FEMINIST THEORIES

Instructor: Sheena Malhotra, Ph.D.
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Class Time: Tuesdays: 4:20 – 6:50 p.m.
Office Hours: Tuesdays: 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Feminist perspectives have transformed the world we inhabit today. At different times and in different contexts various women’s movements have had a great impact on society. This course examines various feminist theories and methods, which impact our daily lives and the ways in which we construct our worlds. We will explore different feminisms (liberal, Marxist/socialist, radical, multicultural, etc.) and discuss potentially transformative ideologies. We will also address different issues, such as class, sexuality, race in the US and global labor. While much of the class will survey many of the different feminist theories, methodologies and issues, we will be able to apply and research at least one fascinating topic in greater depth in the final projects.

REQUIRED TEXTS


CLASS POLICIES

Attendance and Readings: This class involves a fair amount of reading, research and work. Please do the readings before coming to class as they are essential for meaningful discussions to occur. Much of the class revolves around discussions of the reading materials, which can be very engaging if everyone in the class gets into them. Respect for every student’s experience and opinion will be expected. Your participation grade is largely dependent on your class attendance and significant involvement in class discussions. If you have more than two unexplained/unexcused absences, your grade will be affected adversely.

Academic honesty and plagiarism: All assignments must be the student’s own original work. Please cite sources in your papers and familiarize yourself with CSUN guidelines on academic honesty. Plagiarism and cheating are grounds for university action and will not be tolerated. It is the responsibility of the instructor to report any cases of plagiarism to the administration and can result in an “F” on the assignment or in the class.
Late Work: Turn in papers and projects on the date they are due. You will lose 10% of the grade for every day that the assignments are turned in late. Late work will not be accepted if it submitted more than a week after the due date.

**GRADING**

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Autobiographical paper</td>
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<td>Event report</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper on Race &amp; Privilege</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Leading class discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Exams</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>Theory Paper</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
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<td>Attendance and Participation in class</td>
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**TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE** 100 points

**GRADING SCALE**

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**ASSIGNMENTS**

**AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PAPER** [5 points]: The autobiographical paper is a chance for you to reflect on the feminist issues that are most important to you. In 2-3 pages, reflect upon: your views of feminism, what draws you to the subject, what disturbs you about different kinds of feminist ideologies, where do you see yourself fitting in, what are the issues within feminist discourse that are most important to you, etc.

**PAPER ON RACE/PRIVILEGE** [10 points]: This paper is your chance to incorporate the readings and materials that focus on race and privilege into your own experience of these issues. I want to teach you to read with an eye for the author’s thesis and assumptions. The purpose of this paper is to help you synthesize & analyze different ideas and concepts on the subject. In your paper, make connections/comparisons between different authors we are reading. What are their assumptions? Build on their central thesis, or critique it. You will be graded on your engagement with the material and your grasp of concepts/theories discussed in class, as demonstrated through your paper. 3-4 pages.

**LEADING CLASS DISCUSSION** [10 points]: You will be expected to lead class discussion on the readings we do for one week. Working in pairs, prepare a handout for the class on the readings. In your handout: explain the main concepts of the reading clearly, use examples to build the concepts in the article, develop a critique and prepare questions to prompt class participation and engagement.
EVENT REPORT [5 points]: Attend one “event” on or off campus that deals with gender/sexuality. It could be a lecture, a performance piece, etc. Analyze the event you have attended, utilizing some of the readings/discussions from this class. You may turn this report in any time during the semester.

EXAMS [15 points each]: the exams will be based on all the readings assigned for this class as well as on all in-class discussions and materials presented.

THEORY PAPER [10 points]: Your theory paper will consist of an in-depth study of one theoretical perspective. Choose one feminist theory we have studied in the course and research the writers and issues that are associated with that theoretical perspective. You can build on the discussion in the Tong textbook but your paper should present new information not found in the textbook.

LITERATURE REVIEW [20 points]: Your final paper will be a literature review of any issue that deals with gender. For example, you may choose to research and work on body image, sexual harassment, rape, religious fundamentalism, the global economy and it’s impact on women, women in the computer age, women in the military, reproductive rights and abortion, the women’s vote, pornography, teen pregnancy, the female face of poverty, ecofeminism, or a range of other topics. Your literature review is an opportunity to gather, synthesize and analyze all the work that has been done in the field of your interest. Conducting a review of the literature on the topic of your choice will help you understand the issue in greater depth.
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Week 1: August 28 - Introduction to class
- What is Theory?
- What is Feminism?

Week 2: September 4 - Liberal Feminism
- Tong: Chapter #1 – Liberal Feminism
- Feminist Theory Reader
  - #10 – Sonia Correa & Rosalind Petchesky – Reproductive and Sexual Rights: A Feminist Perspective

Issue: Abortion – If These Walls Could Talk 1

Week 3: September 11 - Liberal Feminism & Radical Feminism
- Feminist Theory Reader
  - #5 – bell hooks – Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression
  - #6 – Christine Delphy – Rethinking Sex & Gender
  - #8 - “No More Miss America”
  - #39 – Carolyn Sorisio – A Tale of Two Feminisms

- Tong: Chapter #2 – Radical Feminism

- DUE: Paper #1 - Autobiographical paper

Week 4: September 18 - Radical Feminism & Sexuality
- Meet @ the library – Lab A – for library research session

- Feminist Theory Reader
  - #4 – Bonnie Kreps – Radical Feminism 1
  - #24 – Anne Koedt – The myth of the vaginal orgasm
  - #26 – Audre Lorde – I Am Your Sister – Black Women Organizing Across Sexualities
  - #27 – Gayatri Gopinath – Funny Boys & Girls: Notes on a Queer South Asian Planet
  - Karin Aguilar–San Juan – Going Home: Enacting Justice in Queer Asian America

- Film – If These Walls Could Talk 2
Week 5: September 25 - Multicultural and global feminism/ White Privilege

- **Tong**: Chapter #7 – Multicultural and Global Feminism

- **Feminist Theory Reader**
  - #7 - Amrita Basu – Globalization of the Local/ Localization of the Global
  - #31 – Patricia Hill Collins – The Politics of Black Feminist Thought
  - #33 – Maxine Baca Zinn & Bonnie Thornton Dill – Theorizing Difference from Multicultural Feminism

- **Online**
  - Go to: [www.csun.edu/faculty/sheena.malhotra](http://www.csun.edu/faculty/sheena.malhotra)
  - Under the Fall 2007 classes – click on the “Feminist Theories Link”
  - Access the link for: McIntosh – Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

- **Film - The Way Home**

Week 6: October 2nd - Multicultural and global feminism

- **Feminist Theory Reader**
  - #15 – The Combahee River Collective: A Black Feminist Statement
  - #16 – Donna Kate Rushin – The Bridge Poem
  - #17 – Mitsuye Yamada – Invisibility is an unnatural disaster
  - #18 – Gloria Anzaldua – La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness
  - #37 - Norma Alarcon – The Theoretical Subject(s) of This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo–American Feminism
  - #30 – Uma Narayan – The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Nonwestern Feminist

- DUE: Paper #2 on Race & Privilege

Week 7: October 9th Exam #1

- Exam #1 covers all material in class – upto Week 6
Week 8: October 16

Marxist & Socialist Feminism

- Tong: Chapter #3 – Marxist & Socialist Feminism

- Feminist Theory Reader
  - #21 – Heidi Hartmann – The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union
  - #22 – Linda Y.C. Lim – Capitalism, Imperialism, and Patriarchy: The Dilemma of Third World Women Workers in Multinational Factories
  - #29 – Nancy Hartsock – The Feminist Standpoint: Towards a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism
  - #40 – June Jordan – Report from the Bahamas

Week 9: October 23 - Existentialist + Psychoanalytic and Gender Feminism

- Tong:
  - Chapter #5 - Existentialist Feminism
  - Chapter #4 - Psychoanalytic and Gender Feminism

- Feminist Theory Reader:
  - #2 – Simone de Beauvoir – The Second Sex, Introduction

- Issue: art and activism

Week 10: October 30 - Postmodern Feminism

- Tong: Chapter #6: Postmodern Feminism
- Discussion of Literature Reviews

Week 11: November 6 – Post Structuralist Feminism

- Feminist Theory Reader
  - #34 – Lata Mani – Multiple Mediations
  - #35 – Joan Scott – Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference: Or, the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism
  - #36 – Donna Haraway – Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective

DUE: Theory Paper
Week 12: November 13 – NCA – Research Day

- I will be away at a national conference. Please use this class time to make serious progress on your literature review paper. A literature review paper takes time to research and write. It is not something you can throw together at the last minute. So you need to put in the time earlier in the semester if you want to produce a paper that is a comprehensive review of the literature on your topic.

Week 13: November 20 - Ecofeminism Tong: Chapter #8 - Ecofeminism

- Feminist Theory Reader
  - #12 - Noel Sturgeon – Ecofeminist Appropriations and Transnational Environmentalisms

- Online
  - Reading from Vandana Shiva

Week 14: November 27 – Locations & Coalitions

- Feminist Theory Reader
  - #41 – Adrienne Rich – Notes Towards a Politics of Location
  - #42 – Chandra Talpade Mohanty – Feminist Encounters: Locating the Politics of Experience
  - #43 – Jee Yeun Lee – Beyond Bean Counting

- Catch-up day
- Workshopping our papers

Week 15: December 4 - Exam #2

Exam #2 covers all videos/discussions/materials since Week 8.

DUE – ALL final Literature Reviews are due by midnight on Thurs – Dec 6th

Week 16: December 11

- Class overview and wrap up
- Potluck?