

## WSS 565 (5163): FEMINIST THEORY

[http://www.albany.edu/faculty/jhobson/femtheory/wss565\\_f06.html](http://www.albany.edu/faculty/jhobson/femtheory/wss565_f06.html)

Fall 2006  
Thursdays, 4:15-7:05 pm  
Digital Workshop #1, Science Library ground floor

Instructor: Dr. Janell Hobson  
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Office Hours: Tue./Thur. 2:45-4:05 pm and by appointment  
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### Course Description:

Through interdisciplinary and intersectional frameworks, this course will explore concepts and ideologies that articulate and define principles of feminism – a political movement to end sexist oppression and challenge ideologies of domination. We will read and view critical and creative works that challenge the centrality of gender in feminist analyses through intersections of race, class, nationality, sexuality, etc. We will also reconstitute the political agenda of feminism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and blur the lines between theory and practice as we form a feminist praxis (practice informed by theory) in our organization of a student conference toward the end of the semester.

### Online Syllabus:

An online version of this syllabus has been created to enhance your information and knowledge for this class, including access to hyperlinks and online essays. The URL (website address) is included at the top of this page, and you are strongly encouraged to visit it on a regular basis (a hyperlink to the online syllabus is also available on our webCT home page). To access webCT, use your net ID (first and last initials followed by the last four digits of your SSN) and your password (first initial, followed by the first four digits of your SSN, and your last initial) to log on.

### Women's Studies Department Goals and Learning Outcomes:

Students who graduate from our program will:

1. understand Women's Studies as an interdisciplinary field of study and research.
2. understand intersectional feminist theory at an advanced level.
3. apply feminist theory to research, scholarship, and/or creative work that engages gender, race, class, sexuality, and nation as intersectional vectors of feminist analysis.
4. learn concepts and theories of feminist pedagogy and observe feminist pedagogy in practice.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.albany.edu/ws>

### Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:

This course will parallel departmental goals and objectives in that students will:

1. integrate diverse studies through an interdisciplinary framework.
2. dismantle the intersecting ideologies of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, etc.
3. conceptualize social justice beyond gender equity and toward human dignity.
4. fully participate in the teaching process as active learners, peer educators, and public scholars.

### Required Texts (available for purchase at the Book House in Stuyvesant Plaza):

Alexander, M. Jacqui. *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. Durham: Duke UP, 2005.

- Cliff, Michelle. *Free Enterprise*. San Francisco: City Light Publishers, 2004, 1993.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
- Newman, Louise Michele. *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999.
- Shohat, Ella. *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*. Durham: Duke UP, 2006.
- Smith, Andrea. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. Boston: South End Press, 2005.
- Trinh T. Minh-ha. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990.
- Young, Iris Marion. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990.

Recommended readings are available on WebCT.

### Requirements:

1. ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION (20%): fully expected of every student in order for this seminar to run successfully. You are allowed 1 unexcused absence; however, if you accumulate three unexcused absences, then the highest grade that you can earn for the course will be a B. The same holds true if you fail to participate in class discussions. If you miss more than 5 classes, you will receive an automatic "E" for the course. In addition, each week you are to post on WebCT a discussion question based on the readings.
2. REPRINT-ANALYSIS (10%): to be submitted both on webct and in class; present a reprint-analysis each week based on the reading. Imagine providing a book reprint of that particular text, in which you are to design a front cover that captures the text's main themes, a written blurb for the back cover (1 paragraph), and a brief "foreword" (2-3 pages, typed and double-spaced) to introduce readers to the text. On webct, you will find a "feminist art gallery" of images; feel free to select from this database a work of art that best represents the reading (you may also choose or create a different visual of your own – you are expected to present the artwork in a "book cover design"). Include a paragraph-length caption describing the artwork and how it fits with the theme of the book. For your "blurb," provide a synopsis of the book, and for your "foreword," present an overview of the text's main themes and an analysis of its feminist issues: This is not an opinion, such as whether or not you "liked" or "disliked" the text; rather, this is your own critical evaluation of the author's assertions about a specific topic. Be sure to describe in this foreword the historical context in which the text was first published and explain why it remains relevant (if the book is recently published, project 10 years from now why it will be timeless). 4 or more  $\sqrt{+}$  = A, 4 or more  $\sqrt{=}$  = B+, 4 or more  $\sqrt{-}$  = B-. If you miss 3 assignments, the highest grade you can earn will be a C.
3. DISCUSSION FACILITATOR (10%): You will need to facilitate discussion either as a Presenter of reading materials or as a Recorder of the discussion. Extra credit will be granted if you serve in both roles for different weeks in the semester. You are not required to post discussion questions, nor do you have to submit a reprint-analysis, during the week(s) when you are presiding in these roles. (See descriptions below):

Presenter: you will give a 10-15 minute presentation on the recommended reading(s) for that week, which you will connect thematically to the required reading or film listed. You will also be required, toward the end of your presentation, to initiate class discussion by choosing 2-5 discussion questions posted on webct by your classmates.

Recorder/Online Commentary: you are required, like the presenter, to complete the recommended reading(s) in your role as Recorder. Unlike the presenter, your task is to take extensive notes and listen effectively to the discussion. You will later write a 2-3 page commentary (typed and double-spaced), in response to the seminar discussion – including a synopsis of the discussion in the first segment of your commentary, followed by an analysis of both readings and discussions that presents perspectives not raised during the in-class discussion. This commentary must be posted on WebCT no later than the following day, **Friday, 11:59 pm**; it will later be added onto the class website in a special "weekly digest" page.

4. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (10%): Prepare an annotated bibliography on the subject of **Violence against Women** or **“Women’s Rights are Human Rights.”** Your sources should total five and should include academic journal articles or academic book chapters. Do not cite websites! Please be sure that your annotations (200 words) are analytical and not just a synopsis describing the source. This assignment is due in class on **October 5**.

5. STUDENT CONFERENCE (25%). This class will organize a student conference based on this seminar, from **Nov. 30-Dec. 1**. This year, our department is celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and our goal is to launch our annual student conference with a focus on “Looking Back, Moving Forward.” Your attendance at the event is expected. You will need to participate on and assemble panels of graduate and possibly undergraduate students, accepted in our conference, who will present to the public a paper or project-in-progress based on our conference theme. You will be working on this conference through smaller committees, such as the **Publicity, Program, and Scheduling** committees.

Committees and Due Dates:

- *Publicity Committee*: create a poster logo and a flyer with our Call-For-Papers (**Sept. 21**) & prepare flyers/press releases/announcements/posters for the conference (**Oct. 5**); paper abstracts deadline: **Oct. 27, 2006**. Also, solicit co-sponsorship from UAlbany graduate student organizations.
- *Program Committee*: select 12 paper/project abstracts (**Nov. 2**); send accept/reject notices to authors. The review process must be anonymous; therefore, no one in class is allowed to identify her/his paper abstract to committee members. Assemble and title panels (3 speakers, 1 moderator, and 1 discussant per panel), determine speaker orders, and arrange order of panel presentations. Present completed schedule (**Nov. 9**).
- *Scheduling Committee*: prepare menus (**Oct. 26**) for opening reception, breakfast, and luncheon; prepare conference programs (**Nov. 16**). Contact presenters to determine multimedia equipment needs; schedule equipment with audio-visual services (**442-3647**). Take on needed roles during conference (opening and closing remarks, introduction of keynote speaker, possibly moderating panels or serving as a panel discussant, etc.).

Each committee must select a committee chair. After making decisions as a committee, you will then consult the rest of the class, which will come to an agreement over choices for publicity materials, paper selections, conference schedule, program, and reception menus.

6. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT (25%). You will have an opportunity to work on a paper/project for this seminar and possibly present it at our student conference.

a. Proposal (due **Oct. 26**): write a proposal (2-3 pages, typed and double-spaced, and include an annotated bibliography of at least three sources), which outlines the ways in which you will ground a theory studied in this class through one of the following project options:

1. Applied Theory (5-10 pages, typed and double-spaced): prepare a proposal for research or for grassroots activism. Submit final version to the Initiatives for Women grant (for research) or the Holding Our Own grant (for local activism). Follow grant guidelines. Ground your proposal in a feminist theory studied in class; relate your topic to the conference theme: “Looking Back, Moving Forward.”
2. Critical or Creative Response: develop a critical essay (15-25 pages, typed and double-spaced) or a creative response to a feminist theoretical text studied in class (book, essay, film, music, etc.). Your creative work could be a short story, poem, play/screenplay, memoir, photo-essay, sculpture, musical composition, film short, game/videogame, children’s or young adult fiction, epistolary work, manifesto, dance/performance, etc. (For creative pieces, include a 4-6 page introduction, typed and double-spaced, describing your feminist theoretical framework).

b. Paper Abstract (due **Oct. 26**): You are expected to develop the first phase of your paper as a 200-word abstract that describes how your proposal/critical or creative response grounds a certain feminist theory studied in class and relates to the conference theme, “Looking Back, Moving Forward.” Submit abstract both to our class conference (email to [wstudent@albany.edu](mailto:wstudent@albany.edu)) and to the

National Women's Studies Association conference (deadline: Nov. 1, 2006: Bcc [jhobson@albany.edu](mailto:jhobson@albany.edu)) for professional development.

c. Conference Presentation: You are expected to develop the second phase of your paper (5-8 pages, typed and double-spaced) and deliver it in a 15- minute presentation at the conference. However, if your paper abstract is not accepted by the Program Committee, you will instead be required to serve as a panel moderator, introducing panelists, timing their presentations and facilitating discussion, or as a discussant, who responds to other panel papers at the conference. Conference presentations will take place on Friday, **Dec. 1**.

d. Final Paper: the final phase is the completion of your paper, due **Dec. 14** in my mailbox (SS 341) or in my office (SS 344) by 4 pm.

### **Expectations and Policies:**

- Please come to class with reading materials; you are expected to have read them prior to class, so be prepared to discuss them.
- Films and videos will be screened on the dates listed in the schedule; you have the option of viewing these ahead of time, but it is not required.
- Please send emails only to schedule appointments, not to discuss concerns with the course.
- Late assignments will result in the reduction of your grade by one letter for each week late; no extensions will be granted with the exception of documented emergencies. In addition, plagiarism (see hyperlink definition) is a violation of university policy; any errors in citations and use of work that is not your own will result in a failing grade for the course.
- You need at least a B- to pass this course.

### **Seminar Discussion Format:**

- Each session will begin with a musical prelude, during which you will be expected to freewrite or list "talking points" of main themes from the musical selection (audio or video) that can be applied to the readings. Exceptions to this format: watching feature films.
- Following this musical prelude, we will begin discussing your freewrite reflections and talking points.
- We will segue from this opening discussion to the designated Presenter, who will deliver her/his 10-15-minute presentation on the recommended reading(s), as they connect to the required reading(s), and will also continue discussion by raising 2-5 questions posted on webct by her/his classmates.
- A short break will take place before reconvening for the second half of the session.
- Right after the break, 10-20 minutes will be devoted to discussing plans for the student conference.
- Afterwards, either discussion questions will continue to be raised by the Presenter, or the instructor will introduce new materials (through a lecture, discussion, or screening of a film/video).

### **Course Schedule**

#### **UNIT ONE: THEORIZING JUSTICE**

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| Sept. 7  | Course overview and introduction.<br>Video: Hell to Pay (Alexandra Anderson and Anne Cottringer, 1988).  |
| Sept. 14 | <i>Justice and the Politics of Difference</i> .<br>Recommended Reading: Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference." |

- Sept. 21 *Fighting Words*.  
 Handout (in WebCT “course materials” folder): Alice Walker, “Womanist.”  
 Video: A Place of Rage (Pratibha Parmar, 1991).  
 Recommended Reading: Michele Wallace, “Anger in Isolation: A Black Feminist’s Search for Sisterhood.”  
**Due: Call-for-Papers flyer for conference (Publicity Committee)**

## **UNIT TWO: THEORIZING VIOLENCE**

- Sept. 28 *Conquest*.  
 Video: Nice Coloured Girls (Tracey Moffatt, 1988).  
 Recommended Reading: Suvedrini Perera: “Claiming Truganini.”
- Oct. 5 Film: Closet Land (Radha Bharadwaj, 1990).  
 Recommended Reading: Connie G. Oxford, “Protectors and Victims in the Gender Regime of Asylum.”  
**Due: Annotated Bibliography and Publicity Materials (Publicity Committee)**

## **UNIT THREE: THEORIZING (HER)STORY**

- Oct. 12 *Woman, Native, Other*.  
 Video: Reassemblage (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1982).  
 Recommended Reading: Chandra Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses.”
- \*\*Weekend Bus Trip (all day Saturday, Oct. 14): Women’s Rights National Historical Park and Harriet Tubman Home – meet at Collins Circle, bus pick-up TBA.**
- Oct. 19 *White Women’s Rights*.  
 Recommended Reading: Adrienne Rich, “Disloyal to Civilization?: Feminism, Racism, and Gynophobia.”
- Oct. 26 Film: Kandahar (Mohsen Makhmalbaf, 2001).  
 Recommended Reading: Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”  
**Due: Proposal and Paper Abstract; Menus (Scheduling Committee)**

## **UNIT FOUR: THEORIZING EMPIRE**

- Nov. 2 *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*.  
 Video: Return to Kandahar.  
 Recommended Readings: Roundtable Discussion: “Feminism in Religious Studies and the The\*logy In-Between Nationalism and Globalization” by E. S. Fiorenza, S. D. Welch, and M.P. Aquino from *Journal of Feminist Religious Studies* 21.1 (2005).  
**Due: Paper selections (Program Committee)**
- Nov. 9 *Pedagogies of Crossing*.  
 Recommended Reading: Gloria Anzaldúa, “La conciencia de la mestiza.”  
**Due: Conference Schedule (Program Committee)**

**UNIT FIVE: THEORIZING RESISTANCE**

Nov. 16            *Free Enterprise*.  
 Recommended Reading: Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race."  
**Due: Conference Programs (Scheduling Committee)**

Nov. 23            holiday – no class.

**CONCLUSION: THEORY AS PRACTICE – STUDENT CONFERENCE**

Student Conference: "Looking Back, Moving Forward: Celebrating 35 Years of Women's Studies."

Day 1 (Nov. 30) – University Art Museum

|         |                           |
|---------|---------------------------|
| 4:30 pm | OPENING RECEPTION         |
| 5:30 pm | WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS |
| 6:00 pm | PERFORMANCE               |

Day 2 (Dec. 1) – Standish Room, Science Library

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 8:30-9:00am    | BREAKFAST       |
| 9:00-10:15 am  | SESSION 1       |
| Break          |                 |
| 10:30-11:45 am | SESSION 2       |
| 11:45-12:30 pm | LUNCHEON        |
| 12:30– 1:45 pm | KEYNOTE ADDRESS |
| Break          |                 |
| 2:00-3:15 pm   | SESSION 3       |
| Break          |                 |
| 3:30-4:45 pm   | SESSION 4       |
| 4:45 pm        | CLOSING REMARKS |

Dec. 7            Conference Reflections and Course Review.

Dec. 14            **Due: Final Paper.**  
 (in my mailbox/office, 4 pm)