

**Seminar in Feminist Theory (revised 1/28)**

GIS 3614-001

T/TH 10:30-12:20 in B105

Richard Stockton College of New Jersey

Spring 2013

Dr. Deborah Gussman

Office: F137

Hours: T/TH 1:30-2:20 and by appointment

Phone: 609-652-4657

Email: deborah.gussman@stockton.edu

Homepage: wp.stockton.edu/gussman

Blackboard: GIS 3614

**Required text:** Wendy K. Kolmar & Frances Bartkowski, *Feminist Theory: A Reader* 3d Ed. (McGraw Hill, 2010) ISBN 978007351226

**Recommended text:** Susan Hubbuch, *Writing Research Papers Across the Curriculum* (Wadsworth 2009) ISBN 978-0495899839, or another recently published (2009 or later) writing handbook such as Hacker, MLA handbook, etc.

**Course description:** This course serves as the required capstone course for students pursuing a minor in Women's Studies, and is also open to other interested students. The main focus of the course is reading and discussion of primary works of feminist theory. The course considers how human beings create, interpret and evaluate knowledge claims about the world. Each student is required to create and present individual and group projects that integrate and synthesize material from this course and other material related to feminist theories and issues. This course assumes feminism's value; students must be prepared to work from this assumption. Students should also come ready to read and re-read, write and re-write, think and re-think intensively.

In this course we will:

- explore the broad range of theories which make up the body of scholarship known as "feminist theory."
- consider some of the fundamental questions these theories raise about the origins of gender difference, the nature and origins of patriarchy, the intersection between gender, race, class, sexuality, and nationality as categories of analysis or bases of oppression or empowerment.
- improve skills in reading, critical thinking and applying ideas to life and concrete situations.
- improve skills in oral communications.

In particular, this course has three essential goals. Students will:

- **Learn fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories** (e.g., learn what constitutes and how to interpret and understand feminist theory)
- **Learn to apply course material** (e.g., produce writing that demonstrates the ability to apply feminist theory to your research and/or personal and professional lives)
- **Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas** (e.g., critically evaluate a range of feminist theories) Other important goals for this course include:

- **Developing skill in expressing yourself in writing** (e.g., sharpening your critical writing and analysis skills, particularly in regard to integrating feminist theory into your writing)
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**Accommodation for Students with Special Needs:** Stockton College complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations should contact the Learning Access Program located in the West Quad Building, Suite 110 or by call 652-4988. Additional information on the program may be obtained from <http://www2.stockton.edu/wellness/lap.html>.

**Academic Honesty:** Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and risk failing the course. Other sanctions may also apply and all cases will be reported to Academic Affairs. You are responsible for knowing this policy, particularly what constitutes plagiarism:

<http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=14&pageID=62>. Contact your instructor if you have questions.

**Email Policy:** Please keep the following in mind when communicating with me outside of class:

- I usually check my email each day in the morning. Please plan your email questions accordingly and, while I often respond immediately, allow a twenty-four hour time frame for my reply.
- Always try to visit my office hours with specific questions about course material. If you were absent, contact a classmate with questions about missed material and then visit office hours if you still have questions.
- Visit me during office hours to discuss grades. This includes final grades. Grades should be discussed in person during office hours or other arranged meetings. I will not discuss grades via email.

**Office Hours:** Think of my office as an extension of the classroom and use my office hours to discuss any aspect of the reading and material covered during class: come chat with me about your class projects, writing, questions about the reading, quizzes, lecture or discussion, ideas you wish to develop, reading and interpretive strategies you'd like to try, and so on. Students who visit office hours tend to perform better.

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### **Course Requirements:**

This is a GIS seminar. The first part, GIS, refers to *integration and synthesis*, dealing with the inter-connectedness of ideas and information. GIS courses are designed to help students "transcend specialization and gain perspective on self, areas of knowledge, and the human condition." They are interdisciplinary and cross academic divisions. The seminar mode refers to a group situation where faculty and students participate as intellectuals, but not specialists, mutually engaging with each other around the topic, with an emphasis on seeking integration. So, perhaps somewhat more than ordinary courses, a GIS seminar requires careful reading,

consideration of the reading and other ideas, preparation for class discussions and a willingness to open windows and interconnect ideas.

You will be expected to:

1. **Attend class:** you are allotted 4 absences. I do not distinguish between excused or unexcused absences, so plan accordingly. If you exceed 4 absences due to medical or other emergencies, I will ask for documentation. For each absence after your first four, your final grade will be reduced. Regular, spirited class attendance is a crucial component to passing this course. I will not give incompletes at the end of the semester unless arrangements are made well in advance and you have the appropriate reasons outlined by College policy;
2. **Attend class meetings prepared:** this means DO THE READING WITH GUSTO; I expect class to be highly participatory, with everyone contributing comments, questions, and insights based on the assigned readings and interpreted through prior and emerging knowledge and experience. I will generally lead discussion at the beginning of the semester and will gradually turn over responsibility to students as the semester progresses;
3. **Participate in large and small group discussions and assignments:** Unless otherwise indicated, there will be a reading assignment for every class. The reading is CHALLENGING and will take you several hours to complete and understand. **ALL students** are expected to do the assigned reading for every class, prior to class, as preparation for class discussions. I am very text-based in my approach to this material, and you should bring your book to every class;
4. **Complete all assignments:** Passing the course requires timely completion of ALL assignments, long and short, in-class and out-of-class. No late/incomplete assignments will be accepted after the last day of class;
5. **Unplug:** Silence cell phones, cease text messaging, and do not surf the web or check email during class. An inability to unplug will negatively impact your final grade. This and all other disruptive behavior (e.g., sleeping in class, inappropriate language directed at students/instructor, perpetual lateness, etc.) constitutes grounds for dismissal from class and/or point penalties.

#### **Grades:**

##### **Grading Scale**

100-95: A	86.9-83: B	76.9-73: C	66.9-63: D	62.9-
94.9-90: A-	82.9-80: B-	72.9-70: C-	60: D-	
89.9-87: B+	79.9-77: C+	69.9-67: D+	59.9 & below: F	

##### **Your final grade will be determined as follows:**

Reader reports: 300

Participation: 100

Mid-term theory analysis paper: 200

Final theory application paper: 400

**Total points possible: 1000**

#### **Course Assignments:**

**Reader Reports (12 total; 25 points each; 300 points total):** You are expected to write about the assigned readings for 12 classes. The reader reports are typed worksheets that craft a focused summary of all the day's assigned reading. You must identify the main argument of each article in your own words and summarize the key supporting points. The writing is intended as a preparation for and as an aid to class discussion and will **not be accepted late or if you are**

**absent from class.** (No, it is not ok to turn in your report and then tell me you are too ill to stay for class.) I recognize that we all have emergencies/stresses/etc. and so you are free to opt out of 7 Reader Reports of your own choosing without penalty. I suggest you plan to do all of them and save your 7 free-opt-outs for real emergencies/crunch times. The best reports will demonstrate close, careful, and thoughtful reading of the assignment. If you realize during the course of class discussion that you misunderstood or left out key elements on your report, you may jot down amendments on your report. Note that while I will always collect these writings at the end of class, I may not always provide detailed feedback—much depends on how class discussion goes. Drop by my office hours or set up an appointment if you would like more detailed responses from me about this writing.

**Participation (100 points):** You will be evaluated on active participation in class discussions and seminar-leading; attendance at every class is expected, but not sufficient for a high participation grade. To prepare for class participation, complete your reader reports and think about the following general discussion questions related to the readings.

Some questions that we will want to address with regard to ALL of the readings in the course:

- **What is the author's "project"?** By this I mean, what is s/he trying to achieve, who is his/her primary audience? Is s/he in dialogue—explicitly or implicitly—with other thinkers (feminist or non-feminist)?
- **What is the author's main point?** How does it relate to previous readings?
- **What are the key concepts?** How do they relate to other readings?
- **What assumptions does the author make?**

Some questions that will always be in the background, and that might be useful sparks for your mid-semester paper and/or final paper:

5. **How is theory conceptualized? How is feminism conceptualized?**
6. **How does one evaluate theory?**
7. **What is the value of theory?** Why study it? Why create it?
8. **How does theory relate to "real life"?**

**Midterm Theory Analysis Paper (200 points):** (5-8 pages) This paper will serve as the foundation of your Final Application Paper. It will address a focused aspect of the theoretical or material question/issue related to feminism that your Final Paper will apply and address in greater detail. The midterm paper asks you to select two or more of the feminist essays from our textbook in order to analyze what the essays argue about a shared key issue. Focus on identifying the essays' arguments, how the authors go about supporting their arguments, and how the arguments compare. Include a Works Cited. **Due Friday 3/8 by midnight on Blackboard.**

**Final Theory Application Paper (400 points total):** In lieu of a final exam, and to fulfill the requirements for a Women's Studies Minor, everyone is expected to do a final feminist theory application paper and to present the results of their project to the class. Those who are minoring in Women's Studies will also need to present their projects to the Women's Studies Faculty. The following guidelines are NON-NEGOTIABLE:

**TYPE OF PAPER AND TOPIC/FOCUS:** This paper asks you to apply the theory you analyzed in the midterm paper to a text requiring feminist analysis (approximately 15-20 typed pages). You may include part or all of your midterm paper as part of your final paper. While there is great flexibility in your project's focus, the topic must relate in some way to material we cover in this class—that is, to feminist theories, feminist action, and/or feminist methodology. (The midterm paper will help you establish this focus.) Also, your final paper

must make links to and reference feminist theory articles. You will need to draw on your experience in WS, in your major, and/or other interests for project topic ideas.

**Topic Description:** Submit the broad outline of your project's focus no later than **Feb 14**. The description and outline should include: a topic description of at least 250 words (1 typed page), a rough outline of your final paper, and a bibliography of at least 5 sources. (0-10 points for a detailed description and outline and timely topic approval)

**PROGRESS REPORT:** You will submit a written progress report on your final paper to me no later than **Mar 8** (0-20 points for a timely progress report that indicates actual progress). I strongly encourage you to speak with me outside of class about your paper, i.e. during office hours or other arranged meetings. The Progress Report should include an updated topic description and bibliography of at least 10 sources, a description of work completed, and a timeline and description of work that remains to be completed. The progress report should state your working thesis/main point and outline how your project plans to support that argument/analysis.

**FINAL PAPER COMPLETION:** Failure to meet the **April 25** deadline will result in a late penalty of 5% per day late. No projects will be accepted after the last day of classes. Your final grade will be determined by the project's ability to meet the standards, objectives, and guidelines outlined by the grading rubric. See Final Paper Rubric.

**PRESENTATION:** Students who are minoring in Women's Studies will give a presentation on their paper to the Women's Studies faculty as part of the requirements for completing the minor. All of you will give a presentation to our class. (0-50 points) Students will also evaluate each others' presentations. Presentations will take place **April 18-30th**.

**SELF-ASSESSMENT:** The assessment concisely explains the paper's process, methods, your intended goals and objectives, and your sense of how successfully you met those goals and objectives, including any obstacles, particular strengths or weaknesses of the paper, etc. This 2 page typed assessment narrative is due **April 30**. (0-20 points)

**Paper Revision Policy:** This course is based on the principle that revisions take place **before** the instructor evaluates a paper for a grade. To this end, consider dropping in during office hours or other arranged meetings to discuss your papers in advance of due dates. Drop in at any stage of the writing process: from your initial brainstorming to nailing down those final brass tacks. The instructor will happily read and comment on thesis statements (usually between 1-3 sentences) via Blackboard email. If you wish the instructor to read longer drafts, drop by her office hours. Additionally, I encourage you to use your peer resources during the draft and revision process, including Stockton's Writing Center:  
<http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=70&pageID=2>.

## Class Schedule

### January

#### Week 1: Introductions to Class and Feminist Theory

22      Introductions: to the course, Blackboard, and to each other.

- 24 Feminist Theory 101: "Reading Feminist Theory," Articles 1-3 (Treichler/Kramarae, Walker, Bunch): 2-15 Some questions to consider:
- On what basis did the editors select and organize the chosen selections, and what might be other ways?
  - What fits with your pre-existing sense of "feminism" before you started the book, what surprises you or is new to you in the definitions in the readings?
  - Why do Treichler and Kramarae have all those conceptualizations there? What is the authors' main point, and their definition of feminism?
  - What's the difference between a feminist and a womanist?

## **Week 2: Thinking about Feminist Theory**

- 29 **Final Paper Overview and Theory's Place:** Articles 4-6 (Lorde, Lugones/Spelman, hooks): 15-33  
Some questions to consider:
- What does Lorde mean by "Poetry is not a luxury"?
  - How do Lugones and Spelman suggest that we should evaluate/critique theory?
  - What does hooks believe theory should do? How should we evaluate theory?
  - Integrative: What is theory? What does it provide and/or allow us to do? What criteria (suggested by the authors and/or your own) can we use to evaluate theory?
- 31 **Feminisms Overview:** "Lexicon of the Debates": 34-55; Article 18 (Douglass 88-90)

## **February**

### **Week 3 Bodies and Epistemologies**

- 5 **Bodies:** Articles 12, 82, 97 (Truth 75, Davis 447-453, Garland Thomson 529-541)
- 7 **Epistemologies:** Articles 68; 81; 90 (Haraway 336-346, Collins 442-447, Narayan 491-499)

### **Week 4: Essentialism/Social Construction/Difference**

- 12 **Difference:** Articles 47; 72 (Ortner 201-210, Alcoff 368-378)
- 14 **Difference:** Article 35; 45 (de Beauvoir 147-158, Radicalesbians 197-200)  
**PRELIMINARY FINAL PAPER TOPIC OUTLINE DUE**

### **Week 5: Intersections of Race, Class and Gender**

- 19 **Intersections:** Articles 59; 63; 89 (Lorde 281-285, Yamada 308-311, Crenshaw 482-491)
- 21 **Intersections:** Articles 7; 21; 52; 82 (Navajo 60, Stanton 96-100, NietoGomez 245-248, Davis 447-453)

### **Week 6: Language**

- 26 **Language:** Articles 16; 17; 24; 32 (Anthony 82-86, Woodhull 86-88, Wells-Barnett 107-

109, Woolf 135-140)

28      **Language:** Articles 38; 41; 46; 95 (NOW 175-177, Redstockings 182-183, Older Woman's League 201, Baumgardner and Richards 522-5)

## **March**

### **Week 7: Power**

5 **Power:** Articles 29; 58; 66 (Sanger 126-127, Frye 275-281, Mohanty 319-327)

7 **Power:** Article 50; 61; 78; 87(Mernissi 221-226, Rich 290-299, MacKinnon 413-425, Bikini Kill 476)

8 Midterm paper due by midnight on Blackboard.

### **Week 8: Spring Break: Enjoy!**

### **Week 9: Sexual Division of Labor and “Third World”/Global/Transnational Feminism**

19      **Labor:** Articles 8; 22; 28; 36 (Wollstonecraft 60-64, Gilman 100-104, Eastman 120-122; Friedan 162-167)

21      **Global:** Articles 25; 51; 86 (Goldman 109-114, Rubin 230-245, Laduke 469-472)

### **Week 10: “Third World”/Global/Transnational Feminism**

26      Preceptorial Advising—No Classes

28      *Born Into Brothels* viewing (NO Reader Report Due)

April

### **Week 11: “Third World”/Global/Transnational Feminism and Sexualities**

2 *Born Into Brothels* Discussion: Svati Shah's “Born into Saving Brothel Children,” on SAMAR's website: <http://www.samarmagazine.org/archive/article.php?id=190>; Articles 96; 93 (Grewal and Kaplan 524-29, Enloe 508-516)

4 **Sexualities:** Articles 92; 99 (Halberstam 502-507, Butler, 546-552)

### **Week 12: Sexualities**

9 *Southern Comfort* viewing (NO Reader Report Due)

11 *Southern Comfort* Discussion. Articles 84; 88; 94 (Bordo 459-466, Delombard 477-481, Fausto-Sterling 516-522)

### **Week 13: Sexualities**

16 Writing and Editing Day. I will be available in my office during class hours.

18 Presentations

**Week 14: Theories in Practice**

23 Presentations

25 Presentations. Final paper due.

**Week 15: Theories in Practice**

30 Presentations. Self-assessment paper due.

**May**

8 Senior grades due.

14 Remaining grades due.

## Seminar in Feminist Theory/Gussman

**Reader Report Worksheet:** Fill out a worksheet for each assigned article. The worksheet must be typed; hand-written worksheets will not be accepted for credit. Students will lose proportional points for not completing a worksheet for each assigned article. For example, if the assigned reading includes two articles and the student only completes one worksheet, the student will lose 50% of the 25 possible points (12.5points).

1. Identify the article's title and author:
2. Identify the author's thesis or a sentence or two that best summarize his/her main idea. Quote the thesis here. Be sure to cite the quotation properly (e.g., include quotation marks and page number).
3. Restate the author's thesis or main idea in your own words. Do this carefully so you do not plagiarize: an unacceptable paraphrase only replaces a few words with synonyms or changes the sentence order; in other words, the sentence is too close to the original.
4. Briefly summarize how the author(s) supports the above argument. In other words, what are the article's main supporting details?
5. Write a discussion question based on this article. For example, your question may raise an issue based on relating the article to other readings, focus on applying the article's ideas to a specific situation or context, or focus on having the class look more closely at particular passages from the article.