

Course Syllabus
WOST 210: Introduction to Women's Studies (On line)
Summer, 2009, Section 01I CRN #200930
Indiana University – Purdue University, Fort Wayne

Instructor: Theresa Rojas, M.L.S.

Meetings (on line) by appointment (I am generally working from Ann Arbor, MI)

E-mail: rojasbud@yahoo.com. I can access this account from anywhere, so please use this address rather than e-mailing me within Blackboard or using my IPFW address.

Course Text:

Women's VOICES Feminist VISIONS: Classic and Contemporary Readings, Third Edition, Susan M. Shaw & Janet Lee. McGraw Hill, 2005. ISBN: 0-07-311250-X

The syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Please feel free to e-mail me with questions during the course of the term. This is the best, most expedient way to reach me.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to Women's Studies 210! This course fulfills three credit hours for the BA, AA, and Certificate in Women's Studies. The objectives of this course are to identify, explore, and critically examine issues concerning women's lives in order to come to a greater understanding of how these impact humanity as a whole. Students will take an interdisciplinary approach to developing an understanding of the multiple forces that contribute to the construction of our gendered society.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR SUMMER SESSION: Please be aware that students will be expected to complete (nearly) 16 weeks of course work in just 6 short weeks of the summer session in order to earn 3 full credit hours. As such, this course races along at an extremely fast pace, so you must be prepared to work quickly and independently as of the **first** day of the term. Falling behind will make it impossible to have any fun at all, so please get started TODAY.

In order to be successful in this class, you must have achieved the necessary proficiency in grammar, punctuation, and style for college-level writing. In other words, you must be able to write a strong, college-level essay. If you have not yet taken freshman English, I strongly advise that you do so before taking this course. I will expect you to be able to demonstrate strong writing and critical thinking ability as of the first week.

Students must also be highly computer-literate as this is an on-line course and all of our interaction will take place via electronic communication. All assignments should be submitted using complete sentences, proper grammar, punctuation, etc. Under no circumstances should students submit work in abbreviated "Internet" speak/icons, etc. Likewise, please note that Wikipedia is NOT an acceptable academic resource. I would also discourage you from using dictionary definitions in your work as it is much more

important to get a sense of your personal definition of the terms and concepts you are learning.

The course is conducted entirely on line, but is not self-paced. Instead, each student is expected to participate in maintaining the classroom community by following along with the assignments and discussions on a weekly basis.

The best way to get an outstanding grade in this course is to participate fully, complete all assignments, and follow directions carefully. This syllabus is lengthy, I know. As such, it is important that you read carefully and treat it as your best guide to doing well throughout the various elements of the course.

WOMEN'S STUDIES LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Women's Studies is based on the premise that the study of women's experiences, concerns, social roles, and creativity is essential to our knowledge of humankind and society. Feminist scholarship and theory provide the knowledge and analytical tools necessary for a gender-balanced perspective on our world, both past and present. The Women's Studies Program affords students the opportunity to pursue feminist scholarship on women and gender through a variety of interdisciplinary courses.

Upon completion of this course students should:

1. Demonstrate a basic understanding of feminism and feminist approaches to human agency.
2. Demonstrate a basic understanding of the core issues that affect women.
3. Demonstrate a basic understanding of major categories of feminist critical analysis.
4. Demonstrate a basic understanding of how traditional fields of study are expanded and reshaped when the contributions of women are taken into consideration.
5. Demonstrate the ability to think critically and write succinctly about issues in feminism past and present.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The Course Requirements in a Nutshell

- **Class Contract** (reading and agreeing to the syllabus, due this week!)
- **Introductions and responses to introductions** (due this week!) - 10%
- **Reading Responses** (one per chapter, first one due this week!) - 25%
- **Discussion Replies** (two per chapter/weekly) - 20%
- **Observation Blog Posts** (one per week) - 20%
- **Final Essay or Project** - 25%

Participation and Preparation

Your participation and preparation is crucial to your success in this class, particularly given the speed at which we will go through the material. Although the class is conducted entirely on line, as with any class, it functions best when every student is fully engaged and prepared for discussion. As such, clear preparation and participation in

class discussions are given substantial weight. Please note: Students missing more than two assignments may receive a failing grade.

Participation will be a strong factor in determining your final grade if you are on the border between grades. I cannot emphasize this enough as it truly does make a difference—both in your grade and in the overall quality of the class.

Due Dates

The “Due By” date means that the assignment is due by 11:59 p.m. on that date. I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE ASSIGNMENTS, so be sure that your work is time stamped accordingly. I will accept assignments before the due date, but not after. In Blackboard, the drop box is set to take assignments until a certain time, so you will not be able to submit late assignments. I check for assignments shortly after they are due, so if your submission is not made on time, it will receive a “0” automatically.

Grading

This course is graded using both a point and letter grade system. Students earn points for all assignments, except the midterm and final, which are graded on an A-F basis. Points for each category are converted to flat percentages at the end of the term and then reviewed for a final grade decision, with weight given respectively to the various areas as explained further in the syllabus (shown as a percentage in parentheses). Point conversion is on a percentage basis:

A = 90 – 100%
B = 80 – 89%
C = 70 – 79%
D = 60 – 69%
F = Below 60%

LET’S GET STARTED!

Class Contract (REQUIRED)

Read and agree to all terms set forth in this syllabus. You are **required** to submit a short statement indicating your acceptance of the syllabus as a binding class contract. Simply type the following into the Assignment Drop Box (where it says, “Class Contract”: “I have read and understand the syllabus and I agree to its terms and conditions.” **DUE BY THURSDAY, 5/21.**

Failure to agree to the contract will result in an “F” grade. You may not continue with the class without the class contract.

Introductions (5 points for your intro, 5 points each for replying to 2 other intros = 15 points total) (10%)

This is an important way to get the class started forming a sense of community. Take a moment to read my introduction in Blackboard and then post your own. You may include any information you like, but please include why you are taking Women’s

Studies, what your computer skill level is, and what you hope to get out of the class. You may also include such things as what you like to do for fun or something interesting that most people don't know about you. This will help the class remember who you are.

Introductions and replies are due the FIRST WEEK OF CLASS.

Deadline: THURSDAY, 5/21.

Observation Blog (5 points each entry – starting week 2!) (20%)

You will create a blog (weblog/online journal) using blogger.com and post short (**minimum of 250 words**) weekly entries focusing on your observation of a topic related to the class. Entries do not have to be related to the topic we are covering *that week*, but they must show that you are making critical connections between what we are learning in the class in general and your own observations of the world. Pay special attention to representations of women in every day life. You may use things that you see, hear, read, etc. The objective here is to examine the every day through a more feminist lens than you might normally.

Title blog entries: “Blog 1” (this is the test entry), “Blog 2”, “Blog 3”, etc. Submit the URL (web address) for your blog to the assignments drop box as soon as you create it. PLEASE NOTE: You must create your blog IMMEDIATELY. The URL address and test entry (Blog 1) are due to the Assignments Drop Box by SUNDAY, 5/24.

To create your own blog, go to www.blogger.com and follow the instructions where it says “CREATE YOUR BLOG NOW”. You may name your blog anything you like, but please try and keep it in good taste, as we will be sharing these with the class. PLEASE BE CAREFUL when adding a new entry. Do NOT choose the “create a new blog” option. You want to add an entry every week, not a new blog.

Reading Responses (5 points each -- 2 chapters per week!) (25%)

For each week's reading assignments, you will post a reading response to the designated chapter area on the discussion board. Please title your post appropriately (Reading Response 1, etc) so that it's easy to identify. Each response should include:

- A brief discussion of the main idea(s) of the pieces, including at least three specific references to the text and online readings
- Parenthetical references/citations in MLA style - TWO CITES MAY BE FROM THE TEXT AND ONE FROM ON LINE, but you must have at least three total. Aren't sure how to cite? Please feel free to refer to any MLA reference. Generally, cites should look like this (where the xxxx represents text you are either quoting or paraphrasing): “**Xxxx xxx xxxxx xx xxx**” (234). *Keep quoted text within quotation marks and put the page numbers after the end quote. The period always follows the page number, ending the sentence.*
- How these readings connect to your own life experience (self, family, school, observations of the world in general). While this may include an assessment of whether or not you agree with the ideas presented, you must not approach it as an “opinion piece”. Instead, demonstrate that you have read the assignments and have a strong understanding of the material. If not, you may also pose questions

- Proper spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc.
- **700 words minimum** (this is about a page and a half, single spaced)
- **At the end of each response, include one question for class discussion.**
Questions should be thoughtful and provide the opportunity to spark conversation, not something that can be easily answered with a “yes” or “no”. Keep in mind that this is an opportunity to explore the reading, not vent or rant to the point of distraction. You will note that these responses are a large portion of your grade, so it is in your best interest to give them your just attention every week.
- I would prefer that you copy and paste your response from Word for this part of the course. Opening attachments can sometimes cause problems for your classmates.

The first reading response is due by SUNDAY, 5/24!!

Guide to Reading Response Grades

5 = Clear, thorough articulation of concepts raised in the chapter, references to at least 3 of the readings, discussion question posed, meets the minimum work count, no grammatical/spelling/proofreading issues.

4 = Strong articulation of concepts raised in the chapter, but possibly missing a reference to the readings, small grammar/spelling/proofing issues, slightly short on word count, or missing discussion question.

3 = Fair articulation of chapter concepts, references to the readings or discussion question missing, short on word count, possible major grammar/spelling/proofing issues.

2 = Bare articulation of chapter concepts, possibly difficult to follow and/or short on word count, missing references, or overall does not convey a clear understanding and reading of the chapter.

1 = Does not meet minimum requirements for passing response; major issues throughout.

Discussion Replies (5 points each, 2 posts/chapter = 4 posts/week) (20%)

In order to keep the momentum of the class going in this online format, it is essential that you take time to reflect on the writing of your classmates. This assignment is a chance to interact with the class and show me that not only have you done the reading, but you also understand how the material relates to others. You are required to post two replies per chapter for each of the discussion weeks. You may reply to two different people or to the same person that week. There is no maximum for posting Discussion Replies, though credit is only assigned to the first two. Please take these very seriously as they constitute a significant portion of the total course grade.

Discussion Posts (replies) should include:

- Response to what another classmate has written that carries the discussion forward;
- Respectfully agree or disagree

- Reflect upon what your classmates are saying and how it affects the way you think
- Address any changes in your perspective if you are replying to the same person more than once
- 100 words minimum per post

Once again, your writing should be in complete sentences and using proper grammar, punctuation, etc.

Discussion Guidelines

Given that the online format and the internet in general is often a place where we forget that we are dealing with fellow human beings, it's critical to keep in mind that we must think about what we write before we post.

Failure to follow these guidelines will result in grade penalties and possible disciplinary action.

- **Post respectfully** – Treat each of your classmates and your instructor with the respect and courtesy that you would use in a brick-and-mortar classroom. This is a safe space for exploring often complicated and difficult topics. Honor the classroom community by thinking before you post something that may be harmful to others.
- **“Flaming” is completely unacceptable** – This is when a post to a particular topic generates such interest that replies are hastily posted, such that the topic seems as though it's “on fire”. This often also means that people are posting quick insults or single word responses, just to generate more posts. I have zero tolerance for flaming, so don't do it.
- **Any sort of harassment will not be tolerated.**
- **Encourage disagreement** – Be open to hearing opinions that are different from your own. When posting a potentially adversarial opinion, be sure that you've done your work and know what you are writing about. Do not disagree (or agree for that matter) just for the sake of disagreement. Use strong arguments and back up what you write with evidence from the readings or other sources you find. Be aware, however, that not everything you find online is credible (more on this later).
- **Treat others as you would like to be treated** – Above all, keep this in mind and we'll have a healthy class full of lively discussion.

Final Critical Thought Essay, “Working Toward Change” (25%)

Using concepts from the class to facilitate your exploration, this final assignment will serve as a way for you to begin to process some concrete ways to advocate and work toward change—or, at the very least, to begin to think about how you can affect change—as you analyze your own gendered experiences using theoretical perspectives that we have studied in class. You will write an 5-7 page essay based on one of the questions posed at the end of Chapter 13. Detailed instructions will be posted on Blackboard. **DUE FRIDAY, 6/26**

Formatting all papers

You must use a 12 point font, 1 inch margins all around (as demonstrated in this syllabus), left justify, and a title and heading on the first page. Number all of your pages with your last name and page number in the upper right hand corner. For excellent guidelines, see: webpages.pvbears.org/hslibrary/mla.htm

Citations for all papers (Reading Responses, Final Essay)

Since most of the students in this class are in the humanities, we will use MLA style. MLA is perhaps the easiest of the citation styles to follow and the most common in terms of students owning reference manuals. If you are in a discipline outside of the humanities and are accustomed to using a different citation style (such as APA), you may use this style as long as you let me know in a note submitted with your assignment.

Please note: You must be consistent with your citation style throughout your paper. If you are not familiar with how to cite properly, please refer to the *MLA Handbook* or similar reference.

Finally...

Plagiarism: How to Fail This Course In One Easy Step

DON'T DO IT! Plagiarism is when you take someone else's idea, thoughts, or words and present them as your own. It's considered stealing and very very BAD. A good rule of thumb is that if you find yourself using 3 or more of someone else's words at any one time, cite them! Even if you are using their ideas, but not their exact words, cite them. Think about it, if someone was using some of your work, wouldn't you want credit for it? It's much easier to simply cite your sources rather than deal with the consequences of plagiarism. This can result in an "F" grade for the entire course, suspension, or even expulsion, not to mention making me very unhappy. Cite your sources and make everyone happy. If you need help with this, please contact me or consult with any of the multitude of resources available.

The Help Board

Available in the Discussion Board area. Post miscellaneous questions for the class here. Not sure when something is due? Not sure if you understood something correctly? Use your classmates as your first resource. You may also post resources and help-related announcements here.

Special Needs

Please let me know if you have any special needs or require any sort of accommodation. I will be happy to work with you on making the most out of the class. Also, if you have an emergency during the course of the class, please contact me as soon as you can to discuss arrangements.

Questions regarding the syllabus?

Post your question The Help Board or e-mail me: rojasbud@yahoo.com.

Computer Problems?

Contact the Help Desk, located at Kettler 206: helpdesk@ipfw.edu or (260) 481-6030. The hours are Monday-Friday, 7:30am - 11pm, Saturday: 8am - 6pm, Sunday: 12pm - 10pm. They should be your FIRST contact for anything that comes up involving computer issues. Even if you aren't sure if they can help, give them a call as soon as something comes up. They are a fantastic resource.

COURSE SCHEDULE with DUE DATES

There is a TON of work due throughout the course, **including quite a bit due this week**, so please get started ASAP

WEEK ONE – Introduction Week!

Class introductions

Chapter 1 - Introduction to Women's Studies and Feminism: Perspectives and Practices

5/21 (Friday) Post personal introduction on Blackboard

5/24 Two responses to student introductions

5/24 "Observation" blog creation, test entry (Blog 1), and Blog 2

5/24 Contract email to professor

5/24 Reading response to chapter 1

WEEK TWO

Chapter 2 - Systems of Privilege and Inequality

Chapter 3 - The (Social) Construction of Gender

(Starting this week, there are two chapters worth of work due EVERY WEEK)

5/29 (Friday) Discussion replies to chapter 1

5/31 Observation Blog 3

6/2 Reading response to chapter 2

6/2 Reading response to chapter 3

WEEK THREE

Chapter 4 - The (Social) Construction of Sexuality

Chapter 5 - Body Image and the Commodification of Women (Inscribing Gender on the Body)

6/5 Discussion replies to chapters 2 and 3

6/5 Blog 4

6/7 Reading response to chapter 4

6/7 Reading response to chapter 5

WEEK FOUR

Chapter 6 - Health and Reproductive Rights

Chapter 10 - Rape Culture: Resisting Violence Against Women

6/12 Discussion replies to chapters 4 and 5

6/12 Blog 5

6/14 Reading response to chapter 6

6/14 Reading response to chapter 10

WEEK FIVE

Chapter 11 - Unequal Under Law: State, Law, and Social Policy

Chapter 13 - Working Toward Change

6/19 Discussion replies to chapters 6 and 10

6/19 Blog 6

6/21 Reading response to chapter 11

6/21 Reading response to chapter 13

WEEK SIX

6/23 (Tuesday) Discussion replies to chapters 11 and 13

6/24 (Wednesday) Blog 7

6/26 (FRIDAY) FINAL DUE!!
