

Instructor: Leah Ulansey

Feminist Theories of the Political

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Women's increased representation in politics and the workplace does not diminish the stakes for feminism; it intensifies and complicates them. This course is designed to help students to analyze what is at stake in the choices we make about how we negotiate the patriarchal institutions we have all inherited.

"The personal is political" is a well-known rallying cry associated with U.S. feminism of the 1970s and its consciousness-raising techniques. The slogan encapsulated a drive to shine a spotlight on the micropolitics and sexual politics of everyday, "personal" life. This course examines recent feminist work with a complementary approach, examining the ways in which macropolitics--the domestic and foreign policies of nation states--are gendered phenomena.

Our goal in this course is to make feminist theories available to you as tools for social analysis and social change and as possible sources of personal and creative inspiration. Our working assumption throughout the course will be that gender as a concept cannot be fully understood until we grasp its interconnectedness to race, class, sexual orientation, nationality and other factors that determine one's relative power and privilege (or lack thereof) in a global system of structured inequality.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. You will be asked to write two papers (5-7 pages) in response to the readings. First paper due March 15; second paper due May 3. Suggested topics will be distributed
2. You will be asked to do a visual response to a specific reading or to issues and concepts emerging from the readings. Due April 12.
3. You will be asked to do other informal assignments, such as weekly email responses to the readings.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available in the MICA Bookstore):

Ariel Levy, Female Chauvinist Pigs
Barbara Ehrenreich, Deirdre English, For Her Own Good
Barbara Ehrenreich, Arlie Hochschild, eds, Global Woman
Vandana Shiva, Earth Democracy
Ann Crittenden, The Price of Motherhood
Marilyn Waring, If Women Counted
Rita Gross, Feminism and Religion

Other texts will be distributed as xerox handouts.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Jan. 25 Intro

Feb. 1 TOPICS: Topic: Feminist "waves": Third Wave issues and unfinished business

Readings: *Ariel Levy, Female Chauvinist Pigs (available in MICA Bookstore), Ch. 1-3; pp. 1-117
* Adrienne Rich, "Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying" (1975): xerox
* Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1979): xerox
* McGuffey, Rich, "Playing in the Gender Transgression Zone" (xerox)

Feb. 8 TOPIC: Third wave issues (cont.)

Readings: *Levy, Female Chauvinist Pigs, Ch. 4-6; pp. 118-201
*Ann Koedt, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" (1970): xerox

Feb. 15 TOPIC: WORK (domestic labor, unpaid labor, "labor shifting," gender and the economy)

Readings: *Ehrenreich/English, For Her Own Good (available in MICA Bookstore), Ch. 1- 3 (pp. 3-108)

*Shannon Brownlee, Overtreated (excerpt): Xerox

- Feb. 22 TOPIC: WORK: Parenting and the economy
Readings: *Ann Crittenden, The Price of Motherhood (available in MICA bookstore) Ch 1-6 (pp. 1-130)
* Mothers Movement Online: Read Judith Stacy, "Why We Need Time To Care: The Gap in US Family Policy" at http://www.mothersmovement.org/features/05/time_day/time_to_care_1.htm and browse around the "mother's movement online" website
* Optional: See also www.momsrising.org
- March 1 TOPIC: WORK: Parenting and the economy
Readings: * Ann Crittenden, The Price of Motherhood Ch. 7-13 (pp. 131-274)
* Video (in class): Marilyn Waring: "Who's Counting?"
- March 8 TOPIC: Feminist Economics and the "Genuine Progress Indicator"
Readings: *Marilyn Waring, If Women Counted (available in the MICA Bookstore), Ch. 1-4 (pp. 1-114)
* Internet Research on "Alternative Economic Measures" (alternatives to the GNP)
- March 15 TOPIC: WORK (women and the global economy; feminization of migrant labor: nannies, maids and sex workers; the value of caregiving)
Readings: *Ehrenreich/Hochschild. Global Woman (available in MICA Bookstore), , Introduction (1), and essays by Ehrenreich (85), Zarembka (142), Brennan (154), Pei-Chia Lan (169), and Sassen (254)
* Cynthia Enloe, "The Global Sneaker" (Xerox)
- March 22 Spring Break--no class
- March 29 TOPICS: Gender and science; "embodied reason"
Readings: Ehrenreich/English, For Her Own Good, Ch. 4 and 5 (pp. 111-200)
* Sandra Harding, "The Science Question and Feminism" (Xerox)
* Susan Faludi, from Backlash (Xerox)
- Apr. 5 TOPIC: Eco-Feminism
Readings: *Vandana Shiva, Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply
*Shiva, "The Impoverishment of the Environment: Women and Children Last" (Xerox)
- Apr. 12 Visual responses
- Apr. 19 TOPIC: Feminism and Religion:
Readings: Rita Gross, Feminism and Religion, Ch 1-3 (pp. 1-104)
- Apr 26 TOPIC: Feminism and Religion:
Readings: Rita Gross, Feminism and Religion, Ch. 4-6 (pp. 105-246): focus on Ch 5
*Elaine Pagels, "What Became of God the Mother?" (1976; xerox)
*Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman" (Xerox)
- May 3 TOPIC: Feminism and visual art: is there a "feminist aesthetic"?
*Art Bulletin (Xerox)
TOPIC: Forms of activism; the future of feminism
- Final paper due

The National Conference on Gender (NCG), sponsored by the Gender Public Advocacy Committee (G PAC), brings together all the different communities and identities that have a common interest in ending discrimination and violence caused by gender stereotypes.

In an attempt to honor individual identities, while at the same time hoping to inspire coalitions across boundaries of expertise, experience, and community, the NCG organizers have evolved the following suggestions. These may be worthwhile as guidelines for our classroom discussions here as well.

* With many different people in attendance, not all of us will know about every other person's experiences. Let's take the risk, and the time, to educate each other about the different impacts of gender in our lives.

* "I Don't Feel Safe, Because of You:" Each of us needs to feel safe, but each of us is also responsible for our own safety. Unless someone threatens you physically or is overtly hostile, please think twice about using issues of safety or victimhood to close down debate.

* Hierarchies of Oppression: "I have it a lot worse than you do." Ranking and comparing oppressions usually just leaves everyone feeling disrespected or misunderstood, and usually does nothing to solve our common problems and bring us together. Please think twice about comparing your pain to someone else's. And try not to assume that anyone else hasn't paid a heavy price to be who and what they are and to bring their particular gifts into this world.

* Privilege: All of us walk around in one cocoon of privilege or another. Some of us have some gender privilege, but not race. Others have race but not gender or class. Introducing the argument of privilege can be used to illuminate as well as to diminish. Please make sure you use it in a way that doesn't overlook the price each of us has paid to survive.

* Generalizations: Generalizations, such as, "You straight white males just don't get it" are something we all use and we're usually wrong, because none of us is merely the sum of our group. We're all individuals and want to be recognized as such. Please think twice before making statements about "all straight people," or "all trans men," or about demonizing any one group.

* Representation: Look at who's in your workshops. If you see someone you think is the "only one" in the room, please consider that maybe their voice needs to be extra-heard. And think about who's not in the room, and which voices are not heard.

* Gender Rights and "Gender Transgression:" Gender oppression is not only about "transgressing" gender norms. It's also about a 4-year old jock-in-training who finds herself forced into pigtails and skirts; a quiet, artistic boy who is beat up in the boy's locker room; or a lesbian femme sexually assaulted and then blamed for wearing a short skirt and tight sweater. At some time in our lives, almost all of us have been harassed, shamed, or made to feel afraid because we don't meet someone's ideal of a "real man" or a "real woman." Gender rights are for those of us who transcend narrow gender stereotypes, but they're also human rights, and they're for all of us.