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WGS 205
Graduate Course in the Foundations of Feminist Thought

WMNS 205 explores a series of canonical works in the fields of feminist theory and gender studies with an eye to both the nature of gender-based oppression and its possible remedies. The course begins with an exploration of key schools of feminist thought in the liberal, socialist, existentialist, radical separatist, and postmodernist traditions and then zeroes in on a series of controversies associated with contemporary feminist movements. How, it asks, can women be identified as a group without violating the cultural, racial, and religious identities of particular women? Do theories of intersectionality help us in this context? What are we to make of biological explanations of gender and sexual identity? Are they valid? How are we to understand masculinity and femininity? Are they related to males and females/men and women? What is the source of dichotomization here? Are contemporary theories of freedom and power masculinist? If so, how might we develop feminist alternatives? What about feminist theories of knowing and feminist theories of care? Are they valid? normatively acceptable? Is globalization damaging to women who live in poorer nations? Can shared interests be located among women from different parts of the world? Does global feminism make sense? If so, how should it be organized: as a universal movement or on the basis of coalition politics?

Course Requirements: Class attendance is mandatory. Students will be asked to write either two medium length analytic papers (7-8 pages) or a longer (20 page+) term paper on material covered in the course.

The following required books can be purchased at the Brandeis University Bookstore:

J. S. Mill, The Subjection of Women.
 Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex.
 bell hooks, Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center.
 Patricia Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought.
 R. W. Connell, Gender.
 Susan Okin, Is Multiculturalism Good for Women?.
 Christa Wichterich, The Globalized Woman

All required selections outside of these books can be found on WebCt and in a coursepack (CP) to be purchased in class.g

Seminar Readings

NOTE: The seminars will be organized around the selections listed for each session. So please do read these selections by the date cited.

January 16: Introduction to Course

January 23: Liberal Feminism and its Critics

J. S. Mill, The Subjection of Women.

Julia Annas, "Mill and the 'Subjection of Women'" (WebCt and CP).

Marion Trapper, "Can a Liberal Be a Feminist?" (WebCt and CP).

January 30: Equality and Difference

Allison Jaggar, "Sexual Equality" (WebCt and CP).

Iris Young, "Humanism, Gynocentricism and Feminist Politics"
(WebCt and CP).

Diana Majury, "Strategizing in Equality" (WebCt and CP)

Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill, "Difference and Domination"
(WebCt and CP)

Andrew Sullivan et al., selections from Same-Sex Marriage: Pro and Con
(WebCt and CP)

February 6: Socialist Feminism and the Possibilities of A Dual Systems Theory

Friedrich Engels, selection from The Origin of the Family, Private Property
and the State (WebCt and CP).

Alexandra Kollantai, "Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle" and
"Communism and the Family" (WebCt and CP).

Margaret Benston, "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation"
(WebCt and CP).

Nellie Wong. "Socialist Feminism: Our Bridge to Freedom" (WebCt and CP).

Barbara Ehrenreich, "What is Socialist Feminism?" (WebCt and CP).

Iris Young, "Socialist Feminism and the Limits of Dual Systems Theory"
(Webct and CP).

Gloria Joseph, "The Incompatible Menage a Trois: Marxism, Feminism, and
Racism" (WebCt and CP).

February 13: Simone de Beauvoir and Existentialist Feminism:

Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, Introduction, Chapters 1-3;16-25;
and Conclusion.

Elizabeth Spelman, "Who is the 'We' in Simone de Beauvoir's
Second Sex? (WebCt and CP).

February 27: Lesbian Feminist Theory and the Question of Separatism

Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Experience"
(WebCt and CP).

Cheshire Calhoun, "Separating Lesbian Theory from Feminist Theory"
(WebCt and CP).

Marilyn Frye, "Some Reflections on Separatism and Power"
(WebCt and CP).

Please also read at least two of the following:

Audre Lorde, "I am Your Sister: Black Women Organizing Across
Sexualities" (WebCt and CP).

Gayatri Gopinat, "Funny Boys and Girls: Notes from a Queer
South Asian Planet" (WebCt and CP).

Karin Aguilar-San Juan, "Going Home: Enacting Justice in Queer Asian America" (WebCt and CP).

Amy Lind and Jessica Share, "Queering Development: Institutionalized Heterosexuality in Development Theory and Practice in Politics in Latin America (WebCt and CP).

February 6: Gender and Sexuality/Masculinity

R. W. Connell, Gender, Chapters 1-5.

Judith Butler, "Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification" (WebCt and CP).

R. W. Connell, "The Social Organization of Masculinity" (WebCt and CP).

_____, "Men of Reason" (WebCt and CP).

NOTE: If you are planning on writing on Masculinity or are just interested in it, I recommend:

R. W. Connell., Masculinities, 2nd ed.

Constructing Masculinity, eds, Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson.

I will put copies of both on reserve in the Brandeis Library.

March 13: Race, Gender and Class: the Hierarchies of Power/Patriarchy

bell hooks, Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center.

March 20: Black Feminism and the Question of Intersectionality

Patricia Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought.

Kimberly Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny" Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew" (CP).

March 27: Distinguished WGS Faculty Lecture (4:30- ; International Lounge)

April 17: Feminist Theories of Knowing/Feminist Theories of Care

Carol Gilligan, selections, In a Different Voice (WebCt and CP).

Jean Crenshaw, chapters 7 and 8 (“The Idea of a Female Ethic” and “Maternal Thinking”) from Philosophy and Feminist Thinking (WebCt and CP).

Jennifer Saul, chapter 7 (“Women’s ‘Different Voice’”), Feminism: Issues and Arguments (WebCt and CP).

April 24: Feminism and Multiculturalism

Susan Okin, Is Multiculturalism Good for Women?

Jennifer Saul, “Feminism and ‘Respect for Cultures’” (WebCt and CP).

Sarah Song, “Majority Norms and the Compatibility of Feminism and Multiculturalism” (WebCt and CP).

May 1: Women and Globalization

Chrisa Wichterich, Globalized Women.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Feminist Encounters: Locating the Politics of Experience” (WebCt and CP).

Amrita Basu, “Globalization of the Local/Localization of the Global: Mapping Transnational Women’s Movements” (WebCt and CP).