

# WGS 353: Feminist Theory

Dr. Allison Hobgood (email: ahobgood@willamette.edu; office: 503-370-6211)

Class Meets: TTh 9:40-11:10am, SML 205

Office Hours: Th 12:30-2:30pm or by appointment in Eaton 214

## ***Course Description***

Our purpose in this course is to engage with several foundational and vibrantly contested conversations within feminist theory. We will examine basic issues such as gender difference and its relationship to women's subordination; the intersections of gender with other dimensions of social identity and power (e.g., class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, nation); the way gendered discourse shapes social reality. These issues will be discussed from a variety of feminist theoretical perspectives (e.g., those influenced by liberalism, Marxism/socialism, psychoanalysis, radical feminism, post-modernism, and post-colonialism). The course is organized around central “keywords” (or conversations) within feminist theory. By focusing on the contradictions and confluences among these conversations, we can avoid balkanizing feminisms into competing and mutually exclusive categories or periodizing feminist thought into a progress narrative composed of “waves.” The readings for each keyword challenge, support, augment, and contradict one another, illustrating that feminist theory is a polyphonic, complex, and self-reflexive dialogue. (Prereq: One course in WGS/WMST or consent of instructor)

## ***Required Texts***

1. Kolmar and Bartkowski, *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, second edition (McGraw-Hill 2005)
2. All additional readings will be accessible via WISE e-reserve or handouts

## ***Required Assignments***

3 short papers (3 pp each), weekly WISE postings (newspaper reflections and bibliographical annotations), a final course syllabi and associated presentation, various writing assignments and reading quizzes both in and out of class, draft workshops for papers

## ***Course Objectives***

1. You will understand the diverse range and scope of both historical and contemporary “feminisms.”
2. You will be able to identify and explain key concepts and theoretical strains in feminist theory.
3. You will be familiar with the social, cultural, and historical circumstances surrounding and informing women’s subordination and empowerment.
4. You will understand the role of feminist theory in promoting activism and social change.

5. You will understand the complexities of academic writing and be able to develop an innovative thesis, anticipate your reading audience, reason and argue convincingly, and support your claims with concrete, textual evidence.
6. You will demonstrate the ability to practice writing as a process that entails brainstorming, research, outlining, and revision through multiple drafts.
7. You will be able to identify and evaluate (via an annotated bibliography) useful research sources.
8. You will make connections between the theoretical arguments advocated by feminist theorists and contemporary women's issues in our world.

### ***Disability Statement***

Willamette University is sensitive to the needs of students with disabilities. The Disability and Learning Services Office strives to facilitate reasonable accommodations for those students with a qualifying disability or temporary medical condition and to provide academic assistance on an individual basis to any undergraduate or graduate student who requests it. Any student who requires these accommodations should contact the Disability and Learning Services Office directly at 503-370-6471.

### ***Course Policies***

#### ***Academic Integrity***

Students of Willamette University are members of a community that values excellence and integrity in every aspect of life. As such, we expect all community members to live up to the highest standards of personal, ethical, and moral conduct. Students are expected not to engage in any type of academic or intellectually dishonest practice and encouraged to display honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in all they do. Plagiarism and cheating are especially offensive to the integrity of the courses in which they occur and against the College community as a whole. These acts involve intellectual dishonesty, deception, and fraud, which inhibit the honest exchange of ideas. Plagiarism and cheating may, therefore, be grounds for failure in the course and/or dismissal from the College.

#### ***Class Preparedness***

Always come to class prepared and having read all of the assigned material for that day. Your success in this course will depend not only on the quality of your papers and/or exams but also on your contribution to in-class and online discussions. Also, please bring your primary texts and all supplementary materials to class each day. It is impossible to perform adept close readings and analyses without a text in front of you. Failure to bring your text will count against your participation grade.

### *Attendance*

Attendance is crucial. Because this course relies upon collaborative discussion, **more than three unexcused absences will lower your participation grade by one full letter** unless appropriate justification is given **before** the missed class session. Your **participation in in-class draft workshops** will also be crucial to your grade, so these days are not to be missed.

### *Tardiness*

I will **close the classroom door at precisely 9:40 am**. If you come in after the door is closed, you will be considered tardy. **Three tardies translates into an unexcused absence** that will affect your grade. Please be on time.

### *Classroom Etiquette*

All electronic messaging devices (cell phones, etc) must be **off or in the silent position**. Use of computers is strictly limited to note-taking; machines used for other purposes will be confiscated for the duration of the class period. Be respectful of each other and always listen to differing opinions and ideas with an open mind. Obviously, do not sleep in class.

### *Writing Center*

Please use Willamette's Writing Center. It is a valuable resource that offers writing guidance, peer tutoring, paper feedback, and assignment advice and preparation. Find more info at: <http://www.willamette.edu/dept/wcenter/>

### *WISE postings*

In addition to required class attendance, reading, papers, and presentations, **you are expected to engage in formal, written class participation as noted on the syllabus. These exercises will consist of weekly online WISE postings.** Every week you are expected to spend a minimum of one hour either reading *The New York Times*—or other legitimate news source—and writing a response OR reading an additional article on feminist theory and crafting an annotated bibliographic entry.

### **For newspaper responses:**

(*The New York Times* is available for free on-line. Register at [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).)

In these weekly responses, you should briefly summarize an article that has to do with a “women’s” or “feminist” issue and then try to connect your reading to ideas/topics we have discussed in class. The goal of this assignment is to help you make associations between feminist theory and your “real life.” You might consider the following questions: How do women’s issues in the news shed light on the theoretical ideas we are broaching in class? How do they complicate or enhance your understanding of academic theories? Were you surprised to find links/similarities between “theory” and “praxis”? What are those links? How does this conversation impact the way you operate in the world or who you imagine yourself to be? All responses should include the title, date, and source of the article and at least two paragraphs: a brief summary paragraph of 4 to 5 sentences, and a reflection/reaction paragraph of at least 5 sentences.

### **For annotated bibliographic entries:**

In addition to your assigned readings, choose a short academic essay, article, or excerpt (from the Kolmar and Bartkowski *Reader*) and summarize its contents. These entries should offer appropriate bibliographic citations (following MLA format) and a paragraph or so of information about the reading and its utility. Be sure to consider how your essay is in conversation with ideas we have discussed in class and how it supports, changes, or complicates the theory you have already read. At semester's end, we will compile the annotations into a supplementary bibliography for the course. For source ideas see Kolmar and Bartkowski as well as the following feminist theory database:

<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/enin.html>

**Group 1 will begin by posting newspaper responses, while Group 2 will begin with annotated entries. On days you post to WISE, please post your responses by 8am on the day they are due. Be prepared to discuss your postings in class that day.**

### *Final Syllabi*

The other component of this course will be creating **a syllabus of your own design for a course that emphasizes feminist theory**. You may wish to draw heavily from our course reading list and/or other parts of the texts from which we have read, or you may wish to find other sources that explicate the central concepts, questions, and architecture of your course. Your syllabus may be for a course of study at any level. It should include readings, assignments, goals, and a description that clarifies the outcomes and organization of the course. **Our last 2 class periods will be devoted to sharing your syllabi via formal presentations.** When you turn in your final syllabus, you must submit a 2-3 page analysis that sharply and critically explains the purpose, goals, and logic of the course. Be as creative as you like.

### *Grading Policies*

#### *Assignment Punctuality*

All papers must be turned in to the instructor **in person on the date they are due**. Email submissions and late assignments will **NOT** be accepted unless otherwise discussed. If you are going to miss class, your paper is due **beforehand**, and you must notify me of your absence or it will go unexcused. **No make-up exams** will be allowed without prior arrangement. Make-up exams **MUST** be taken when rescheduled.

#### *Paper Requirements*

All papers must meet the following requirements in order to be graded:

1. Times New Roman font, size 12
2. MLA format
3. Double-spaced
4. A title
5. Some papers will have citation requirements. In these cases, you must have a works cited page and proper citation rules must be followed in the essay.
6. Electronic websites **DO NOT** count as legitimate sources.

### *Grading System*

**Participation:** 20%

**3 Papers:** 50% (3pp each)

**Syllabus and presentation:** 15%

**Weekly WISE postings:** 15%

### *Paper Criteria*

An **“A” paper** offers a persuasive, eloquent, stylistically sophisticated argument. It presents a compelling thesis, which is then developed into a well-structured, coherent essay. An “A” paper uses evidence effectively. Such a paper thoughtfully considers and analyzes other viewpoints, including the views of the paper’s intended audience. An “A” paper’s style is distinctive, and this style helps further the writer’s argument.

A **“B” paper** also offers a convincing argument. It has an interesting thesis and is, on the whole, well-structured. Like an A paper, it too considers alternative positions and does so in a thoughtful manner. A “B” paper’s style is clear and relatively free of errors that could hinder its readability and/or persuasiveness. A “B” paper grasps the significance of style in making an effective argument.

A **“C” paper** makes an argument but does not do so effectively. It may fail to present evidence in support of its thesis or it may present evidence in a haphazard and hence unconvincing manner. In addition, a paper will receive a “C” if it is stylistically unsophisticated, replete with digressions, lacks a sense of audience, or ignores opposing opinions.

A **“D” paper** fails to present an argument. The paper lacks a thesis and is merely a string of ideas, some of which may be very interesting but none of which are developed into a clear, rational, coherent essay. Additionally, a plethora of typos, stylistic problems, or grammatical flaws may turn any paper into a “D” paper if such lapses significantly affect the essay’s readability.

An **“F” paper** results when the writer neglects to hand in the assignment; refuses to address the paper topic; or violates common standards of decency. Additionally, plagiarism also will result in a paper grade of “F.”

### *Numerical Grading Criteria*

**A 4.0** Performance at this level is exceptional. The student consistently demonstrates excellent command over the content and methods of the course as well as originality, depth, and distinctive insights.

**A- 3.7** Performance at this level is of very high quality. The student demonstrates well above average command over the content and methods of the course as well as significant originality, depth, and distinctive insights.

**B+ 3.3** Performance at this level is very good. The student demonstrates a strong command over the content and methods of the course, reflects clear comprehension, and achieves all the stated objectives.

**B 3.0** Performance at this level is good. The student demonstrates an adept command over the content and methods of the course, reflects comprehension, and achieves the stated objectives.

**B- 2.7** Performance at this level is above average. The student demonstrates general command over the content and methods of the course and reflects and achieves the stated objectives.

**C+ 2.3** Performance at this level is slightly above average. The student demonstrates fair competence over the content and methods of the course and achieves nearly all the stated objectives.

**C 2.0** Performance at this level is average. The student demonstrates average competence over the content and methods of the course and achieves most of the stated objectives.

**C- 1.7** Performance at this level is below average. The student demonstrates less than average competence in the content and methods of the course. Clear comprehension and mastery of course objectives is not apparent.

**D+ 1.3** Performance at this level is less than satisfactory. The student demonstrates inadequate knowledge of the content and methods of the course and minimal engagement with course objectives.

**D 1.0** Performance at this level is marginal. The student demonstrates insufficient knowledge of the content and methods of the course and fails to meet the course objectives.

**F 0.0** Performance at this level is unacceptable. The student fails to demonstrate any knowledge of the methods and content of the course or to engage in any way with course objectives.

### ***Course Schedule*** (schedule is subject to change)

**Tu Jan 20 Course Introduction: Who Needs Feminism, Anyway?**

Discussion of Treichler and Kramare, "Feminism," 7-11 (*FT*)

**Th Jan 22 Feminism**

Toril Moi, "'I Am Not a Feminist But...': How Feminism Became the F-Word," 1735-1741 (e-reserve)

Nancy Cott, "Introduction" from *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 3-10 (e-reserve)

Joreen [Jo Freeman], "The BITCH Manifesto," 213-18 (*FT*)

**Tu Jan 27 Patriarchy (WISE posting Group 1)**

Nancy Miller, "On Being Wrong," 55-65 (e-reserve)

Kolmar and Bartkowski, "Power," 52-53 (FT)

Allan Johnson, "Patriarchy, the System: An It, Not a He, Them, or an Us," 75-97 (e-reserve)

**Th Jan 29 (WISE posting Group 2)**

Gerda Lerner, "The Creation of Patriarchy," 212-229 (e-reserve)

**Tu Feb 3 Sex and Gender (WISE posting Group 1)**

Kolmar and Bartkowski, "Sexualities," 56-58 (FT)

Denise Riley, "Does Sex Have a History," 437-46 (FT)

Catharine MacKinnon, "Sexuality," 475-88 (FT)

**Th Feb 5 (WISE posting Group 2)**

Judith Lorber, "Believing Is Seeing: Biology as Ideology," 37-54 (e-reserve)

Anne Koedt, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," 227-32 (FT)

**Tu Feb 10 Masculinity (WISE posting Group 1)**

Susan Bordo, "Reading the Male Body," 265-306 (e-reserve)

**Th Feb 12 (WISE posting Group 2)**

Michael Kimmel, "Consuming Manhood," 12-41 (e-reserve)

**Tu Feb 17 Motherhood (WISE posting Group 1)**

Kolmar and Bartkowski, "Sexual Division of Labor," 55-56 (FT)

Sara Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking," 342-367 (e-reserve)

Alexandra Kollontai, "Working Woman and Mother," 126-130 (FT)

**Th Feb 19 (WISE posting Group 2)**

Joan Tronto, "The 'Nanny Question' in Feminism," 34-51 (e-reserve)

**Tu Feb 24 Essentialism/ Social Construction**

Kolmar and Bartkowski, "Essentialism/Social Construction/Difference," 47-49 (FT)

Linda Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism," 426-37 (FT)

**Draft paper 1 (3pp) due in class, draft workshop**

**Th Feb 26**

Diana Fuss, "The 'Risk' of Essence," 455-64 (FT)

**Paper 1 due in class**

**Tu Mar 3 Performativity (WISE posting Group 1)**

Judith Butler, from *Gender Trouble*, 496-504 (FT)

Judith Halberstam, "Transgender Butch," 550-61 (FT)

[TBA: other excerpts from Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 1-43 (e-reserve)]

**Th Mar 5 (WISE posting Group 2)**

Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 384-94 (FT)

Rosi Baridotti, "Meta(l)morphosis: The Becoming Machine," 586-598 (FT)

**Tu Mar 10 Intersectionality: Race (WISE posting Group 1)**

Kolmar and Bartkowski, "Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender," 49-50 (FT)

Kimberle Crenshaw, "Intersectionality and Identity Politics," 533-42 (FT)

Angela Davis, "Rape, Racism, and the Myth of the Black Rapist," 172-201 (e-reserve)

**Th Mar 12 (WISE posting Group 2)**

Patricia Hill Collins, "The Politics of Black Feminist Thought," 3-18 (e-reserve)

Florynce Kennedy, "A Comparative Study: Accentuating the Similarities of the Societal Position of Women and Negroes," 169-72 (FT)

**Tu Mar 17 Intersectionality: More Race (WISE posting Group 1)**

Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 76-87 (e-reserve)

Zinn and Dill, "Theorizing Difference from Multiracial Feminism," 1-7 (e-reserve)

Anna NietoGomez, "Chicana Feminism," 296-302 (FT)

**Th Mar 19 (WISE posting Group 2)**

Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," 338-43 (FT)

Mitsuye Yamada, "Asian Pacific American Women and Feminism," 365-68 (FT)

**Tu Mar 24 Spring Break**

**Th Mar 26 Spring Break**

**Tu Mar 31 Intersectionality: Class**

Charlotte Bunch, "Not for Lesbians Only," 252-56 (FT)

bell hooks, "Feminism: A Transformational Politic," 464-69 (FT)

Angela Davis, "Outcast Mothers and Surrogates," 509-15 (FT)

**Th Apr 2**

Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism," 356-65, (FT)

**Draft paper 2 (3pp) due in class, draft workshop**

**Tu Apr 7 No Class Meeting**

**Paper 2 due 5pm (via email and WISE posting)**

**Th Apr 9 No Class Meeting, begin syllabus work**

**Tu Apr 14 Intersectionality: Disability (WISE posting Group 1)**

Susan Wendell, "The Social Construction of Disability," 35-56 (e-reserve)

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory," 575-86 (FT)

**Th Apr 16 (WISE posting Group 2)**

Ruth Hubbard, "Who Should and Who Should Not Inhabit the World?," 179-198 (e-reserve)

**Tu Apr 21 Transnationalism (WISE posting Group 1)**

Kolmar and Bartkowski, "Third World/Global Feminism," 54-55 (*FT*)

Chela Sandoval, "US Third World Feminism," 42-64 (e-reserve)

Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes," 372-79 (*FT*)

Winona LaDuke, "Mothers of our Nations," 525-29 (*FT*)

**Th Apr 23 (WISE posting Group 2)**

Cheryl Chase, "'Cultural Practice' or 'Reconstructive Surgery'? US Genital Cutting, the Intersex Movement, and Medical Double Standards," 126-151 (e-reserve)

Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Global Identities: Theorizing Transnational Studies of Sexuality," 569-75 (*FT*)

**Tu Apr 28 Activism**

Nancy Naples, "Feminist Activism and Activist Scholarship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," 1-20 (e-reserve)

Bring 2-3 examples of "activism" from the world/your experience (consider using info garnered from your newspaper journaling)

**Th Apr 30** Presentation of syllabi

**Tu May 5** Presentation of syllabi, closing remarks

**\*\*\*Paper 3 and Syllabus (with revisions and accompanying 2-3 page critical analysis) due May 11, 4pm in my office\*\*\***

**\*\*\*Seniors, your work is due to me earlier and via email: Saturday, May 9 at noon (12pm)\*\*\***