FEMINIST THEORY
WSS 565 (9207)
www.albany.edu/faculty/jhobson/wss565

Spring 2011
Tuesdays 4:15-7:05 pm
Humanities 127

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This interdisciplinary graduate seminar will examine philosophical discourses emerging from feminism – a political movement aimed at eliminating sexist oppression and striving toward gender equity and liberation. Included in this exploration is a deepening of our understanding of gender and its intersection with race, class, sexuality, and nationality, as well as its framing of our social relations through the prism of power, privilege, and hierarchies. Analyzing diverse topics – including capitalism, corporatization of the academy, globalization, imperialism, body politics, fiction and storytelling, religion and theology, and theory-as-praxis – we will further our knowledge base with an aim towards social justice.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Ms. Magazine Digital Classroom (you may subscribe online).

These books are available for purchase at the University bookstore and Mary Jane Books. Additional readings are included in a course packet (hereafter abbreviated in the course schedule as “CP” and available for purchase at Mary Jane Books).
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Activities (30% of grade)

Online & Classroom Facilitators: Each session will feature two types of discussion facilitators:
The first, an online facilitator, will post to our classroom blog a 250-word analytical reflection on
the reading(s) for the week, as well as offer a 140-character summary of this reflection on
Twitter. S/he may also choose to post a three to four-minute video blog in lieu of this 250-word
analytical reflection (providing the link or embedded link on our classroom blog). By the same
token, the blog post could also serve as a creative component, writing the analytical reflection as
a poem, vignette, or fictional prose in lieu of the 250-word essay. The online facilitator is
expected to blog and tweet by Sunday, 11:59 PM EST, before we meet for class on Tuesday.
This will allow time for others in class to respond (see below under “Blog Commentators”).

The second facilitator, a classroom facilitator, will review the online discussion before creating
talking points and discussion questions to raise in class, as well as conduct further research on
the author(s) and text(s) that are discussed for that week (e.g. author’s biography, critical and
audience reception of the text, events taking place during the time in which the text debuted,
review of a main author/text cited in the work, etc.). (15%)

Blog Commentators: Students who are not scheduled to be discussion facilitators that week will
instead post reflexive and thought-provoking comments to the online facilitator’s blog post.
Comments must be posted by Tuesday, 12:00 NOON EST, before class time. (15%)

Assignments: Toward Purposeful Feminist Writing (70% of grade)

The following assignments are geared towards integrating the writing process and feminist
process. What would it take to present scholarly theories, concepts, and practices in ways that
are accessible to a broader audience? How do we produce writing primarily for an academic
audience? In Women’s Studies, should we “code-switch,” or should we adhere to a writing that
is accessible to diverse audiences? How might this be grounded in feminist theory?

We will produce feminist writing for different audiences: one that is based within an academic
setting and one that is geared towards a general audience with feminist interests. The first phase
of this writing imagines students forming panels and developing a conference paper abstract for
the academic conference of the National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA), which will take
place in Atlanta, GA from November 10-13, 2011. (As graduate students, you may apply for
travel funds from either NWSA or SUNY’s GSO). The second phase imagines students
“pitching” the same idea in the conference paper abstract for a feature article (1,500-2,000
words) that could be published in Ms., a mainstream feminist magazine funded by the Feminist
Majority. You will be encouraged to send your “pitch” to Ms. (a letter addressed to Ms’s senior
editor). Responses to this pitch could either be encouragement to develop your article for future
publication in Ms’s magazine or on Ms’s online blog or recommendation for a different outlet. Regardless of the editorial response, you will be expected to develop your idea into an article for this assignment.

The final phase involves the transformation of this article into a research proposal for your master’s final project, thesis, or Ph.D. dissertation. How would you take the same idea for your abstract/article and turn it into a research project that would form the basis for a longer paper, creative project, community/pedagogy project, or a reading guide for a comprehensive exam? The Research Proposal, unlike an article for a popular magazine, is specifically geared towards an academic readership (specifically your committee members). Therefore, you will have a clear and structured format, which would outline how you intend to conduct original research based on your idea. How would you write this proposal so that it is grounded in feminist theory?

Below are the stages in which you will develop these writing projects:

Stage I: Conference Paper Abstract – Review the NWSA conference Call-for-Papers and develop a 100-word paper abstract and title that fits one of the conference themes. This is due in class on February 8, during which time we will share our ideas and form group panels. These panels will then develop a 50-75-word panel rationale that encompasses the individual abstracts. The rationale and abstracts should later be submitted formally to the NWSA conference (http://www.nwsa.org/conference/cfp.php). The deadline for submissions is February 15. Please forward the email acknowledging receipt of your submitted panel proposal/abstracts to jhobson@albany.edu. (10%)

Stage II: “Pitch” Letter to Ms. Magazine – After reviewing select issues of Ms., develop a “pitch” for the magazine: in other words, write a 1-2-page letter addressed to the magazine’s senior editor proposing a feature article. Develop your pitch from the core idea of your paper abstract. Describe the topic’s timeliness, its relation to feminism, its proposed length (1,500 or 2,000 words), and what your credentials and research interests are in writing on this issue. Draw a parallel between an article already published in Ms. and your own proposed feature. This is due in class on February 15. (10%)

Stage III: Draft of Ms. Article – Follow the voice and style of Ms. magazine articles. Develop a draft of your article (1,500-2,000 words, typed and double-spaced), which is due on Blackboard by April 5, 12:00 NOON EST. You will be expected to peer-review each article posted on Blackboard no later than April 25, 11:59 PM EST. Be prepared to discuss your article in class and describe how it will be tweaked as a research proposal. (10%)

Stage IV: Final Draft of Ms. Article – The final draft needs to be submitted in class on May 3. Outside of this seminar, you will be encouraged to develop your “pitch” and article as formal submissions to Ms and/or develop your draft as a conference paper for NWSA. You also have the option of revamping it for a different publication or conference. (20%)
Stage V: Research Proposal – Transform your completed feature article into a research proposal (min. 5 pages, max. 10 pages, typed and double-spaced). In other words, based on the research you conducted for your article, outline a plan for further research on this topic. What theoretical frameworks, literature review, and methodological plan do you need to include in this proposal? How would you develop the core ideas from your article into a larger research project? You will have an opportunity to discuss your plans in a presentation in class during the weeks of April 26 and May 3. You have until **May 12, 5:00 PM** to submit your research proposal in my mailbox (Social Science room 353). (20%)

**EXPECTATIONS**
You are expected to attend these weekly seminars on a regular basis. Once you miss two sessions, you will not earn higher than a “B” for this course. Exceptions will be made for illnesses and family emergencies. Keep in mind that you need a “B-” to pass a graduate course. Once you miss four sessions or more, you will receive an automatic “E” for this course.

You are also expected to submit assignments on time. Late assignments will receive a letter grade reduction for each day late, with an “E” grade administered after two days late. Please note that plagiarism is a university offense, which will result in a failing grade and disciplinary action.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**UNIT ONE: TOWARD FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION**

Jan. 25  
Course overview and introduction.  

Feb. 1  
*Feminism without Borders.*

**UNIT TWO: MAKING FEMINIST MEDIA**

Feb. 8  
Due: Conference Paper Abstract.

Feb. 15  
*Ms. Magazine* (search for articles relating to topic of interest).  
Due: “Pitch” Letter to Ms. Magazine.

*Winter Break.*
UNIT THREE: (EN)GENDERING IDENTITIES


Mar. 8 *Exile and Pride.*

UNIT FOUR: THEORIZING ETHICS & THE SACRED


UNIT FIVE: VISIONS OF LIBERATION

Mar. 29 *Paradise.*

Apr. 5 SCREEN: *Antonia's Line* (Marleen Gorris, 1995).
Due on Blackboard: Draft of Ms. Magazine Article.

CONCLUSION: THEORY INTO ACTION

Apr. 12 *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis.*

*Spring Break.*


May 3 Presentations continued.
Due: Final Draft of Ms. Magazine article.

Final Paper: Research Proposal due May 12.