

WSS 565 (4979): FEMINIST THEORY

www.albany.edu/faculty/jhobson/femtheory/wss565_f07.html

COURSE INFORMATION

Fall 2007
Thursdays
4:15-7:05 pm
LC 13

Instructor: Dr. Janell Hobson
Office: SS 344
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00-4:00 pm and
by appointment.
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Course Description:

This interdisciplinary course will examine key changes in contemporary feminist theory, which have addressed the political implications of multifaceted oppressions and power relations impacting women's lives. We will also reexamine the narrative of "women's history" and formulate a vision for "feminist futures" that factor in diverse concepts of resistance and praxis (the bridging of theory and practice) that reflect the multiracial and transnational state of women's lives at present. At the end of the semester, students enrolled in this course will collaborate in organizing the annual student conference, hosted by the Women's Studies department. To see past events, please visit http://www.albany.edu/wstudent_conference.

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 Blackboard home page). To access Blackboard, 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.

COURSE GOALS

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. apply skillful integration of methods from different disciplines..
2. apply analyses that intersect gender, race, class, sexuality, and nation.
3. engage the classroom community with other types of communities.
4. fully participate in the teaching process as active learners, peer educators, and public scholars.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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

- Clare, Eli. 1999. *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation*. Boston: South End Press.
- Cliff, Michelle. (1993) 2004. *Free Enterprise*. San Francisco: City Light Publishers.
- Lerner, Gerda. 1997. *Why History Matters: Life and Thought*. New York: Oxford UP.
- Sharpley-Whiting, T. Denean. 2007. *Pimps Up, Ho's Down: Hip-Hop's Hold on Young Black Women*. New York: NYU Press.
- Smith, Andrea. 2005. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. Boston: South End Press.
- Springer, Kimberly. 2005. *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980*. Durham: Duke UP.
- Trinh T. Minh-ha. 1990. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP.
- Young, Cynthia A. 2006. *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of the U.S. Third World Left*. Durham: Duke UP.

Course Packet (hereafter abbreviated as CP), with additional readings, is available for purchase at Shipmates, also at Stuyvesant Plaza.

Activities:

1. Attendance and Participation: 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.
2. Book Forum: A public event to highlight the recent book by T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, which is also designed to create an intellectual community for both graduate and undergraduate students to come together and discuss a contemporary and popular issue relating to gender and race. This "book forum" is scheduled during class time but will be held in Campus Center 375 on **November 1**. As a class, you will be expected to publicize the event, to especially try and attract to this event those who are the subjects in this book (that is, how will you work to diversify a Women's Studies audience beyond members of the department?), and to lead a public discussion of a book that incorporates feminist theory. You are encouraged to not only distribute flyers and online announcements, but to also feature food and refreshments (potluck-style or \$\$ donation for pizza or catering) for this "free and open to the public" event.
3. Student Conference: This class will organize a student conference from **Nov. 29-30**. This year, our annual student conference will focus on "Media Justice and Feminist Futures." Your attendance at the event is expected. You will participate on and/or assemble panels of graduate and 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 posters and flyers advertising our conference Call-For-Submissions and logo & prepare press releases/announcements (**Sept. 27**); abstracts sent to wstudent@albany.edu (deadline: **Oct. 19, 2007**).
- *Program Committee*: select 9-12 paper/project/workshop abstracts (**Oct. 25**); send accept/reject notices to authors. The review process must be anonymous; therefore, no one in class who submits to the conference is allowed to identify her/his paper abstract to committee members.
- *Scheduling Committee*: prepare menus (**Oct. 25**) for opening reception, breakfast, luncheon, and afternoon snacks; prepare conference programs (**Nov. 15**). Contact presenters to determine multimedia equipment needs. Take on needed roles during conference (opening and closing remarks, introduction of keynote speakers, possibly moderating panels, documenting the event through picture-taking and video-recording, etc.).

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. On **October 25**, we will devote all of class time to plan the conference. After the Program Committee decides on papers, projects, and workshops, the class will then assemble and title panels (3-4 speakers), determine speaker orders, and arrange order of panel presentations. The goal of this session is to present a completed conference program and schedule for the two-day event. You may contribute a paper/project abstract to this conference (due date: **Oct. 19**) emailed to wstudent@albany.edu; however, it is not required, nor is it a given that your abstract will be accepted by the Program committee. If you are accepted, you will be expected to develop your paper (5-8 pages, typed and double-spaced) or project and to deliver it in a 15- minute presentation at the conference. You may also serve as a panel moderator (introducing panelists, timing their presentations and facilitating discussion). Conference presentations will take place on Friday, **Nov. 30** (see Course Schedule for time table).

Assignments:

1. Student-Led Online Discussions: On our *Blackboard* online classroom site, you will be expected to contribute to online student-led discussions, an important learning activity in this course. For each reading assigned, you are required to post a discussion question and then facilitate the ensuing discussion. Before you post a question, read the questions already posted, and do not repeat a question asked by another student. Your discussion question should relate directly to an issue raised in the text studied, and it should elicit a thoughtful response. Don't ask a question which can be answered by simply looking the answer up. Your question should require critical thinking and should be provocative in its ability to evoke commentary. In addition to facilitating the discussion on your own topic, for each reading assignment you are also required to be an active participant in at least two of the topics facilitated by other students. It is important to post your discussions as soon as you have completed the reading assignment and to return frequently to facilitate and participate in those discussions. You are expected to reply to all students who have responded to your discussion question and to all those who respond to any of your postings. I will grade these discussions, but I will not be a participant. If the discussion you are leading gets off track, it is your responsibility to refocus it. You are responsible for maintaining the quality of the discussion threads you lead. Every

posting to a discussion should add something substantive to that discussion. Be sure to read the detailed instructions provided online for facilitating and posting to student-led discussions. I will close discussion threads 2 weeks after initial posting.

2. **Discussion Facilitator:** You will be expected to facilitate classroom discussion at least once in this course. You will need to give a 5-10-minute presentation on the recommended reading(s) assigned during the week, which you will connect thematically to the required reading(s) listed. You will also be required, toward the end of your presentation, to facilitate class discussion by choosing 2-5 discussion questions posted online by your classmates. Be prepared to facilitate discussions more than once this semester. You are not required to post to the online discussions during the week(s) when you are presiding in this role.

3. **Review Essay:** You will be expected to produce a review essay (5-8 pages, typed and double-spaced) of three books, two of which are assigned for this course. Your third book should be a text referenced in the endnotes or bibliography of one or more of the required and recommended readings in this course. Your review essay should provide a comparative analysis of the feminist theory formulated in each text. This assignment is due **November 8** in class (and should also be posted online on our Blackboard page).

HOW YOUR GRADES ARE DETERMINED

ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS	% OF FINAL GRADE	DUE DATES
Class Participation	15%	ongoing
Student-Led Online Discussions	20%	ongoing
Discussion Facilitator	15%	ongoing
Book Forum	10%	Nov. 1
Review Essay	20%	Nov. 8
Student Conference	20%	Sept. 27 (publicity), Oct. 19 (deadline for abstract submissions) Oct. 25 (conference materials and planning), Nov. 15 (conference program), Nov. 29-30 (event launched)

EXPECTATIONS

As previously mentioned, you are allowed 1 unexcused absence. Excused absences and make-up assignments are only granted in cases of emergency and grave illnesses. If you accumulate three unexcused absences, then the highest grade that you can earn for the course will be a B. If you miss **5** or more classes, you will receive an automatic "E" for the course. Late assignments will result in a letter-grade reduction for each day late. After two days late, you will receive a "0" for that assignment.

Plagiarism is a university offense and will result in failing grades.

TO AVOID PLAGIARISM:

Understand what it means: plagiarism results when someone uses the ideas or writings of another and presents these ideas or writings as his or her own. Examples include:

1. Buying a paper from a research service or term paper mill.
2. Turning in a paper from a "free term paper" website.
3. Turning in a paper someone else has written for you.
4. Copying materials from a source without proper citation.
5. Using proper citation but leaving out quotation marks.
6. Paraphrasing materials from a source without appropriate citation.

When citing sources, it is best to present ideas using your own original words. If you fully understand a source, you will be able to completely describe its themes and ideas in your own words and from your own perspective. However, if you copy a passage that someone else wrote and only change a few words around, it becomes plagiarism.

When quoting directly from sources, it is best to use direct quotes only if the phrasing is apt and powerfully stated; be sure to include proper citation. If the quote is not revelatory or eloquent but simply provides some useful information, then it is best to explain the information completely in your own words while providing proper citation.

Use the site www.turnitin.com to submit your written work and check for plagiarism errors. The easiest way to do this is to log on, create an account (if you are a new user) and copy and paste your essay into the assignment box.

Seminar Discussion Format:

- Please come to class with reading materials; you are expected to have read them prior to class, so be prepared to discuss them.
- Each session will begin with an artistic or musical prelude, during which you will be expected to freewrite or list "talking points" of main themes from the artistic or musical selection (audio or video) that can be applied to the readings.
- Following this prelude, we will begin discussing your freewrite reflections and talking points.
- We will segue from this opening discussion to the designated Facilitator, who will deliver her/his 5-10-minute presentation on the recommended reading(s), as they connect to the required reading(s), and who will also continue discussion by raising 2-5 questions posted on Blackboard by her/his classmates.
- A short break will take place before reconvening for the second half of the session.
- When applicable, right after the break, 15 minutes will be devoted to discussing plans for the student conference.
- Afterwards, either discussion questions will continue to be raised by the Facilitator, or the instructor will introduce new materials (through a lecture, discussion, or screening of a film/video).
- 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. You need at least a B- to pass this course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Aug. 30 Course overview and introduction.
Readings in CP: Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"; Christian, "The Race for Theory"; and Shohat, "Area Studies, Gender Studies, and the Cartographies of Knowledge."

Part One – Why "Herstory" Matters

Sept. 6 *Free Enterprise*.
Recommended Reading in CP: Alexander, "Pedagogies of the Sacred."

Sept. 13 holiday – no class.

Sept. 20 *Soul Power*.
Living for the Revolution.
Recommended Reading in CP: Higginbotham, "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race."

Sept. 27 *Why History Matters*
Recommended Reading in CP: Scott, "The Evidence of Experience."
Due: Conference Publicity Materials

Oct. 4 *Woman, Native, Other*.
Video: *Reassemblage* (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1982).
Recommended Reading in CP: Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes."

Oct. 11 *Conquest*.
Video: *Nice Coloured Girls* (Tracey Moffatt, 1987).
Recommended Reading in CP: Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins."

Part Two – Feminist Futures

Oct. 18 *Exile and Pride*.
Video: *Mama Wahunzi* (Lawan Jirasuradej, 2002).
Recommended Reading in CP: Thomson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory."

Oct. 25 Conference Planning.
Due: Conference Materials

Nov. 1 Book Forum: *Pimps Up, Ho's Down*. (Location: Campus Center 375)

Nov. 8 Film: *Closet Land* (Radha Bharadwaj, 1990).
Due: Review Essay.

- Nov. 15 Readings in CP: Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto"; Nguyen, "Tales of an Asiatic Geek Girl"; and Fusco, "At Your Service."
 Online: "Gendering Processes within Technological Environments"; "Mythic Hybrid." (See online syllabus.)
 Video: *Performing the Border* (Ursula Biemann, 1999).
Due: Conference Program.
- Nov. 22 holiday.

Student Conference: "Media Justice and Feminist Futures"

Thursday, Nov. 29 – Campus Center Assembly Hall

- 4:30 pm Opening Reception and Welcome
 5:00 pm Film Screening(s).

Friday, Nov. 30 – Campus Center Assembly Hall

- 8:30-9:00 am Breakfast.
 9:00-10:30 am Session I.
 Break
 10:45-12:15 pm Session II.
 Luncheon
 1:00-2:30 pm Featured Panel: *Omonike Akinyemi, Meredith LeVande, and Branda Miller.*
 Break
 2:45-4:15 pm Session III.
 4:15-4:30 pm Closing Remarks.

Conclusion

- Dec. 6 Course review.