

Feminist Social and Political Thought (Fall 2015)
Political Science 313/Women's Studies 360

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Tues/Thurs 11:45-1:05, LC 12
Office hours:
Tuesdays: 1:45-2:45 Milne 320
Thursdays: 1:15-2:15 HU B16

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 types of difference, e.g. 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 and are available for purchase at the University bookstore. 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

- Attend class and arrive on time.
- Complete all readings by the assigned date.
- Come to class with assigned readings and prepared to discuss them
- Check Albany.edu email account regularly for announcements

You are strongly encouraged to print out all online readings. You may use a tablet or laptop to for online readings. Phones are **not** acceptable alternatives.

Evaluation: Exam 1: 20%; Exam 2: 30%; Participation 20%; Final Exam/Essay: 30%

Exams: Exams will consist of short answer and in-class essays. The final exam or essay will cover material from the whole semester. Make-up examinations and incomplete grades will only be given in the event of serious personal or family illness or other unusual circumstances with approval of 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. Two classes may be missed for any reason without penalty. 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 short writing exercises, 1 page or less. **They will be given without notice periodically throughout the semester.** There are no make-ups for missed in-class assignments. I will throw out penalties for two missed assignments, or the two lowest marks.

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 regular classes, you must have documentation from the **dean of undergraduate studies** (Lecture Center 30; 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." Accommodations must be requested *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

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 27 Introduction and Syllabus

I. Feminists Take Action: The Second Wave

- Sept 1 Louis Menand, "The Sex Amendment: How Women Got in on the Civil Rights Act," *New Yorker***
"National Organization of Women (NOW) Statement of Purpose" (1966)**
"Homemakers' Bill of Rights" (1979)**
"Why I Want a Wife," Judy Syfers (1971)**
- September 3 Sara Evans, *Tidal Wave*, chapter 1-2
Film (in class): *She's Beautiful When She's Angry*
- September 8 Sara Evans, *Tidal Wave*, chapter 3-4

Recommended: Evans, chs. 5-7
- September 10 "Consciousness-Raising" The Women's Collective**
"The Woman Identified Woman" Radicalesbians (1970)**
"Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female" Francis Beal, SNCC (1969)**
"Abortion: A Woman's Decision, A Woman's Right" Jane pamphlet**

Recommended:
"Funeral Oration for the Burial of Traditional Womanhood," The Jeanette Rankin Brigade (1968)**
"The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" Anne Koedt (1970)**
"The Politics of Housework" Pat Mainardi, Redstockings (1970)**
"Hyde Park Voices Series on Jane" (1973)**
All available here: <http://www.cwluherstory.org/Classic-Feminist-Writings/>
- September 15 No Class Meeting
- September 17 Review
- September 22 **Exam**
- September 24 No Class Meeting

II. The Universal Subject of Rights

- September 29 The Universal Rights of Man and Woman
- *Declaration of the Rights of Man* **
 - Olympe de Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen(ess)* **
 - *Declaration of Independence* **
 - Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Declaration of Sentiments* **
 - Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, introduction
- October 1 Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ch. 1-2
- October 6 Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ch. 3

III. Feminism's Claim of Experience

- October 8 Women, Work, and the Family
- Sojourner Truth, "Aren't I a Woman?" **
 - Friedrich Engels: *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State***
- October 13 Emma Goldman, "The Traffic in Women" **
Lori Marso, "A Feminist Search for Love," *Feminist Interpretations of Emma Goldman***
- October 15 Feminists Challenge the State
- Emma Goldman, "Woman Suffrage" **
 - Emma Goldman, "A New Declaration of Independence"***
- Recommended:*
- Kathy Ferguson, *Emma Goldman: Political Thinking in the Streets*
 - Kristin Bumiller, *In an Abusive State*
- October 20 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 22 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 on Hulu
- October 27 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

Toward Liberation, Ch. 14: The Independent Woman (pp. 721-751)
Conclusion (pp. 753-766)

Oct 29 Review

Nov 3 **Midterm Exam**

IV. Feminism and the Politics of the Family

November 5 Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (excerpt) **

November 10 Katha Pollitt, *Pro: Reclaiming Abortion Rights* (excerpt) **
Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the
Meaning of Liberty* (excerpt) **

November 12 Silvia Federici, "Wages Against Housework" **

V. The Politics of Universalism

November 17 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 19 Judith Butler *Undoing Gender*, Introduction, ch. 10

November 24 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, ch. 2

December 1 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, ch. 9

December 3 Decolonizing Feminism
• Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and
Colonial Discourses," *Feminist Review* 30 (Autumn, 1988): 61-88 **

December 8 Michael Ferguson and Lori Marso, eds., *W is for Women* (selections)

December 10 Summary and Review

Final Exam/Essay – Due Friday, December 18, 1:00