

Introduction to Feminist Theory

Fall 2017, GSWS 0500 – 1050
Tuesday/Thursday 9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.
121 Cathedral of Learning

Instructor: Dr. Marie Skoczylas

Office: 402-D Cathedral of Learning

E-mail: mbs@pitt.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. & by appointment

Course Description:

This course is an interdisciplinary introduction to the feminist ideas and debates concerning gender and sexuality in political, social, and economic contexts over the last two hundred years. While we will focus on the United States, there will be some engagement with global feminist perspectives on gender, race, class, and sexuality. In keeping with the activist nature of feminist theory, this course will approach “theory” as an attempt to answer fundamental questions about the power relations that structure our everyday lives and consciousness. Theory in this sense is a tool for thinking systematically about *how* the world works, and for constructing arguments about how we *want* the world to work. Consequently, we will pay particular attention to the (de)construction of power in both public and private relations as we critically analyze texts, discuss and present ideas in class, and complete written analyses.

* This course satisfies the Writing Intensive and Philosophy General Education requirements.

Course Objectives: By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Define and critically read feminist theory
- Compare, contrast, and critique various perspectives of feminist theorists
- Explain feminist epistemology and critically analyze the ways in which knowledge is produced
- Use feminist approaches to theory to think systematically about power and resistance in both public and private relations
- Analyze current events and cultural artifacts from feminist perspectives
- Apply feminist theory to your own research interests and home discipline(s)

Required Readings:

McCann, Carole R. and Seung-kyung Kim (eds). 2013. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, Third Edition. Routledge. (Chapter and page numbers in this syllabus will refer to this edition unless otherwise noted).

Articles will also be assigned as required readings for this course. In the Class Schedule, those readings will be designated with (CW) and will be available under the “Course Documents” heading on CourseWeb at <http://courseweb.pitt.edu>.

* *This syllabus is subject to change. You will be notified in advance of changes.*

Course Requirements and Point Distribution:

Your final grade for this course will consist of three reading memos, five reading memo responses, a “theory to practice” presentation, two papers, a peer review, a final presentation and abstract, and participation points. Your grade is calculated as a percentage of 100 possible earned points in the class.

Reading Memos (3 x 10)	30pts
Reading Memo responses (5 x 2)	10pts
Paper #1	10pts
Theory→Practice Presentation	10pts
Peer Review	10pts
Paper #2	10pts
Final Presentation and abstract	10pts
Participation	10pts

Letter Grades and Percent Ranges

A+ 97-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F 0-59
A 93-96	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
A- 90-92	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

Reading Memos (RMs): Throughout the semester, you must do three Reading Memos and post them on our CourseWeb Discussion Board (please post the body of the text directly into the form field; do not attach the RM).

Your memo should be between 600-700 words and include the following: 1) In a few sentences, *briefly* summarize the main argument of the author/s; 2) Choose one new concept introduced in the reading and define it in your own words; 3) Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the argument, a comparison to arguments we have previously read, or a critical reflection on the implications of the author’s perspective; 4) Pose two questions that could guide class discussion.

All memos must be posted to CourseWeb no later than 6pm on the day before the class in which your reading will be discussed. So, for example, if your reading is scheduled for Thursday, September 7, post your memo by 6pm on Wednesday, September 6. Posting it by 6pm the day before it is due gives your classmates time to read it before we meet. Additionally, *please bring a hard copy of your RM to class on the day we are discussing the readings*. Each RM is worth up to 10 points.

Sign up for RMs on the Google Docs spreadsheet by September 7. If you do not select the readings by this date, I will assign readings to you. The Google Doc link is available on CourseWeb.

Reading Memo responses: You are also required to comment on other classmates’ Reading Memos five times (on *separate readings*) throughout the semester on days you are *not* signed up for a Reading Memo. Each comment is worth 2 points and must be adding something substantial to the conversation. You may choose to pose a challenge to

your classmate's claims, extend their argument, or answer their questions (as long as the answer furthers discussion of the author's ideas; avoid purely personal/anecdotal responses). Comments must be posted *prior to* the class session in which we discuss the readings.

Theory → Practice Presentation: For this assignment, you will deliver a 10-minute presentation. The presentation will begin with a summary of the assigned reading. You will be expected to explain the main arguments of the author. Then you will give a summary of a current event or timely issue connected to the reading, making clear what the connection is. Finally, you will pose at least two questions and facilitate class discussion. You will sign up for your reading in class at the beginning of the semester.

Paper #1: For this 5-page paper, you will choose one of two themes: "Feminism and Pop Culture" or "Feminism and Social Change." You will then use class readings in feminist theory to analyze a specific aspect of popular culture (if you chose the first theme) *or* a current or past societal inequality concerning gender and/or sexuality, and a subsequent effort to spur social change (if you chose the second theme). Detailed instructions for this assignment and a grading rubric will be available on Course Web, and we will discuss this assignment in further depth in class. You must bring a hard copy of this paper to class. This paper is worth up to 10 points and is due: Thursday, October 5.

Paper #2: This 10-page paper will be a revision and extension of Paper #1. You will incorporate new readings, my feedback, and the insights of your classmates (from our peer review session). You will also attach a copy of your peer reviewer's feedback when you submit this paper. We will discuss this assignment in further depth in class. This paper is worth up to 10 points. The first draft is due Tuesday, November 28. You must bring a hard copy of this paper to class. The final paper is due during finals week by noon: Tuesday, December 12. *You must also upload a copy of your final paper to Turnitin by this date.*

Peer Review: On Tuesday, November 28, we will have an in-class peer-review session. You will bring a hard copy of Paper #2 to class and work with another classmate to improve your paper. You will generate a 2-page review of suggestions and constructive criticism. This review must be attached to the final draft of your paper, due at the end of the semester. I will also be available for consultation.

Final Presentation and Abstract: On the last days of class, you will deliver a short presentation of your paper to the class. Visual aids should accompany your verbal presentation. These may include handouts, videos, or power point slides. You must also turn in a 150-word abstract about your paper on your assigned presentation date. This will count toward part of your score of a possible 10 points. The abstract should identify the aim of your paper, address why it is important, and summarize your argument.

Participation: You are strongly encouraged to attend all classes, as your presence is required to earn participation points. Your active participation and attendance is important to the success of the course for both you and your classmates. Therefore, you

are expected to arrive on time and stay for the entire class period. Chronic absences will negatively affect your grade. Class sessions will consist of lectures, discussions, in-class activities, pop quizzes, the sharing of short homework assignments, and small group exercises. Your participation in these activities counts toward the 10 possible participation points you can earn, and *they cannot be made up!*

Extra Credit:

You may earn up to 2 points of extra credit throughout the semester by attending one of the GSWS events listed *in this syllabus* and writing a 2-page essay about it. You will have 1 week after the event takes place to turn in the paper. Provide a brief (1-2 paragraphs) summary of the event, then make connections to one of the theorists we have read this semester. Finally, discuss whether you agree or disagree with the ideas presented at the event (and be sure to clearly explain why).

The complete calendar of GSWS events can be found on the GSWS website:
<http://www.gsws.pitt.edu>.

University and GSWS Program Policies and Statements

Disability resources and services: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890 as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. For more information, visit <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/drs/>

Academic integrity and plagiarism: Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz, exam or paper will be imposed. For the full Academic Integrity policy, go to: www.as.pitt.edu/faculty/policy/integrity.html. Violation of the Academic Integrity Code requires the instructor to submit an Academic Integrity Violation Report to the Dean's Office.

“Turnitin”: Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of Turnitin.com page service is subject to the Usage Policy and Privacy Pledge posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Classroom recording policy: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

E-mail policy: Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address.

Cell phone and laptop policy: All cell phones and other electronic communication devices are to be turned to the off setting during class. Laptops are to be used for note-taking only.

Attendance: Students who miss 10 or more classes will not pass the course.

Late policy: In-class activities cannot be made up. No exceptions. Papers and Reading Memos will be reduced by 2 points for each day late (this includes after class).

Non-discrimination policy: As an educational institution and as an employer, Pitt values equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic and cultural diversity. Accordingly, the University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, disability, or status as a veteran. For more information, visit <http://cfo.pitt.edu/policies/documents/policy07-01-03web.pdf>

Gender-Inclusive language guidelines: Aspiring to create a learning environment in which people of all identities are encouraged to contribute their perspectives to academic discourse, the University of Pittsburgh Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program provides guidelines and resources regarding gender-inclusive/non-sexist language (gsws.pitt.edu/node/1432). Following these guidelines fosters an inclusive and welcoming environment, strengthens academic writing, enriches discussion, and reflects best professional practices.

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (e.g. first-year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored. These guidelines fulfill the best intentions of the University of Pittsburgh's Non-Discrimination Policy (see above).

Content warning and class climate: Our course readings and classroom discussions will often focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging topics. As with any course in

the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program, course topics are often political and personal. Readings and discussions might trigger strong feelings—anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the readings; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers' understanding of the readings; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom.

I expect everyone to come to class prepared to discuss the readings in a mature and respectful way. If you are struggling with the course materials, here are some tips: read the syllabus so that you are prepared in advance. You can approach your instructor ahead of time if you'd like more information about a topic or reading. If you think a particular reading or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, you can arrive to class early and take a seat by the door so that you can easily exit the classroom as needed. If you need to leave or miss class, you are still responsible for the work you miss. If you are struggling to keep up with the work because of the course content, you should speak with me and/or seek help from the counseling center.

Sexual misconduct, required reporting, and Title IX: The University is committed to combatting sexual misconduct. As a result, you should know that University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence, to the University's Title IX office so that the victim may be provided appropriate resources and support options. What this means is that as your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me, or of which I am somehow made aware.

There are two important exceptions to this requirement about which you should be aware:

A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here: <http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report/confidentiality>

An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as part of an academic project, classroom discussion, or course assignment, are not required to be disclosed to the University's Title IX office.

If you are the victim of sexual misconduct, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:

- Title IX Office: 412-648-7860
- SHARE @ the University Counseling Center: 412-648-7930 (8:30 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F) and 412-648-7856 (AFTER BUSINESS HOURS)

If you have a safety concern, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Police, 412-624-2121.

Other reporting information is available here: <http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report-0>

Class Contacts

If you must miss a class, please check-in with a fellow student to get the notes and discuss missed information. The two people to contact about this are:

Name: _____ E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

Course Schedule

WEEK 1

Tuesday, August 29: Introduction to the course: What is Feminist Theory?

Thursday, August 31:

- Read (on CW): Frye, Marilyn. "Oppression."

WEEK 2

Tuesday, September 5: The "First Wave" of Feminism and Women's Rights

- Read (on CW): "Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention, 1848"
- Read (on CW): "On Sojourner Truth and 'Ain't I a Woman?'"

Thursday, September 7: Reconsidering the 1st Wave: Rights or Liberation?

- Read (in FTR): Hewitt, Nancy. "Re-Rooting American Women's Activism: Global Perspectives on 1848."

WEEK 3

Tuesday, September 12: Womanhood

- Read (in FTR): Beauvoir, Simone de. "The Second Sex: Introduction."
- Read (in FTR): Wittig, Monique. "One is Not Born a Woman."
- Read (in FTR): Bunch, Charlotte. "Lesbians in Revolt."

Thursday, September 14: Feminist Epistemology

- Read (in FTR): Hartsock, Nancy. “The Feminist Standpoint: Toward a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism.”
- Read (in FTR): Irigaray, Luce. “This Sex Which Is Not One.”
- Read (in FTR): Collins, Patricia Hill. “Defining Black Feminist Thought.”

WEEK 4

Tuesday, September 19: Difference, Hierarchy, Privilege, and Inequality

- Read (on CW): Collins, Patricia Hill. “Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection.”
- Read (on CW): McIntosh, Peggy. “White Privilege and Male Privilege.”
- Read (on CW): Wendell, Susan. “The Social Construction of Disability.”

Thursday, September 21: Feminist Epistemology and Post-Colonial Feminism

- Read (in FTR): Narayan, Uma. “The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Nonwestern Feminist.”
- Read (in FTR): Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. “‘Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity Through Anticapitalist Struggles.”

WEEK 5

Tuesday, September 26: Representation and Feminist Solidarity

- Read (on CW): Collins, Patricia Hill, “Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images.”
- Read (in FTR): Smith, Andrea. “Native American Feminisms: Sovereignty and Social Change.”
- Read (on CW): Law, Victoria. “Against Carceral Feminism”

Thursday, September 28: Women’s Liberation: Gender, Race, Class, and Sexuality

- Read (in FTR): Thompson, Becky. “Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism.”
- Read (in FTR): Martinez, Elizabeth. “La Chicana.”
- Read (in FTR): The Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement.”

WEEK 6

Tuesday, October 3: Gender and the Body I

- Read (on CW): Fausto-Sterling, Anne. “The Five Sexes, Revisited.”

- Read (in FTR): Davis, Kathy. “Reclaiming Women’s Bodies: Colonialist Trope or Critical Epistemology?”

Thursday, October 5: Gender and the Body II In class: View *Killing Us Softly 4 Paper #1 is Due!* Please bring a hard copy to class.

- Read (on CW): Rubin, Lisa *et al.* “Body Ethics and Aesthetics Among African American and Latina Women.”

WEEK 7

Tuesday, October 10: No class (Monday classes meet)

Extra Credit: Discussion with Gabby Yearwood, "Black Masculinity and Intimacy: Discussing Jay-Z's 4:44." **Wednesday**, Oct. 11, 5:00pm – 6:30pm. 407 Cathedral of Learning.

Thursday, October 12: Power and Feminist Ways of Organizing

- Read (on CW): Freeman, Jo. “The Tyranny of Structurelessness.”
- Read (on CW): Levine, Cathy. “The Tyranny of Tyranny.”
- Read (on CW): Smith, Andrea. “Dismantling Hierarchy, Queering Society.”

WEEK 8

Tuesday, October 17: Pornography and Feminist Sexuality Debates

- Read (on CW): MacKinnon, Catherine. “Pornography: On Morality and Politics.”
- Read (on CW): Rubin, Gayle. “Thinking Sex,” part 2 (pgs. 9-16), part 5 (pgs. 23-27) and part 6 (pgs. 27-34).
- Read (on CW): Ferguson, Anne. “Sex War: The Debate between Radical and Libertarian Feminists.”

Extra Credit: A conversation with Gayle Rubin, 2:30pm – 3:45pm. Scaife Hall, Auditorium 5.

Thursday, October 19: Feminism and Sex Work

In class: View *Live Nude Girls Unite* and continue discussion

WEEK 9

Tuesday, October 24: Feminist Agency and Sexuality

- Read (on CW): Bay-Cheng, Laina Y. "The Agency Line: A Neoliberal Metric for Appraising Young Women's Sexuality." *Sex Roles* (2015): 1-13.

- Read (on CW): Springer, Kimberly. “Queering Black Female Heterosexuality.”
- Read (on CW): Celeste, Angustia. “Prorate Confidant: Beyond Despoiled Innocence and Empowerment.”

Extra Credit: Lecture by Chloe Georas, "The Unkindest Cut of All: Coloniality, Performance, and Gender in the Courtroom and Beyond." **Wednesday**, Oct. 25, 3:00pm - 5:00pm. 602 Cathedral of Learning.

Thursday, October 26: The “Third Wave”: Women Confronting and Creating Culture

- Read (on CW): Lorde, Audre. “Poetry Is Not a Luxury.”
- Read (on CW): Creasap, Kimberly. “Zine-Making As Feminist Pedagogy.”
- Read (on CW): Piepmeier, Alison. “Bad Girl, Good Girl: Zines Doing Feminism.”
- Read (on CW): Walia, Harsha. “Slut Walk: To March or Not to March.”

Extra Credit: Lecture by Jack Halberstam, "Wild Things: Notes on Queer Anarchy." 6:00pm - 7:30pm. Frick Fine Arts Auditorium.

WEEK 10

Tuesday, October 31: Feminism and Reproductive Justice

- Read (on CW): Sanger, Margaret. “My Fight for Birth Control.”
- Read (on CW): Silliman, Jael *et al.* “Women of Color and Their Struggle for Reproductive Justice.”

Thursday, November 2: Feminism and Labor

- Read (on CW): Ehrenreich, Barbara. “Maid to Order: The Politics of Other Women’s Work.”

WEEK 11

Tuesday, November 7: The Panopticon and Heteronormativity

- Read (on CW): Foucault, Michel. “Panopticism.”
- Read (on CW): Barton, Bernadette. “The Bible Belt Panopticon.”

Thursday, November 9: Feminism and the Family, Love and Marriage

- Read (on CW): hooks, bell. “Romance: Sweet Love.”
- Read (in FTR): Firestone, Shulamith. “The Culture of Romance.”
- Read (on CW): Goldman, Emma. “Marriage and Love.”
- Read (on CW): Conrad, Ryan. “Gay Marriage and Queer Love.”

WEEK 12

Tuesday, November 14: Gender Constitution

- Read (on CW): West, Candace and Don H. Zimmerman. "Doing Gender."
- Read (in FTR): Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory."

Extra Credit: Lecture by Kathleen Perry Long, "Depathologizing Diversity: Critiques of Normative Thinking About the Body." 4:00pm - 5:30pm. 602 Cathedral of Learning.

Thursday, November 16: Masculinities

- Read (on CW): Reeser, Todd. "Introduction: The Study of Masculinity."
- Read (on CW): Halberstam, Judith. "Drag Kings: Masculinity and Performance."

Extra Credit: Lecture by Elizabeth Rodriguez Fielder, "The 'Crooked Stitches' of Desire: Sewing and Sexual Awakening in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*." 4:00pm - 5:00pm. 501 Cathedral of Learning.

WEEK 13

Tuesday, November 21: Feminism and Trans* Liberation

- Read (in FTR): Feinberg, Leslie. "Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come."
- Read (on CW): Connell, Raewyn. "Transsexual Women and Feminist Thought: Toward New Understanding and New Politics."

Thursday, November 23: No class! (Thanksgiving)

WEEK 14

Tuesday, November 28: Peer Review Session

Paper #2 Draft is Due! Please bring a hard copy to class.

Thursday, November 30: Feminism Today

- Read (on CW): Halberstam, J. Jack. "Chapter 1: Gaga Feminism for Beginners," in *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal (Queer Action/Queer Ideas)*
- Read (on CW): Zeisler, Andi. "Chapter 7: Empowering Down," in *We Were Feminists Once: From Riot Grrrl, to Covergirl, the Buying and Selling of a Political Movement*

WEEK 15

Tuesday, December 5: Final Presentations (Group 1)

Bring a hard copy of your presentation abstract to class

Thursday, December 7: Final Presentations (Group 2)

Bring a hard copy of your presentation abstract to class

Closing remarks

WEEK 16

Tuesday, December 12: *No class (finals week). Final papers due in my mailbox by noon.*