

Feminist Theory: Gender Justice  
POLS 377-01, WGST 377-01, PHIL 400-01  
Fall 2020

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Office hours  
Via Zoom appointment  
W 3:30-5:30 pm &  
other times as arranged

Class meets TR 12:25-2pm

At its height, the National Welfare Rights Organization had more than 25,000 paid members. Some people have called it "the largest black feminist organization in American history."  
JACK ROTTIER COLLECTION GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

This class considers

- x What problems of social justice have worried feminist thinkers historically?
- x Over time, how have women, LGBTQ, and marginalized race and ethnic groups experienced subordination through institutions, laws, cultural practices, and ideas in the U.S. and elsewhere?
- x How have feminist thinkers and social movements tried to change institutions and practices that subordinate women and other groups?

Our class will examine these questions through historical and contemporary feminist writings and debates with a focus on the intersection of gender and race, primarily in the U.S. since this course satisfies a Arts and Sciences core curriculum requirement for Diversity in the U.S. The history of feminist political thought in the West helps us to understand how U.S. institutions, laws, and practices have evolved in ways that subordinate women, particularly black women as well as other women of color. We will conclude the course by situating U.S. feminisms within a global context through selected transnational feminist writings and videos. Ultimately, the goal of this course is to assess the potential of different approaches to feminism for illuminating injustices and shaping possibilities for justice in public and private spaces and across differences of gender, race, sexuality, and class.

The first half of the course addresses important concepts in feminist theory, placing each one in particular historical examples of oppression. These concepts are tools that you will use to analyze feminist theories and policies, plan feminist political action, and reflect on your own actions

- x Testimonial injustice
- x Intersectionality
- x Feminist standpoint(s)

The second half of the course emphasizes the evolution of feminist thought through selected historical moments. This allows us to see how different

Social science core student outcomes: Students will acquire conceptual tools and methodologies to analyze and understand their social world. With these tools, they will be able to act in their world more effectively and become forces for positive change. They will gain a better understanding of human diversity. Students will be able to think and write critically about human behavior and community. They will become aware of the various methodological approaches used by social scientists.

#### Format

The class format and requirements are intended



- x Always bring a copy of the assigned texts to class and also have it handy during Zoom discussion groups. Either print or electronic versions of assigned readings are acceptable.
  - x There may be occasional pop quizzes over the readings to encourage you to pay close attention to them. Pop quizzes count toward your class participation grade.
- 3) Write three essays. Essays will be evaluated according to criteria explained in the assessment/grading rubric posted on Blackboard. The goal is to improve your analytical and writing skills over the course of the semester.

The first essay will be very short (700 word limit) so that we have time to go over your draft carefully in a tutorial session before you turn in a final version. Your draft will be shared in a tutorial group of 3 students; each group will meet with one person or via zoom to review the drafts. Guided by the assessment rubric, we will suggest ways to improve each essay. Each of you will have a turn as an author and as a helpful critic, so that you gain experience listening to others and learning from their perspectives. This is the only essay assignment for which we will take class time for tutorial groups; it is important to pay close attention to the rubric and the feedback you receive so that your future essays show improvement.

The remaining essays will vary in length and topics, but assessment/grading criteria will be based on the same rubric. Again, to improve, it is always important to reflect on the rubric and feedback on your previous essays. For each of the first two essays, I will ask you to post a response in your journal to my feedback on your essay; I will be interested in how you think you can improve on the next essay. Essay #1 (1200 word limit) will be on a topic of your choice that is approved by me in advance. One Zoom class session will be devoted to peer review of your paper, but there will be no tutorial session and no opportunity to get my feedback on your essay before it is graded. Essay #2 (1200 word limit)

7) All students are required to fill out a course evaluation at the end of the semester.

Instructor feedback and evaluation: Normally, I will respond to individual journal entries during the week they are submitted if they are submitted on time. I will respond to weekly discussion board posts from zoom breakout groups before the lecture for the next week. Graded essay assignments will be returned within two weeks. Rubrics for evaluating all written and oral assignments are posted on Blackboard; these rubrics are for your own self-evaluation of the quality of your work, as well as for grading.

Grading: Grades will be determined as follows:

Essays 30%

Journal entries 20%

Participation, including attendance, participation in discussion groups, participation in lecture Q and A 20%

Discussion group coordination 10%

about something, clearly state that you do not know the answer. Credit the ideas of others through citing and linking to scholarly resources.

- x Berespectful Respect privacy, diversity and opinions of others. Communicate tactfully and base disagreements on scholarly ideas or research evidence. Avoid sharing another person's professional or personal information.
- x Beprofessional and polite Represent yourself well at all times. Be truthful, accurate and courteous. Address others by name or appropriate title and be mindful of your tone. Treat people as if you were in a face-to-face situation. Avoid using sarcasm, being rude or writing in all capital letters. Written words can be easily misinterpreted as they lack nonverbals.

\*Adapted from Arizona State University online learning tips <https://asuonline.asu.edu/newsroom/onlinelearning/tips/netiquette-online-students/>

The following university policy statements can be found at the end of this syllabus

- x Facemasks Policy Please pay particular attention to this one.
- x Attendance
- x Student Success Center
- x University Writing Services

## Feminist Theory



- x Patricia Hill Collins, Ch. Black Feminist Epistemology pp. 272-292, in [Black Feminist Thought](#) (1990)
- x Kristen Intemann, Feminist Standpoint, excerpt, in *Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory* (2016). Eres.

## Part II. History of Feminist Political Thought (in the West)

9/29, 10/1 Social construction of gender and race in the modern social contract

- Sally Haslanger, Gender and Social Construction (2006), Eres.
- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (France 1949), in Freedman

Margaret Sanger Woman and the New Race U.S. in Freedman  
Jane Addams, excerpt from The Second Twenty Years at Hull House (1930s).

10/27, 29 Civil Rights, Women's Rights, and Race

Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (U.S., 1963), in Freedman  
Combahee River Collective: A Black Feminist Statement (U.S. 1977), in Freedman  
Audre Lorde The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House U.S. in

Freedman

Alice Walker's definition of a womanist

<http://noteasybeingred.tumblr.com/post/206038114/alice-walkers-definition-of-a-womanist-from-in>

Alice Walker In search of our Mothers' Gardens , [http://l-adam-mekler.com/walker\\_in\\_search.pdf](http://l-adam-mekler.com/walker_in_search.pdf)

11/3, 5 Rights and Race continued





Disability Services, and Academic Coaching

Link: <https://www.slu.edu/life-at-slu/student-success-center/index.php>

### University Writing Services

Students are encouraged to take advantage of University Writing Services and the Student Success Center; getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels. Trained writing consultants can help with writing projects, multimedia projects, and oral presentations. University Writing Services offers one-on-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting

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