

WMST 400 • Fall 2012

Theories of Feminism

Tues/Thurs 12:30-1:45pm • 1121 SQH

Instructor: Dr. Tara Rodgers
E-mail: trodgers@umd.edu
Blackboard site: <http://elms.umd.edu/>
Office hours and location: Thurs 11am-12pm or by appointment
2101 Woods, Women's Studies Department
Office phone: (301) 405-2446
Prerequisite: One WMST course or a course cross-listed with a WMST course.

Course Description

This course introduces key topics in feminist theories with attention to their historical, cultural, and intellectual contexts. Readings will survey multiple ways that feminist theories and social movements have identified gender-based oppression and formulated critiques of power. We will discuss how feminists have theorized embodiment and knowledge production by attending to such differences as race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and their intersections. We will also examine art-making as a mode of feminist theorizing and activism, and read feminist analyses of media, culture, and representation. Theories of feminism enable us to think systematically about social inequalities: to understand how gender in its intersections with other aspects of difference informs our life experiences and our perspectives on the world. A primary concern of this course is the dynamic potential of these theories to serve as tools for critical consciousness and social action. Discussions and assignments will explore such questions as: How is knowledge about marginalized subjects produced? What are the relationships among lived experiences and claims to knowledge? How is theory useful in daily life and toward social change?

Course Objectives

- Students will be exposed to theories of feminism that address issues of women and gender across multiple historical eras and cultural locations
- Students will learn how to think critically about what constitutes feminist theories and why
- Students will learn to recognize interlocking systems of oppression and understand sexism and gender difference in intersection with race and racialization, class position, sexuality, and disability
- Students will be introduced to feminist critiques of political economic formations and ideologies of capitalism, militarism, neoliberalism
- Students will be encouraged to think about feminist theories in relation to their own lives and develop their own positions within feminist conversations and debates, in assignments that range from scholarly analysis, op-ed writing, learning analysis, and collaborative media production

Course Materials

Required book:

King, Samantha. *Pink Ribbons: Breast Cancer and the Politics of Philanthropy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). ISBN: 978-0816648993

You are not required to buy this book, however we will be reading most of it and therefore this reading will not be available as a PDF. One hard copy of this book will be on reserve at McKeldin Library (it is on order, to arrive later in the semester). If you wish to purchase your own copy, there will be some available via the University Book Center, or you can order online through Amazon.com or another source.

All other required readings for the course will be available through ELMS as PDFs.

Correspondence

Announcements: Periodically I will distribute information about assignments and other important issues (such as changes/cancellations of a course meeting due to inclement weather) on ELMS/ Announcements and via the ELMS e-mail tool. Please ensure that you are checking the ELMS website at least once a week, and that you are able to receive e-mail at the address associated with your ELMS account.

Contacting me: Please use e-mail as my primary contact; I do not check voice mail as often. I do my best to respond to e-mails within 24 hours, but may take longer to respond especially over weekends and university holidays. Please remember that e-mail is a formal mode of correspondence. Be sure to address me formally (“Dear Professor”), identify yourself, and clearly state your question and expectations of a response.

Meeting: I encourage you to meet with me at least once a semester to discuss your interests and goals in the course. I am available to meet during office hours listed above. If you wish to meet at a different time, please e-mail me at least 24 hours in advance to schedule an appointment in person or via Skype (drtararodgers).

Submitting an assignment via e-mail: Please include the course number (WMST400) in your e-mail subject line, and your last name and course number in the file name of the assignment (e.g., “Smith_WMST400_midterm.doc”). All written assignments should be formatted in Times 12-pt font, double-spaced, with 1” margins, and submitted via e-mail to trodgers@umd.edu.

Policies and Expectations

Academic Integrity

The University has a nationally recognized Honor Code, administered by the Student Honor Council. The Student Honor Council proposed and the University Senate approved an Honor Pledge. This prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. The University of Maryland Honor Pledge reads:

I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.

Unless you are specifically advised to the contrary, the Pledge statement should be handwritten and signed on the front cover of all papers, projects, or other academic assignments submitted for evaluation in this course. Students who fail to write and sign the Pledge may be asked to confer with the instructor. By putting your name on your assignments and exams, you are indicating to me that the work is your own.

All quotations taken from other authors, including from the internet, must be in quotation marks and cited. Paraphrased material must be cited as well. Learning how to cite properly is an important skill; please consult a reference manual for proper citation practices, and ask me in advance of deadlines if you have any questions about citing materials properly. More information on citations can be found at the library's website: <http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/citing.html>

Absences

Regular class participation and active engagement with course readings and discussions are essential to your success in this course. Unexcused absences, routine lateness or early exits, without appropriate documentation, will adversely affect your grade.

In the event that a class must be missed due to an illness, the policy in this class is as follows:

1. For every medically necessary absence from class, a reasonable effort should be made to notify the instructor in advance of the class. When returning to class after the first absence, students must bring a note identifying the date of and reason for the absence, and acknowledging that the information in the note is accurate.
2. If a student is absent more than one time, the instructor may require documentation signed by a health care professional.
3. If a student is absent on a day when a test is scheduled, a paper is due, or another graded activity takes place in class, the student is required to notify the instructor in advance and, upon returning to class, bring documentation of the illness signed by a health care professional.

Class Times

Students who come late to class or leave early disrupt the flow of lectures and discussion. Please respect class times and if you need to arrive late or leave early, do so quietly and inform me in advance of the class if you can. Late arrivals or early departures may on occasion be unavoidable due to medical or family emergency, but reasons such as extra-curriculars, job or internship activities, or another class's requirements are not acceptable excuses for missing class time, and may adversely affect your course participation grade.

Late Assignments

No extensions or make-ups will be granted on assignments or exams unless in the case of illness or emergency which must be documented in writing as indicated above. Late assignments will be penalized, and I reserve the right to not accept them at all.

Accommodations

Students with a disability or learning difference that may require special accommodations in class or on assignments should inform me at the beginning of the semester. The Disability Support Services (DSS) office may also be of assistance: <http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/>

Religious Observances

Please inform me well in advance of class sessions or assignment due dates that may be affected by religious observances.

Discussion Etiquette

In class and in online forums, please work to create a comfortable climate of friendly, engaged, and respectful discussion. Avoid any personal attacks or posturing. Disagreements, even arguments, are a natural part of academic debate, but we must grant each other courtesy and respect even when we disagree. We will work together to keep critiques constructive, and not purely negative. If there is anything I can do to make the course environment more hospitable to you or others, please let me know.

Electronic Devices

I welcome and encourage the use of laptops, tablets, mobile phones, and similar electronic devices in class for note-taking or class-related research and activities. Please ensure that your phones are set to silent or vibrate mode before entering the classroom. If you need to leave your phone on because you are awaiting an urgent call or message related to family or medical issues, please inform me before the beginning of class. Students who consult non-course related content on electronic devices (such as checking e-mail or texting) during class may be asked to leave.

Grading

10%	Participation
15%	Reading responses
20%	Take-home midterm exam
15%	Op-ed assignment
15%	Zine/Poster/PSA (group project)
25%	Take-home final exam/learning analysis

Grading system:

I follow the guidelines of UMD's grading system, and encourage you to review that summary here: <http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/grades.html>

I translate these guidelines as follows:

A indicates excellent work: careful and insightful engagement of the course material, and flawless (or near flawless) writing and citing. Please note that in most courses I have taught, A+ work is exceptional and rare. This course may prove that pattern wrong—but know that I understand an A to represent excellent work, and an A+ to recognize work that is above and beyond that in terms of originality and clarity.

B represents good command of the subject material and good writing; typically less polished, creative, or ambitious compared to an A

C constitutes acceptable but average completion of the assignment. If you receive a C grade, I encourage you to set up a meeting with me to discuss how to improve on future assignments;

D work is below average, incomplete, or does not follow assignment instructions;

F grades are insufficient to pass.

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation (10%): Your regular attendance and active engagement is an integral part of your success in this course. I expect that you will attend every class and give your very best in class discussions and activities. This means doing the readings in advance and coming to class prepared to share your questions and reactions to them. Because students have different learning and communication styles, I will evaluate your participation on the quality and thoughtfulness of your engagement with course material rather than the quantity of it.

Reading responses (15%): *Every* time we have class, you must come to class having done the readings and filled in one or more “reading summary sheets.” This sheet is provided at the end of the syllabus; an electronic version will be available on ELMS. On days when there are multiple readings, fill out at least one reading summary sheet completely for one of the required readings, and complete additional sheets as best you can. It may be handwritten or typed, as long as it is legible to me. Your reading summary sheets will be useful for keeping track of authors and concepts over the semester, and they will also serve as the grounds for our class discussions and small group activities. I will collect your reading summary sheets on a random series of days, approx. 6 times throughout the semester. These will be graded on a simplified scale and together will comprise 15% of your course grade. Reading summaries are not cumulative. Only the summary sheets for the readings on that particular day of class will be collected. There are no make-ups or late acceptances if you are absent on a day when these are collected. I will drop the lowest of these grades, so you have an opportunity to miss one collection without penalty.

Take-home midterm exam (20%): The take-home midterm exam will be an approx. 4-5 pp. paper requiring you to answer specific questions about the readings and lectures in the course up to that point, and compare and contrast authors’ arguments. More information TBA in class.

Op-ed assignment (15%): A 2-3 pp. opinion paper, similar to those published opposite the editorial page of newspapers, in which you will have the opportunity to use feminist theories discussed in the course to analyze or advocate around a contemporary issue. Topics and assignment parameters will be distributed in class.

Zine/Poster/PSA - group project (15%): This project will be carried out collaboratively by small groups assembled by the instructor. This assignment will ask you to convey an issue or topic in feminist theories and/or women's lives using a visual or multimedia format. Suggested formats are a zine, poster, or public service announcement; more information TBD in class.

Take-home final exam/learning analysis (25%): The take-home final will be an approx. 5-6 pp. paper in which you will be asked to synthesize insights from several course readings, and reflect on your own process of learning in the course. Instructions TBA in class.

Extra credit: During the semester, I may occasionally announce events that you may attend and write up a short response to receive extra credit in the course. My policy is that such extra credit opportunities are occasions for our entire class to have supplemental, collective conversations about course themes. Therefore, I typically do not offer students individual opportunities to do extra credit activities on their own.

Semester Schedule and Course Readings

- This syllabus is subject to change as we move through the course; students will be notified in advance of any changes to readings, assignments, exams or grading.
- Assigned readings are to be done before the date under which they are listed.
- Please bring readings to class (hard copy or electronic format) so that you may reference them during discussion.

Thurs Aug 30 - Greetings; Course Overview

Read and consider the "Read, Write, Cite" document on ELMS

I. Introductions

Tues Sept 4 - Defining Feminisms; Defining Theory

hooks, bell. "Feminist Politics: Where We Stand" and "Consciousness Raising: A Constant Change of Heart," in *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), 1-12.

hooks, bell. "Theory as Liberatory Practice," in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 59-75.

Bunch, Charlotte. "Not by Degrees: Feminist Theory and Education" (1979), in *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, edited by W. Kolmar and F. Bartkowski (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 2000), 11-15.

Thurs Sept 6 - The Cultural Politics of Emotion (or, Where Does Theory Come From?)

Jaggar, Alison. "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," in *Feminisms*, edited by S. Kemp and J. Squires (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 188-93.

Ahmed, Sara. "Feminist Attachments," in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 168-90.

Enloe, Cynthia. "Introduction: Being Curious About Our Lack of Feminist Curiosity," and chap. 1, "The Surprised Feminist," in *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1-8, 13-18.

Tues Sept 11 - Historical Roots of Women's Rights Discourses in the U.S.

Davis, Angela Y. "The Anti-Slavery Movement and the Birth of Women's Rights" and "Class and Race in the Early Women's Rights Campaign," in *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 30-69. [and recommended: ch. 4, 70-86.]

Thurs Sept 13 - Accounting for Sexual Violence

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *Feminist Frontiers*, 8th ed., edited by V. Taylor, N. Whittier, and L. Rupp (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 484-94.

Smith, Andrea. "Sexual Violence as a Tool of Genocide," chap. 1 in *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005), 7-33.

hooks, bell. "Ending Violence," in *Feminism is for Everybody* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), 61-66.

Tues Sept 18 - Nationalism, Militarism, Imperialism

Enloe, Cynthia. "Nationalism and Masculinity," in *An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World*, edited by Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 222-28.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others," in *Feminist Frontiers*, 527-35.

II. Bodies and Sexualities

Thurs Sept 20 - Sex and Gender

Grosz, Elizabeth. "Refiguring Bodies," in *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1994), 3-24.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, 2nd ed., edited by S-k Kim and C. R. McCann (New York: Routledge, 2010), 419-30.

Tues Sept 25 - Sex and Gender (cont'd)

Fausto-Sterling, Anne. "Dualing Dualisms," 1-29, [and recommended: "Should There Be Only Two Sexes?," 78-114] in *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

Recommended:

Doyle, Jennifer. "The Gender of Second," *From a Left Wing: Soccer, Sports, Polemics* [blog], Aug. 12, 2012. <http://fromleftwing.blogspot.com/2012/08/the-gender-of-second.html>

Thurs Sept 27 - Gendered Embodiment; Masculinities

Young, Iris Marion. "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality," in *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 27-45.

Connell, R.W. "The Social Organization of Masculinity," in McCann and Kim, *FTR*, 232-43.

Recommended:

Doyle, Jennifer. "Happy Together," *From a Left Wing: Soccer, Sports, Polemics* [blog], Aug. 10, 2012. <http://fromleftwing.blogspot.com/2012/08/happy-together.html>

Tues Oct 2 - Disability Theories

Wendell, Susan. "Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability," *Hypatia* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 104-24.

McRuer, Robert. "Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence," in *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*, edited by R. Garland-Thomson, B. J. Brueggemann, and S. L. Snyder (New York: MLA Publications, 2002), 88-99.

**** Take-home midterm handed out in class ****

Thurs Oct 4 - Queer Theories, Gender Theories

Wilchins, Riki. Chaps. 1-3 in *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2004), 5-30.

Namaste, Viviane. "Making the Lives of Transsexual People Visible: Addressing the Politics of Social Erasure," chap. 1. in *Sex Change, Social Change: Reflections on Identity, Institutions, and Imperialism* (Toronto, ON: Women's Press, 2005), 1-11.

Tues Oct 9 - No class - Take-home midterm due via e-mail by 2 PM

III. Epistemologies

Thurs Oct 11 - Standpoint Theories

Hartsock, Nancy. "The Feminist Standpoint: Toward a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism," in McCann and Kim, *FTR*, 316-31.

Hill Collins, Patricia. "Defining Black Feminist Thought," in McCann and Kim, *FTR*, 341-56.

Tues Oct 16 - Theorizing Difference

Anzaldúa, Gloria. "La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness," in McCann and Kim, *FTR*, 254-62.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 17-42.

Recommended:

Selections from DeRango-Adem, Adebé, and Andrea Thompson (editors), *Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out* (Toronto: INANNA, 2010).

Zinn, Maxine Baca, and Bonnie Thornton Dill. "Theorizing Difference from Multiracial Feminism," in *Feminist Frontiers*, 89-95.

IV. Media and Culture

Thurs Oct 18 - Writing Op-Eds; Voting Rights

** Op-ed assignment discussed in class.

** Discuss the issue of voting rights in the context of the 2012 U.S. elections; strategize research and brainstorm a specific topic for your op-ed.

Tues Oct 23 - Technologies

Oldenziel, Ruth. "Unsettled Discourses," in *Making Technology Masculine: Men, Women and Modern Machines in America, 1870-1945* (Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 19-50.

Thurs Oct 25 - Poetry

Lorde, Audre. "Poetry is Not a Luxury" and "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," in *Sister Outsider*, 36-39, 40-45.

Reed, T.V. "The Poetical is the Political: Feminist Poetry and the Poetics of Women's Rights," in McCann and Kim, 92-105.

**** Fri Oct 26 - Op-ed assignment due via e-mail by 11:59 PM ****

Tues Oct 30 - Writing and Revision Workshop

** Bring a printout of your op-ed to class to share and revise with classmates.

Thurs Nov 1 - Zines - GUEST LECTURE - Melissa Rogers, WMST PhD student

"What is a zine?" paragraphs on the Bingham Center website (for background information):

<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingdb/zines/about/>

Piepmeyer, Alison. "'We Are Not All One': Intersectional Identities in Grrrl Zines," chap. 4 in *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism* (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 123-54.

Tues Nov 6 - “Third Wave” Feminism

Grewal, Inderpal, and Caren Kaplan, Introduction to Part 3, “Representations, Culture, Media, and Markets,” in *An Introduction to Women’s Studies*, edited by Grewal and Kaplan (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 265-68.

Garrison, Ednie Kaeh. 2000. “U.S. Feminism-Grrrl Style! Youth (Sub)Cultures and the Technologies of the Third Wave,” *Feminist Studies* 26 (1, Spring): 141-70.

Thurs Nov 8 - Group project introduction

** Zine/Poster/PSA assignment discussed in class; form groups

Tues Nov 13 - Neoliberalism and the “Breast Cancer Movement”

King, Samantha. *Pink Ribbons: Breast Cancer and the Politics of Philanthropy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); read introduction and chaps. 1-3, pp. vii-59.

Thurs Nov 15 - TBA - King discussion (cont’d ?) - Group project work session

Tues Nov 20 - TBA - Group project work session

Thurs Nov 22 - NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Tues/Thurs Nov 27/29 - ** Zine/Poster/PSA assignment due in class **

Student presentations

Tues/Thurs Dec 4/6 - TBA

Semester wrap-up and review

** Final exam take-home assignment distributed on Thurs Dec 6

Tues Dec 11 - LAST DAY OF CLASSES - NO CLASS - WORK ON FINAL

**** Take-home final/learning analysis due via e-mail no later than 12 NOON Fri Dec 14 ****

(Note that we will not use our regularly-scheduled exam time since this is a take-home final.)

READING SUMMARY SHEET: WMST 400

Citation

Author, title, and publication details (use a style guide of your choice, e.g., Chicago or MLA)

Summary Statement

One-sentence summary of the main point or argument

Key Concepts

One to three principal terms the author invented or employed

Secondary Ideas

List of as many as five one-phrase summaries of supporting evidence

Broader Impact/Political Stakes

One sentence giving your judgment of the value, impact, and stakes of the reading

Significant Passages

Note the page no., paragraph no., and opening words of up to three passages of the text that you found particularly important, interesting, pivotal, inspiring, or difficult to understand