
WOST W304: Feminist Theories

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Welcome to WOST W304! As the IPFW bulletin explains, W304 is designed to provide students with an overview of those crucial feminist texts that have given shape to Western feminism and feminist theory as we know them today. Toward that end, we will look at a wide variety of texts, moving historically through the foundational texts of the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries and then onto some of the most crucial writings that have shaped contemporary feminist discourse, focusing largely on writings from the United States. Along the way, we'll make a couple of pit stops, first to dwell on the rather difficult relationship feminist theory has often had with poststructuralist thinking about the self and then to consider some alternative views to American feminist theory. As this last sentence might suggest, I'm interested in exploring not only the themes that cohere the body of writings we call "feminist theory" but also the tensions and conflicts that have made it such a dynamic field of study. The various assignments for this class are designed to help you process and synthesize this survey of sometimes challenging reading material, while also giving you the chance to explore and articulate your own ideas as they relate to feminist theoretical debate.

The general objectives of this course, then, are:

- To provide you with an opportunity to study feminist theory's depth and breadth and to consider the issues, problems, questions, and assumptions that have shaped it.
- To help you hone your repertoire of reading and analytical skills by exploring complex and sometimes dense theoretical texts
- To help you formulate significant critical questions about feminist theory
- To help you research and write about these questions effectively
- To provide you with the opportunity to theorize issues from a feminist perspective and to articulate your own ideas, both verbally and in writing, about feminist issues.

Required Texts:

Feminist Theory: A Reader, second edition, edited by Wendy Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski

Feminists Theorize the Political, edited by Judith Butler and Joan Scott

Various selected readings (made available through library reserve and Blackboard)

A note on the textbooks: please keep in mind that you should purchase your books immediately, if you haven't already done so. If you order them online, be sure that the shipping method you choose gets the books to you in time to complete the assigned reading. Please also note that there are resources available should you find the expense associated with your WOST textbooks prohibitively expensive. Among the resources, Community Friends of Women's Studies, a Fort Wayne non-profit, offers small grants to assist WOST students. You can find out more about their Education Means Everything grants by going to <http://www.cfwsinc.com/e-m-e-education-means-everything-grant>. Applying is a simple process so I encourage you to look into it if you need the help.

Requirements

Critical Responses (5%): Over the course of this semester, you will be expected to complete five short responses to the readings for a given day (approximately 400-600 words each). This writing will combine analysis of the text's arguments with your own questions and interrogations. The purpose of this writing is three-fold: it gives you a chance to process the texts you read before coming to class, to generate specific issues for discussion, and to

practice your analytic thinking and writing skills. Your responses will be evaluated according to how well your writing demonstrates an understanding of the text's argument, your ability to critically engage the argument through analysis, critical questions, and an exploration of the text's implications, and the clarity of your ideas. Please note that this last factor pertains to the clarity of expression, not to how well you avoid EWSE errors (see below). In other words, these are considered informal writings that do not require the level of polish I expect in your formal writings; however, they should be typed and you should strive to write with clarity. To help guide you with your responses, we will spend some time during the first week generating a list of questions/approaches that you can adopt for the assignment. Because your engagement with the texts is crucial, you select which readings you respond to over the course of the semester. The only constraints are: you must submit your response on the day we discuss the reading (at the start of class) and you must complete at least two of your responses by Oct. 6.

Formal Writing/Research Projects (25% each): You will be responsible for completing two formal projects for this course. For the first writing/research project, you will write a four part essay (roughly 8-10 pages) that considers an issue related to contemporary feminist theory through four modes of investigation: description, analysis, vision, and strategy, a model we'll talk more about later. In the meantime, you can prepare for this assignment by keeping track of those issues related to feminist theory that you think you might like to explore in greater depth. For your second formal writing project, you will take what you've learned from a semester of reading feminist theory and take a stab at some theoretical waxing of your own by writing your own feminist manifesta (roughly 6-8 pages). More on this later as well.

Research Colloquium (10%): At the end of the semester during our final exam period, we will have a class colloquium. As part of this event, you will select a piece from one of your two formal projects, turn it into a format appropriate for oral presentation (yes, PowerPoint!), and present your work to our class and any special visitors we decide to invite (say, friends, other WOST students, whomever we scrap up off the street, etc.). More later.

Participation (Including Quizzes and In-Class Writing) (15%): Because this is an upper-level (seminar-like) course that emphasizes class discussion and collective investigation, your success in this class depends greatly on your willingness to participate, actively, in the study of feminist theory. This means *attending class, doing the reading, coming to class prepared, contributing to class discussion, and participating in small group work*. Everyone will be expected to read—carefully and thoughtfully—the assigned readings and to participate in class discussions in thoughtful and productive ways. The typical “A” participant, then, is someone who never misses classes, contributes thoughtful remarks frequently but without dominating the discussion, and clearly keeps up with her or his work. In addition, any in-class projects we undertake, such as informal writing exercises, will be factored into this portion of your grade. And should they prove necessary at some point to ensure everyone is completing the reading, quizzes will become a regular part of class and a component of your participation grade as well.

Policies

Attendance: Because this course emphasizes active participation in discussion, regular attendance is absolutely essential to your success in this class and to the success of the class in general. Indeed, when you miss class, you also miss the exchange of ideas that is intended to strengthen your skills as a reader, thinker, and writer. Therefore, excessive absences are simply unacceptable. For each absence, your participation grade for the course will be lowered by a letter grade (e.g., B+ to a C+, C+ to a D+). Missing half a class will count as half an absence and will be tallied up accordingly. Those students with more than three unexcused absences will automatically fail the course. Please note that whether an absence counts as excused or not is at my discretion. Generally, I hold to strict boundaries: serious family emergencies, illness, travel for school-related events can be excused with documentation, but missing class because you have a paper due in another class is not excusable. If you need to miss and aren't sure if it falls into one of the three categories above, ask me about it before you miss class. Also note that if you do miss class, you are responsible for finding out from a classmate any assignments you will have missed.

Edited Standard Written English: Since this course is an upper-division course, my assumption is that you can compose an essay using Edited Standard Written English (ESWE). Thus, while it is acceptable to have sentence-level errors, misspellings, and punctuation problems in your informal writings and drafts, it is not acceptable to have excessive errors in the final copies of your formal essays. For each of your formal assignments, you can have no more than an average of six ESWE errors per page in the following categories:

- ◆ Spelling and typographical errors
- ◆ Sentence punctuation errors, including run-on sentences, fragments, comma splices, etc.
- ◆ Verb form, tense, and agreement with subject
- ◆ Pronoun form and agreement with antecedent
- ◆ Possessives and plurals

Should you exceed this limit, you will be required to seek assistance at the English department Writing Center (see below) before your next essay is due. If you fail to seek out this assistance, you will receive a failing grade for the essay.

Late and Missed Assignments: Late work is not accepted and will be returned to you ungraded. If you foresee a problem with an assignment, see me about it before it is due. If you expect to miss class on the day an assignment is due, plan to turn it in early.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: Using someone else's words, ideas, or work without proper acknowledgment or documentation is the most serious of academic offenses. This includes everything from turning in someone else's work as your own, to buying a paper and submitting it as your own, to paraphrasing (i.e., putting into your own words) ideas you got from other sources, whether books or the web, without appropriately documenting and citing your source. Please see my handout on plagiarism and how to avoid it for additional information. And if you have any questions about plagiarism, speak to me about it before you turn in your assignment. Let me emphasize the severity of this offense: All cases of plagiarism will result in the failure of this course and will be reported to the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Dean of Students.

Tolerance and Respect: Any speech or behavior that shows disrespect or intolerance towards others in the class is not allowed. As college students, you will be expected to participate in class discussions in mature ways that demonstrate an open-mindedness towards diversity, including differences in race, culture, gender, sexuality, religion, and ideas.

Cell Phones and Laptops: Remember to either turn your phones off or, if you absolutely must, place them on vibrate for emergencies only. Under no circumstances should you text message in class. Similarly, feel to bring your laptop for note-taking but only for note-taking.

Resources

Me: Don't hesitate to come directly to me with questions or concerns. I have three open office hours each week (listed above) and am available by appointment as well.

The Writing Center: As an IPFW student, you have access to individualized, one-on-one assistance from a tutor at IPFW's Writing Center. Tutors there can help you with any step in the writing process, from invention to revision. The service is free, and you can make an appointment by calling them 481-5740, emailing writingcenter@ipfw.edu or online at <http://www.ipfw.edu/casa/tutoring/tutortrac.shtml>.

Center for Women and Returning Adults: CWRA provides academic, financial and personal assistance to IPFW women and returning students and can connect you with the network of services available at IPFW and Fort Wayne. You can visit their office in Walb 120 directly for assistance or reach them at 481-6029.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability and need assistance, special arrangements can be made to accommodate most needs. Contact the Director of Services for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible to work out the details (Walb 113, phone: 481-6658). Once the Director has provided you with a letter attesting to your needs for modification, bring the letter to me. For more information, please visit the web site for SSD at <http://www.ipfw.edu/ssd/> .

Course Schedule

T Aug. 25	<u>Course Introduction</u> : review syllabus; discuss selections about feminism; generate paradigm questions for critical responses
T Sept. 1	<u>Foundations of Feminist Theory, 1792-1920</u> : Mary Wollstonecraft, from <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> (pg. 64+) Sarah Grimké, from <i>Letters on the Equality of the Sexes . . .</i> (pg. 69+) Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “ <i>Declaration of Sentiments</i> ” (pg. 71+) Harriet Taylor, “ <i>Enfranchisement of Women</i> ” (pg. 74) Sojourner Truth, “ <i>Ain’t I a Woman</i> ” and “ <i>Keep the Thing Going. . .</i> ” (pg. 79+) John Stuart Mill, from <i>The Subjection of Women</i> (pg. 80+) Susan B. Anthony, Speech after Arrest for Illegal Voting (pg. 91+)
T Sept. 8	<u>Foundations Continued, 1792-1920</u> : Josephine Butler, “ <i>Letter to My Countrywomen . . .</i> ” (pg 86+) Victoria Woodhull, “ <i>The Elixir of Life . . .</i> ” (pg. 95+) Friedrich Engels, from <i>The Origins of the Family . . .</i> ” (pg. 100+) Anna Julia Cooper, “ <i>The Status of Woman in America</i> ” (pg. 102+) Charlotte Perkins Gilman, from <i>Women and Economics</i> (pg. 110+) Emma Goldman, “ <i>The Traffic in Women</i> ” (pg. 120+) Mother Jones, “ <i>Girl Slaves of the Milwaukee Breweries</i> ” (pg. 124+) Crystal Eastman, “ <i>Now We Can Begin</i> ” (pg. 130)
T Sept. 15	<u>The Doldrums? 1920-1963</u> : Margaret Sanger, “ <i>Birth Control . . .</i> ” (pg. 138) Mary McLeod Bethune, “ <i>Southern Negro Women and Race Cooperation</i> ” (pg. 140) Stella Brown, “ <i>Studies in Feminine Inversion</i> ” (pg. 142+) Joan Riviere, “ <i>Womanliness as Masquerade</i> ” (pg. 146+) Karen Horney, “ <i>The Dread of Woman . . .</i> ” (pg. 154+) Margaret Mead, “ <i>Sex and Temperament</i> ” (pg. 157+) Mary Ritter Beard, “ <i>The Haunting Idea . . .</i> ” (pg 162+) Simone de Beauvoir, from <i>The Second Sex</i> (pg. 175+)
T Sept. 22	<u>Feminist Theory Finds Its Voice, 1963-1975</u> : Read <u>everything</u> in the table of contents from Betty Friedan, “ <i>The Problem That Has No Name</i> ” (pg. 198+) to and including Paula Murray, “ <i>The Liberation of Black Women</i> ” (pg. 232+)
T Sept. 29	<u>1963-1975 Continued</u> : Read <u>everything</u> in the table of contents from Radicallesbians, “ <i>The Woman-Identified Woman</i> ” (pg. 239+) to and including “ <i>The Traffic in Women</i> ” (pg. 273+) with the exception of Hélène Cixous, “ <i>The Laugh of the Medusa</i> ,” which we will pick up later.
T Oct. 6	<u>Feminist Theory as Institution, 1975-1995</u> : Read everything from Christine Delphy, “ <i>For a Materialist Feminism</i> ” (pg. 292+) to and including Mary

	<p>Daly, "The Metapatriarchal Journey . . ." (328+) with the exception of Luce Irigaray, from <i>This Sex Which Is Not One</i>, which we will pick up later.</p> <p>➤ Last Day for First Two Critical Response Papers</p>
T Oct. 13	<u>No class—fall break</u>
T Oct. 20	<p><u>1975-1995 Continued:</u> Read <u>e everything</u> in the table of contents from Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex . . ." (pg. 338+) to and including Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Wester Eyes . . ." (pg. 378+)</p>
T Oct. 27	<p><u>Feminist Theory and the Impact of Poststructuralism:</u> Donna Harraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" (pg. 384+) Sandra Harding, "From the Woman Question . . ." (pg. 404+) Diana Fuss, "The 'Risk' of Essence" (pg. 455+) Catharine McKinnon, "Sexuality" (pg. 475+) Ynestra King, "The Ecology of Feminism" (pg. 469+)</p>
T Nov. 3	<p><u>Feminist Theory and the Impact of Poststructuralism Continued:</u> Linda Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism" (pg. 426+) Denise Riley, "Does a Sex Have a History?" (pg. 437+) Introduction to <i>Feminists Theorize the Political</i> (pg. xiii+) Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations" (pg. 3+ in <i>FTP</i>) Joan Scott, "Experience" (pg. 22+ in <i>FTP</i>) Mary Poovey, "The Abortion Question . . ." (pg. 239+ in <i>FTP</i>) Zakia Pathak and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, "Shahbano" (pg. 257+ in <i>FTP</i>)</p>
T Nov. 10	<p><u>Feminist Theory and the Impact of Poststructuralism Continued:</u> Drucilla Cornell, "Gender, Sex, and Equivalent Rights" (pg. 280+ in <i>FTP</i>) Kirstie McClure, "The Issue of Foundations" (pg. 341+ in <i>FTP</i>) Chantal Mouffe, "Feminism, Citizenship . . ." (pg. 369+ in <i>FTP</i>) Sharon Marcus, "Fighting Bodies . . ." (pg. 385+ in <i>FTP</i>)</p>
T Nov. 17	<p><u>French Feminist Theory:</u> Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa" (pg. 256+) Luce Irigaray, from <i>This Sex Which Is Not One</i> (pg. 317+) Gayatri Spivak, "French Feminism Revited" (pg. 54+ in <i>FTP</i>) Other selections TBA</p> <p>➤ Final Draft of DAVS Essay Due</p>
T Nov. 24	<p>Paula Gunn Allen, "Kochinnenako in Academe . . ." (pg. 394+) Judith Plaskow, "Jewish Memory . . ." (pg. 413+) Gloria Anzaldúa, "La Conciencia de la Mestiza . . ." (pg. 420+) Norma Alarcón, "The Theoretical Subject(s) . . ." (pg. 488+) Patricia Hill Collins, from <i>Black Feminist Thought</i> (pg. 504+) Angele Y. Davis, "Outcast Mothers . . ." (pg. 509+) The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (pg. 521+) Winona LaDuke, "Mothers of Our Nation" (pg. 525+)</p>
T Dec. 1	<p><u>Contemporary Theories:</u> Read <u>everything</u> in the table of contents from Bikini Kill, "Riot Grrl. . ." (pg 532+) to and including Uma Narayan, "Contesting Cultures . . ." (pg. 542+)</p>

T Dec. 8	<u>Contemporary Theories Continued:</u> Read <u>everything</u> in the table of contents from Judith Halberstam, "Transgender Butch. . ." (pg 550+) to and including Rosi Braidotti, "Meta(l)morphoses . . ." . . ." (pg. 586+) ➤ Final Draft of Feminist Manifesta Due ➤ Last Day for Writing a Critical Response Essay
T Dec. 15	<u>Final Exam Period:</u> Student colloquium

All readings are from *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, unless they are designated as coming from *Feminists Theorize the Political (FTP)* or some other source TBA.

A final note on the readings: You can expect this syllabus to change and evolve over the course of the quarter. I will, of course, keep you up to date on the changes. For your part, please be patient and attentive to announcements and any assignments you might miss because of absences.