2004. *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia).

Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Narayan, Uma. 1997. *Dislocating Cultures* (New York: Routledge).

Okin, Susan Moller. 1989. *Justice, Gender and the Family* (New York: Basic Books).

\* all other readings listed in the Course Schedule are on Blackboard under e-reserve\*

### III. COURSE SCHEDULE

August 30      Introduction

hooks, b: “Feminism: a movement to end sexist oppression”, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (New York and Boston: South End Press, 2000) 18–33.

#### A. Key Terms

September 6      *Woman*

de Beauvoir, S: Introduction, Chapters I (pp. 3-10, 20 - 37), IX, XI, XII (pp. 267-281), XVII (pp. 484-498), Conclusion

September 13      *Sex and Gender*

Fausto-Sterling, A: “Dueling dualisms”, *Sexing the Body* (New York: Basic Books, 2000) 1–29.

Scott, J: “Gender: A useful category of historical analysis”, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press 1988) 28-50.

West, C and D. Zimmerman: “Doing gender”, *Gender and Society* vol.1, no. 2 (June, 1987), 125-151.

September 20      *Troubling sex/gender/desire*

Butler, J: Prefaces, Chapters 1 (I – VI), 3 (IV), Conclusion

#### B. The Body and The State

September 27      *Spaces of femininity*

Bordo, S: “The body and the reproduction of femininity”, *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. eds. Conboy, Medina, and Stanbury. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 90-110.

Pollock, G: “Modernity and the spaces of femininity”, *Vision and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1988) 50-90.

Wolff, J: “The culture of separate spheres: The role of culture in nineteenth century public and private life”, *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) 117-134.

Young, I. M: "Throwing like a girl: A phenomenology of feminine body comportment, motility, and spatiality", *The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy*. eds. Allen and Young. (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1989) 51-70.

October 4                      *The politics of reproduction*

Bordo, S: "Are mothers persons? Reproductive rights and the politics of subjectivity", *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 71-98.

Davis, A: "Surrogates and outcast mothers: Racism and reproductive politics in the nineties" *The Angela Davis Reader* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998) 210-221.

Gal, S and G.Kligman: "Reproduction as politics", *The Politics of Gender after Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) 15-36.

MacKinnon, C: "Privacy v. equality: Beyond Roe v Wade", *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987) 93-102.

October 11                      *Public protection?*

Brown, W: "Finding the man in the state", *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) 166-196.

Fraser, N: "Women, welfare, and the politics of need interpretation", *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) 144-160.

Fraser, N: "Sex, lies and the public sphere: Reflections on the confirmation of Clarence Thomas", *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 99 – 120.

Mink, G: "The Lady and the Tramp: Gender, race, and the origin of the American welfare state", Gordon, ed. *Women, the State, and Welfare* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990) 92-122.

### **C. Work and Family**

October 18                      *Family*

Okin, S: Chapters 1, 5, 6, 7, 8

October 25

*Work*

Collins, P: "Work, family and Black women's oppression", *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000) 45–67.

Hochschild, A: "Love and gold", *The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 185-197.

Milkman, R: "Women's history and the Sears case", *Feminist Studies*, 12 (2) (Summer 1986) 375-400.

Schultz, V: "Women 'before' the law: Judicial stories about women, work and sex segregation on the job", *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Butler and Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992) 297-338.

**D. Contesting Culture**

November 1

*Culture and tradition*

Narayan, U: Chapters 1, 2, 3

November 8

*Culture and Agency*

Mahmood, S: Preface, Chapters 1, 2, 5, Epilogue

**E. Feminism and Capitalism**

November 15

*Autonomous Marxist Feminism*

**\*\*final paper proposal / outline due\*\***

Federici, S: (selections)

November 29

*Feminism, Capitalism, Neoliberalism*

Davis, A: "Women and capitalism: Dialectics of oppression and liberation", *The Angela Davis Reader*, op.cit., 161-192.

Mott, S: "Reinventing revolutionary subjects in Venezuela", *Politics and Culture* (March, 2014) <https://politicsandculture.org/2014/03/10/reinventing-revolutionary-subjects-in-venezuela-by-sara-c-motta/>

Fraser, N: "Feminism, capitalism and the cunning of history", *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (London and New York: Verso, 2013) 209-226.

December 6                      course summation

December 13                    \*\* final paper due\*\*

#### IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Class participation** (30%): This course is a seminar. Students should come to class prepared to discuss the readings every week. We will do close readings of the texts, identifying the main arguments, clarifying the terminology and considering the broader intellectual and political projects to which the work contributes. We will also be thinking with the material, using it to go beyond our "common sense" conceptions of the issue or problem it addresses.

**Attendance** is therefore expected and required. If you miss a single class, you should (obviously) still do the reading and get class notes from a colleague. If you miss more than one class session, you must also provide me with a 3-page summary of the reading *before the next class session*. This does not substitute for one of the issue papers.

2. **Class facilitation** (10%): One student will be responsible for facilitating the discussion each class session. You will not be required to teach the class (that is my job). To prepare for that role, please:

1. Identify the main argument of the text.
2. Identify the theoretical and political projects to which the work contributes (in other words, why did the author write the book, article, etc.?)
3. Present what you find most interesting - or surprising - about the reading for the week
4. Present what you find most confusing about the reading
5. Prepare two questions for class discussion

NB: If you are facilitating on a week in which there are multiple readings, you may, if you wish, select only two for your responses to points 1 and 2 above. Alternately, you might try to think across all of the readings and identify common projects.

Please e-mail me a **one-page** statement of these 5 points by noon the day of class. Please note: I do not wish to see, nor will I read, your complete reading notes or an outline of the material. In addition, please refrain from using hand-outs in class as they tend to foreclose rather than open up discussion.

3. **Two issue papers.** (10%) In these papers you identify an issue in the reading that you find particularly interesting or problematic or important and: 1. clearly explain how the issue is

presented and situated within the selected text or texts; 2. explain your interest in the issue and argue either for or against the author's position. Start your paper with a statement of the author's project and the basic argument of the text/s, to provide a foundation for your comments. Issue papers must be submitted before class discussion of the text/s in question. (maximum: 5 pages each)

You do not need to identify in advance which weeks you will write issue papers. However, at least one of your issue papers must be submitted by November 1. Issue papers must be submitted in hard copy. I will not accept electronic submissions unless there are clear mitigating circumstances.

**4. One final course paper.** (50%) Each student will prepare a paper on, or using, feminist theory. Your papers should advance your own intellectual project. You may: 1. choose a feminist thinker and analyze the ways in which her/his work contributes to our understanding of specific social phenomena, or 2. consider a particular issue (e.g., war, poverty, privacy rights) and show how a gendered theoretical perspective reveals what is otherwise invisible. In the former, your paper would involve an in-depth reading across the work of a single theorist; in the latter, your paper would include discussion of several theorists on a single issue. In either case, your work should address what the work contributes to our ability to analyze the phenomenon in question (as well as its limitations) and how a gendered perspective changes our "common sense" or conventional understanding of the problem.

I will meet with each of you individually during the semester to discuss your work and generate a topic. A two-paragraph proposal or outline will be due on November 15; the final paper is due on December 13. Guidelines for paper length and number of sources (not including relevant course readings) are as follows:

*MA students:* 20 pages; minimum of one book and two articles / book chapters, or five articles / book chapters.

*PhD students:* 25 pages; minimum of two books, or one book and five articles / book chapters.

### **Honor Code:**

Students are expected to be familiar with and to abide by the **Honor Code** as cited in the university Catalog (<http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/9798/honorcod.html>). If you have any questions regarding proper attribution of sources, consult the Writing Center webpage: [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources/workshops/quote\\_sum\\_para\\_files/frame.htm](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources/workshops/quote_sum_para_files/frame.htm) or ask me. Any violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for adjudication.

### **Please Note:**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me at the beginning of the semester and also contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.