

Feminist Sites of Struggle

Course Location: Reed College (yes that means no grades...)

Course Description:

Welcome to a class dedicated to struggle; feminist style. This class will seek to investigate feminism via the intersecting systems of oppression that define and shape feminist discourse. We will do this by creatively exploring specific sites of feminist struggle on a variety of levels.

As we come together in this class as a community of learners, we understand our interdependence and our responsibility for each other's learning and growth, and commit to engage in meaningful, critical and self-reflective dialogue. Throughout this dialogical learning process, we will seek to engage in a praxial relationship (of action and reflection) with our material and with the world.

Course Objectives:

"Students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge." – Paulo Friere

- Develop a feminist methodological approach to critical theory.
- Develop an intersectional understanding of systems of power and oppression, and how they contribute to feminist discourse.
- Investigate the ways in which we contribute to and are shaped by systems of oppression.
- Identify where we as members of academia function as agents of change (or servants of the status quo).
- Engage in a practice of feminist action and reflection with our material and in our lives.
- Learn to engage with intellectual concepts creatively.

Course Format:

A reading of this syllabus will demonstrate an overwhelming lack of formal structure within the course. This is intentional. It is my hope that you as students will come to understand what it means to define your own education. We will struggle with this material at a pace which allows for true depth and critical engagement, and the schedule will adapt accordingly.

Course Expectations:

Take ownership of this class and commit to a realistic and challenging level of engagement.

Submit a weekly journal which reflects on the readings, discussion and real life experiences of that week. Art is highly encouraged.

Commit at least 7 crimes against the status quo throughout the semester and submit "proof" to class and professor.

Meet with professor three times throughout the semester (beginning, middle and end) to evaluate progress, in addition to submitting self-evaluations at these times (again, art is recommended).

Course Texts/Materials:

Kolmar and Bartkowski, *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, second edition (McGraw-Hill 2005)

hooks, bell. Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom. Routledge: New York 1994

Mayer, Tamar. Women and the Israeli Occupation: The Politics of Change. Routledge: London 1994.

Goldman, Emma. Anarchism and Other Essays. Digreads.com books 2008.

Richi Wilkins. Queer Theory/Gender Theory: An instant Primer. Alyson books 2002

All other readings will be made available online/via photocopies.

Course Schedule:

Weeks 1-2:

Review of traditional feminism.

-Problematize by exposing limitations.

* Assignment: Matrix Review

Identify one phenomenon not traditionally associated with feminism in contemporary society (preferably relative to your own life) and fill in the matrix:

How does the stated phenomenon harm women, privilege men, and destroy us all on individual, institutional and cultural levels?

Weeks 3-4:

Conceptualizing a Methodology;

-*"La Frontera: Towards a New Consciousness"* (Anzaldua)

- Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory," 575-86 (*FT*)

- "Theory as Liberatory Practice" (hooks);

- "Black Feminist Epistemologies" (Hill-Collins)

- "Intersectionality and the Risk of Flattening Difference" (Luft)

- Cheryl Chase, "'Cultural Practice' or 'Reconstructive Surgery'? US Genital Cutting, the Intersex Movement, and Medical Double Standards," 126-151 (e-reserve)

Weeks 4-10:

Understanding Power; beyond the binary

* Assignment: Feminism - there's something for everyone!

Choose an 'ism (preferably related to personal investment, interest, academic pursuit, etc), do academic investigation to develop an analysis of that 'ism, and briefly present your findings to the class. Demonstrate the ways in which an analysis of this 'ism is central to a feminist lens. Incorporate awareness of this 'ism into discussions throughout the semester.

[Racism, Heterosexism, Imperialism, Capitalism, Militarism, Ableism, Religiousism, Scientific/biological determinism, Environmentalism, etc.]

Proposed Readings and Topics of Discussion: (Schedule TBD)

Capitalism:

Winona LaDuke, "Mothers of our Nations," 525-29 (*FT*)

Racism:

Angela Davis, "Rape, Racism, and the Myth of the Black Rapist," 172-201 (e-reserve)

"Ethnosexual Frontiers / Sex-Baiting & Race Baiting" (Nagel);

Heterosexism:

Charlotte Bunch, "Not for Lesbians Only," 252-56 (*FT*)

Emma Goldman, "Marriage and Love," 94-99

Imperialism:

Mayer, Tamar. Women and the Israeli Occupation: The Politics of Change. Chapters 1 and 2

Militarism and violence against women:

Mayer, Tamar. Women and the Israeli Occupation: The Politics of Change. Chapter 7 (Homefront as battlefield)

Ableism:

Ruth Hubbard, "Who Should and Who Should Not Inhabit the World?," 179-198 (e-reserve)

Religion (Hegemonic Christianity):

Emma Goldman, "The Hypocrisy of Puritanism" (71)

Karen K. Seat, "Feminist Theology"

"Biology" and the institution of science and the binary:

Judith Lorber, "Believing Is Seeing: Biology as Ideology," 37-54 (e-reserve)

Anne Koedt, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," 227-32 (FT)

Judith Butler, from *Gender Trouble*, 496-504 (FT)

Environmentalism:

Ynestra King, "The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology" (FT)

*Assignment

Select a global/cultural/societal phenomenon, and develop an intersectional feminist analysis of that phenomenon to present to the class. Facilitate a discussion around that phenomenon. This analysis must incorporate at least three different systems of oppression, and demonstrate how they inform each other to perpetuate said phenomenon.

(ie.- Imperialism, Religious fundamentalism, and Militarism all inform the phenomenon of female suicide bombers in Iraq.)

Weeks 11-15:

Implicating ourselves and looking to the future.

Explore our own bodies/experiences as text;

bell hooks, "Holding my Sister's Hand" (TTT)

Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 76-87 (e-reserve)

bell hooks, "Feminism: A Transformational Politic," 464-69 (FT)

Richi Wilkins. Queer Theory/Gender Theory: An instant Primer. Alyson books 2002

*Assignment: Autobiography

Develop a personal narrative describing how you learned sex/gender (and perhaps sexuality), using the intersectional, feminist lens we have developed during this course. Develop a creative means of sharing this narrative with the class.

Develop a personal manifesto of continued feminist struggle (can be specific or broad). Why is this struggle important to you? What does it consist of and how will you *resist*?