**Special Topics Course:**
*Liberation, Equality, Resistance: Women Making Change*

Instructor: Sheena Malhotra, Ph.D.
Phone: 818-677-7217
Email: sheena.malhotra@csun.edu

Online Discussions: Wednesdays 7-9 p.m.
Students will be expected to do additional asynchronous work weekly

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**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

“Liberation, Equality, Resistance: Women Making Change” examines the different ways in which women have changed the very fabric of the world we live in today. We will study both; women as activists, who create change through large movements, as well as women who create change within the daily context of their lives. The recognition that race, class, sexuality and nationality position women’s lives in very particular ways, is central to our discussion. Therefore, we will explore these intersections as well as the forms “feminism” “liberation”, “freedom,” “resistance” and “equality” take for women acting within particular historical, political, cultural and social realities.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**


Class Reader. The Class Reader is available at Westwood Copies - located at 1001 Gailey (cross street - Weyburn).

**CLASS POLICIES**

**Readings:** This class involves a fair amount of reading and work. Please make sure that you do the readings assigned before you login to the class chats. Much of the class revolves around discussions of the reading materials, which can be very engaging if everyone in the class is prepared. Respect for every student’s experience and opinion will be expected. I reiterate. Please do the readings before coming to class, as they are essential for meaningful discussions to occur.

*Unannounced mini-quizzes* will be administered if many of you consistently do not keep up with the readings and/or are missing class regularly.

**Academic honesty and plagiarism:** All assignments must be the student’s own original work. Please cite sources in your papers and familiarize yourself with UCLA 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, in the class.

**Late Work:** Turn in papers and projects on the date they are due. Late work will not be accepted if it is submitted more than one day after the due date.

**GRADING**

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<thead>
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<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation in class</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Discussions/Responses [3 pts for each disc]</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaction Papers [2 x 10 pts]</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Exam</td>
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<td>Final Project</td>
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**TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE** 100 points

**GRADING SCALE**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<td>A</td>
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**ASSIGNMENTS**

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:** A significant portion of your grade depends on your attendance and active participation in the class. This requirement consists of the following components: (a) attendance, (b) punctuality, (c) keeping up with the readings, (d) active participation in class which consists of significant involvement in class discussions, asking and answering questions, etc. You maybe asked to do post quotes from readings and give your analysis when we are in-class. If you have more than one unexplained/unexcused absences, your grade will be affected adversely. Please turn off beepers, cell phones, etc. in the classroom.

**ONLINE DISCUSSION/RESPONSES:** You will be responding to some of the questions raised in class online. Log on to the website for this class for the discussion times indicated on the “tentative schedule” within this syllabus. You will be graded on your ability to use the arguments presented by different authors in the text and reader in order to build your positions online [i.e. quality, not quantity of comments].
Reaction PAPERS: These papers are your chance to react to the readings and materials discussed in class. The purpose of these papers is to help you synthesize & analyze different ideas and concepts that might present themselves, not merely summarize them. Use at least two to three readings or videos we have watched and discussed in class. Please make sure that the readings you use include at least one Aptheker chapter and one reading from the reader. You are welcome to bring in outside readings for your paper. Formulate a thesis statement that captures your analysis of a concept or idea in depth and then develop it through the paper.

Please do not waste time re-presenting the author’s whole argument in your paper, summarize quickly and then use the space to respond to the ideas presented, by analyzing them. You will be graded on your engagement with the material, your grasp of concepts/theories discussed in class, and your analysis of relevant issues as demonstrated through your paper. You will be graded on your ability to build on or challenge arguments, through a well-formulated analysis. 3-5 pages.

INTERVIEW: You will conduct an in-depth interview with a woman in your family (your mother, aunt, grandmother, sister, etc.) Write up this interview reflecting on what you learnt about the conditions of her life, her choices, your understanding of her situation and its connections to your experience. 4-5 pages. A more detailed handout on conducting this interview can be found at the end of this syllabus.

EXAM: the exam will be based on all the readings assigned for this class as well as on all in-class discussions and materials presented. The exam will consist of a variety of questions that allow you to demonstrate your understanding of the concepts. It will be available online during class time on the date indicated on the schedule.

FINAL CREATIVE PROJECT: Throughout this course, we will be engaging with various creative forms of expression. Aptheker contends that, “Art can tell the truth in a way that nothing else can.” Your final project will be an exploration of this idea. Choose a medium that you would like to work with. It can be poetry, short story, photography, or any other medium you enjoy. Your project is to “tell the truth” about some aspect of your life through art and/or to use your final project to create change.

Use the project to explore... as a reflective, empowering piece. For example, you might choose to create a webpage that provides information and resources for survivors. Or you might choose to write poetry about your own experience as one. Please keep in mind... whatever you create, your final project must be something you can transmit to me and to the class through the internet or email. You can be creative about how to do this. If it is a visual medium you choose, you might have to photograph it or scan things in. You will also write a 3-5 page paper that will accompany your final project in order to explain/develop what you are trying to do in your piece. Please email me individually about your project by mid-semester. But most of all - have fun with it.
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

October 4th: Introduction to class - Meet Online @ 7 p.m.

- Aptheker: Chapter 1 “Conditions of Work”

October 11th: Our Stories – Meet Online @ 7 p.m.

- Aptheker: Chapter 2, “The Dailiness of women’s lives”

- Reader:
  - Alice Walker – In search of our mother’s gardens
  - Paula Gunn Allen – When women throw down bundles
  - Leny Mendoza Strobel – A personal story: Becoming a split Filipina Subject
  - Cherrie Moraga – La Guerra

October 18th: US & Global Feminism
Complete DISCUSSION BOARDS by midnight – No online chat tonight.

Aptheker: Chapter 5, “Get over this hurdle because there’s another one coming”: Women’s resistance and everyday life

- Reader:
  - A history of US Feminism – different perspectives
  - Donna Kate Rushin – The Bridge Poem
  - Jo Carrillo – And when you leave, take your pictures with you
  - Rosario Morales – We’re all in the same boat
  - L.R. Wolfe & J. Tucker – Feminism lives: Building a multicultural women’s movement in the United States

October 25th: Global Feminism - Meet Online @ 7 p.m.

- Reader
  - Amanda Kemp, Nozizwe Madlala, Asha Moodley & Elaine Salo – The dawn of a new day: Redefining South African Feminism
  - Marta Lamas, Alicia Martinez, Maria Luisa Tarres & Esperanza Tunon - Building bridges: The growth of popular feminism in Mexico

- Power Politics – Arundhati Roy
  - The ladies have feelings, so...
  - Power politics: The reincarnation of Rumpelstiltskin

- Reaction Paper #1 DUE
November 1st: Intersections of Race, Class, Culture and Nation
Complete DISCUSSION BOARDS by midnight – No online chat tonight.

**Reader:**
- Audre Lorde – Age, race, class and sex: Women redefining difference
- Mitsuye Yamada – Invisibility is an unnatural disaster: reflections of an Asian American woman
- Chandra Talpade Mohanty – Defining genealogies: Feminist reflections on being South Asian in North America
- Pat Mainardi – The politics of housework

November 8th: Intersections of Race, Class, Culture and Nation
- Meet Online @ 7 p.m.

**Watch The Color of Fear before class.** The video is available at the Media Lab located in Powell Library (Room 270) and at some independent bookstores/libraries. You will find the video reserved under my name or by the class number.

**Media Lab hours:**
- Mon – Thurs: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- Fridays: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Saturday/Sunday: 12:00 to 5 p.m.

**Reader:**
- McIntosh – White Privilege and Male Privilege

**Power Politics – Arundathi Roy**
- The algebra of infinite justice
- War is peace

November 15th: Women, the Body and Spirituality
Complete DISCUSSION BOARDS by midnight – No online chat tonight.

**Reader:**
- Margery Kempe – Christianity and spiritual desire
- Fatima Mernissi & Ghada Samman – Islam and feminism: Changing interpretations
- Laura Geller – Encountering the divine presence
- Wicca – The moon birch grove

**DUE: Interview report**
November 22nd: ONLINE EXAM

The online open-book exam will consist of a variety of questions that will draw on the readings, class discussions and exercises. You will be expected to demonstrate through your answers that you have engaged with the materials in a meaningful way and made connections between different texts. Time will be limited, so be prepared before logging on to take the exam.

November 29th: Women and Sexuality – Meet Online @ 7 p.m.

- **Aptheker:** Chapter 3, “The lesbian connection”
  - Chapter 4, “In the mind’s eye – Imagination as survival”

- **Reader:**
  - Annamarie Jagose: Queer (p.72-100)
  - Marie Cartier – From your lesbian neighbor
  - Audre Lorde – The erotic as power

Reaction Paper #2 DUE

December 6th: “Towards a gathering of women” – Class Wrap Up
- Meet Online @ 7 p.m.

- **Aptheker:** Chapter 6 – Towards a gathering of women
  - Gloria Anzaldua – Speaking in tongues: A letter to 3rd World women writers
  - bell hooks – The poetics of soul: Art for everyone
  - Martha Graham – I am a dancer
  - Anais Nin – Women reconstructing the world
  - Lucille Clifton – Song at midnight
  - Suheir Hammad – First writing since
  - Bell hooks – Love as the practice of freedom

DUE: Final Creative Projects and papers
Brief Guide to conducting an interview for WMC:

You will be conducting an in-depth interview with a woman in your family (your mother, aunt, grandmother, sister, etc.) This is a rough guide to the interviewing process.

1. **Prepare a list of questions** to ask your interviewee. You are trying to find out as much as possible about her life. For example, your questions may focus on her childhood, her parents and family, what her hopes and desires were, how her marriage/s (if she is married) came into being, how she sees her role within her marriage, why she made some of the choices she did, her relationship to her children, her reflections on her life so far, what she believes was her greatest achievement, how she survived, what is her greatest strength, what would she like to pass on to future generations, etc., etc. Design the questions to fit the life of the person you are interviewing.

2. **Conduct the interview.** I would highly recommend that you audiotape it as well as take notes. You are acting as an ethnographer, and you want to capture as closely as possible her words and her truths.

3. Once you have conducted the interview, listen to it a few times. Start jotting down the **major themes** that keep appearing in her stories and answers. Pick out particularly important quotes from the interview and transcribe them. See if you can construct a coherent narrative based on her answers.

4. Now you are ready to **write up a report** of your interview. Reflect on what you learnt about the conditions of her life, her choices, your understanding of her situation and its connections to your experience. Make sure you include some direct quotes from her so that the reader is able to hear the narrative in her own voice.

5. **Analysis** is an important part of the write-up. Try and bring in readings from the class to help you analyze the information you have gathered.