Course Objectives and Description
The entry of women into the political sphere produces a challenge to the core concepts of political thought. Feminist political thought thus provides an important vantage point from which to think critically about the nature and limitations of key political concepts such as rights, equality, identity, and agency as well as the nature of politics itself. Feminist politics and theory pose deep challenges to some of the major commitments of modern political thought, particularly to those of liberalism, e.g. freedom as free choice and equality as formal and gender-neutral. But feminism is not as unified as its challenge to liberalism might suggest. It continually faces questions with regard to its boundaries, agendas, and even the subjects of feminism itself – what is a woman? How does the category of gender illuminate or eclipse power relations involving other categories of difference, such as those of culture, race, class, and sexual orientation?

This course will explore the variety of feminisms emerging out of women’s struggles for political inclusion (liberal, Marxist and radical feminisms) as well as more recent feminist theoretical challenges to the category of woman, identity politics, and rights-centered politics.

Required Texts
The following texts are required for this course and are available for purchase at the University bookstore and at Mary Jane Books (corner of Western Avenue and Quail Street). Additional readings are available on-line through Blackboard (indicated by **).
Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (** new translation: Borde and Malovany-Chevallier, Vintage)
Sara Evans, Tidal Wave (Free Press)
Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (Penguin)

Course Requirements
As a student in this course, you are required to:
• Attend class and arrive on time.
• Complete all readings by the assigned date.
• Come to class prepared to participate actively in discussions of assigned readings.
• Bring assigned texts to class with you.
** The use of laptops in class is strongly discouraged. Talk to me if there are extenuating circumstances.

Evaluation
Exam 1: 20%; Exam 2: 30%; Participation 20%; Final Exam/Essay: 30%
Exams: Your ability to understand and critically analyze the course material will be assessed through two exams. Exams will consist of short answer and in-class essays. The final exam will test you on material from readings and lectures from the entire semester. No make-up examinations, early examinations, or incomplete grades will be given, except in the event of serious personal or family illness or other extraordinary circumstances approved by the dean of undergraduate studies.

Participation: Participation is highly valued in this course and is essential for your success. The greater the quality and quantity of your participation, the more rewarding the class will be for everyone. You should always walk into class prepared with some contribution: a question, an interesting observation about the text, and/or an opinion on the readings. When the material is particularly difficult is the best time to bring questions about particular passages or key terms.

The participation grade is based on three components:

1) Attendance: Attendance will be taken each week, but attendance alone is insufficient to receive full credit for participation. Missing more than two (2) classes, lateness, or arriving unprepared to lecture will guarantee a grade of a C or lower. Two classes may be missed for whatever reason you deem sufficient. After that, additional absences will lower your participation grade, unless they are excused by the undergraduate dean’s office.

2) Class Discussion: Each student is expected to regularly make an active and thoughtful contribution to class discussions. This includes asking questions, offering observations about the readings and formulating opinions. You are particularly encouraged to respectfully respond to your fellow students’ thoughts and opinions.

3) In-class assignments: In-class assignments will consist of writing a short piece, one page or less, that will be used to test your understanding of the reading. In-class assignments will be given without notice periodically throughout the semester. There will be no opportunity to make up missed in-class assignments. Up to two missed assignments will be disregarded. Any missed due to documented, excused absences will also be disregarded.

Absences
Students who are sick are strongly encouraged to stay home as necessary. For this reason, two absences will not be counted against your grade. This policy DOES NOT APPLY TO EXAM DATES. If you must miss an exam or more than two normal classes, you must have documentation from the dean of undergraduate studies (Lecture Center 30 Phone: 518-442-3950) or your grade will be adversely affected.

Reasonable accommodation
“Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations (http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html).”
If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this course you must inform me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as any unforeseeable circumstances arise. Reasonable accommodations are generally established well in advance and are rarely granted after retroactively.

**Cheating and Plagiarism**
You will be required to complete the library's on-line tutorial on plagiarism for this course. Cheating on an exam or plagiarizing written work will result in failure in the course and referral of the case to a university committee. For more information, please see the undergraduate bulletin: [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html)
Schedule of Readings and Assignments

**This schedule is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class.**

I. **Introduction: What is feminism? Why does it matter for democracy?**

August 26  Introduction and Syllabus

August 28  Sara Evans, *Tidal Wave*, chapter 1
            No Class Meeting

II. **Feminists Take Action: The Second Wave**

September 2  Sara Evans, *Tidal Wave*, chapter 2
             “National Organization of Women (NOW) Statement of Purpose” (1966)
             “Homemakers’ Bill of Rights” (1979)
             “Consciousness-Raising” The Women’s Collective (early 1970s)
             “Why I Want a Wife,” Judy Syfers (1971)

September 4  Sara Evans, *Tidal Wave*, chapter 3
             “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female” Francis Beal, SNCC (1969)
             “Abortion: A Woman’s Decision, A Woman’s Right” Jane pamphlet

September 9  Sara Evans, *Tidal Wave*, chapters 4-5
             *Recommended:*
             “Funeral Oration for the Burial of Traditional Womanhood,” The Jeanette Rankin Brigade (1968)
             “Hyde Park Voices Series on Jane” (1973)

September 11  Exam on Second Wave Feminism

III. **The Universal Subject of Rights**

September 16  The Universal Rights of Man
             - *Declaration of the Rights of Man*
             - *Declaration of Independence*

September 18  The Universal Rights of Woman
             - Olympe de Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen(ess)*
             - Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Declaration of Sentiments*
             - Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman?”
Recommended:
- Joan Scott, “Rereading the History of Feminism,” Only Paradoxes to Offer: Women and the Rights of Man

September 23  Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, introduction, ch. 1
September 25  University holiday
September 30  Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, ch. 2-3
October 2    J. S. Mill, The Subjection of Women (selections) **

IV.   Feminism’s Claim of Experience

October 7  Women, Class, and the Family
- Friedrich Engels: The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State**

October 9  Feminists Challenge the State
- Emma Goldman, “Woman Suffrage” **
- Emma Goldman, “A New Declaration of Independence”**

October 14 Emma Goldman, “The Traffic in Women” **

Recommended:
- Kathy Ferguson, Emma Goldman: Political Thinking in the Streets
- Kristin Bumiller, In an Abusive State

October 16  What is a woman?
- Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex
  Volume I: Facts and Myths: Introduction (pp. 3-17)
  Destiny: Ch. 1 “Biological Data” (pp. 21-48)
  Myths: Ch. 3 (pp. 266-274)

October 21  Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex
  Volume II: Lived Experience (p. 279)
  Situation, Ch. 5: The Married Woman (pp. 439-451, 466-486, 511-515, 521-523)
  Situation, Ch. 6: The Mother (pp. 524-570)

Recommended: Story of Women (1988; film) – available through Hulu Plus

October 23  Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex
  Toward Liberation, Ch. 14: The Independent Woman (pp. 721-751)
  Conclusion (pp. 753-766)
October 28  Review

October 30  **Midterm Exam**

V.  **Feminism and the Politics of the Family**

November 4  Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (excerpt) **

November 6  Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” *Blood, Bread and Poetry* *

November 11  Cheshire Calhoun, “Constructing Lesbians and Gay Men as Family’s Outlaws,” *Feminism, the Family, and the Politics of the Closet*

VI.  **The Politics of Universalism**

November 13  Combahee River Collective: A Black Feminist Statement **
Gloria Anzaldúa, “La Conciencia de La Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness” *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* **

November 18  Judith Butler *Undoing Gender*, Introduction, ch. 10

November 20  Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, ch. 2

November 25  Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, ch. 9

November 27  University holiday

December 2  Decolonizing Feminism

December 4  Michaele Ferguson and Lori Marso, eds., *W is for Women* (selections)

December 9  Summary and Review

**Final Exam/Essay – Due Thursday, December 18**