Introduction to Women’s Studies
WSTD 197  Spring/Fall 2006-2007
Tuesday/ Thursday 9:30 – 10:45

This syllabus is open to amendment.

Course Description:

Women’s Studies is an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary field that draws on feminist ideas and scholarship to develop historical, theoretical and cross-cultural frameworks for the comparative study of women and gender.

The primary goals of the course are to acquaint you with the great variety of women’s experiences and to foster an understanding of how gender, as a social construct, shapes people’s lives, primarily in the context of the United States, on various levels – from the most personal to the political and systemic. This course aims to show how gender does not operate in a vacuum, but rather must always be understood in its complex relation to other social constructs such as class, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Materials will include work from differing theoretical approaches that feminists have taken to ground their work in a variety of fields.

Course Content

The topics covered in course will be divided into four main areas of inquiry:

Section One: Questions of difference, feminist responses: gender, sexuality, and other inequalities; approaches to feminist theories.

Section Two: Women in society: family structures, work in and out of the home, popular culture and creative expression

Section Three: Bodies: gendering the body, women’s health issues, reproductive rights, violence against women

Section Four: Feminisms of our own: women and religion; peer presentations of Research Projects

Required texts:
2. Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics. bell hooks.
3. Additional articles, found on e-Reserves (see the library web page)
Skill-set acquisition (What we’ll learn)
In addition to learning about the challenges that differences of gender/race/class/sexuality provoke, this course also aims to help you better your abilities to…

1. **read critically:** individual students demonstrate their ability to comprehend and analyze the course material via weekly one-page reaction/reflection papers, and in-class discussion.
2. **write clearly:** individual students demonstrate the ability to articulately summarize the reading, and systematically support (using the texts) their responses to the weekly reaction/reflection questions. Students demonstrate the ability to present and support a longer, researched argument of their choosing (see Project).
3. **work collaboratively:** students demonstrate the ability to work in small groups during class discussions; students may also choose to work collaboratively on the Project (research and presentation)
4. **synthesize carefully:** individual students demonstrate the ability to explain, and to compare and contrast theories verbally in class discussions, and in writing on the midterm take-home midterm exam, and the in-class final exam.

Methodology (How we’ll learn)

Our *class time* is best spent discussing, analyzing and interrogating the texts we have read. Please come to class having read the texts, and prepared some notes on the reading questions. Be prepared to engage in meaningful discussion with your colleagues as we delve into the texts together. Each class will be a large part discussion, with some lecture.

Short **reaction-reflection papers** will be due almost EVERY WEEK; on some occasions, these may be in-class response writings. The questions for these one-page (at most) papers will help you begin to formulate your thoughts on an issue, and/or to dig deeper into one or more articles. Your responses will be used in our class discussions.

Preparing for the two **exams** will help you synthesize the diverse texts in order to see the various parts of the field of Women’s Studies as an interacting “whole”. It is advisable to form study groups outside of class, and to come see me for any questions you may have.

The **Project** gives you a chance to apply this class to a field of interest we might not get to during the semester. This will be more in-depth than the response writings, and will require you to present your own position, and support it with findings from your own research. This is your formal opportunity to show your us something we wouldn’t have been exposed to if you weren’t part of this group.

When you are **reading**, take notes (in a notebook, in the margins…) – these will help you to support the comments you will want to make in class, and to synthesize your understanding of the arguments made for the two exams. As you are reading, ask yourself:
- What is the author trying to say?
- What stylistic/rhetorical/philosophical devices is the author using to make his/her point?
- What does this mean to me? How does this impact me?

Ask questions in class. Ask yourself questions while you are reading. Write questions in the margins of your books. Engage these authors as if they were here in the room.
A word on discussion-based classes...

It is my hope that this class will become a forum for a good conversation about vital and controversial issues: we have a lot to learn from each other! To this end, it is important that we respect one another; each person brings valuable insights and experiences to the class. This subject asks that you keep a critical stance coupled with an open mind and a willingness to learn. You will be expected to discuss your ideas openly, but always in a respectful manner; you are encouraged to constructively challenge your own, the reading’s and other’s assumptions about women’s and men’s positions in our society, but it is essential to listen carefully to all participants in the class so that there is room in the course for everyone’s learning process.

Evaluation (How credit will be given for the work you do)

NOTE: Assignments are due on the date listed on the calendar. I do not accept late work. This is simply because it doesn’t make sense to “move backward,” working on last week’s assignment when you need to be thinking about this week’s.

20% In-class participation. Do the reading, come to class with questions, observations, critiques, etc. Share with and learn from your colleagues. You will have opportunities during the semester to self-evaluate based on the criteria I will be using. This reminds you of my expectations, and gives us a chance to dialogue about your contributions to class.

20% Weekly reaction/reflection papers: Once a week, you will receive two to three wide-scope questions that will help you to think about the reading. A thoughtful response to one question, with textual evidence will result in approximately ½ to 1 page, single-spaced, Times 12 or Courier 10. There will be 9 reaction/reflection papers; I will drop the lowest grade.

15% Take-home mid-term exam: You will be given review questions one week before the mid-term exam is due. You may use your notes, your texts, each other to review. You may come ask me questions. The exam questions will be similar to the review questions. Once the exam questions go out, your work will be your own, on your honor.

5% Mid-term interview: An opportunity to show your ability to apply your knowledge of feminist issues and theories, you will join one to three of your colleagues and myself in a 30-minute discussion. I will pose some general questions to get the discussion going.

20% Research Project: Paper (15%) and presentation (5%): This is your chance to tie this class in with another field of study, to further investigate a concept, author, or theory that struck you; you may research something, design an experiment, analyze literature, music, etc. The written portion should be at least 5-6 pages in length, double-spaced, using (at least) two sources from the class readings, and three outside sources. You may work in a group of 2 – 3 students, but each student will be responsible for their own written portion. You will present your findings (in 6-8 minutes) to your peers the final week of class.

20% In-class written exam: You will be given a series of review questions, just like the midterm. When you come to class, three of the questions will be on the exam; you will pick two about which to write organized, persuasive essays. While you will not need to give direct citations, a good exam will use references to specific writers and theories we have covered. The exam will focus mainly, but not exclusively on texts covered since the mid-term.
Grading Scale and Evaluation Standards

A/A-: Superior, excellent, outstanding. Demonstrates critical, informed inquiry into the question that reflects a synthetic understanding of feminist theory as well as the issue discussed. *Insight beyond what is normally expected.* Writing is free from material (content) and structural (grammar, punctuation, format) errors.

B+/B/B-: Very good, good. Demonstrates ready command of full range of concepts and shows some critical, informed and creative inquiry that reflects *above average* understanding of the material. Writing is mostly free from material and structural errors.

C+/C/C-: Okay, acceptable. Demonstrates *satisfactory* ability to describe the overall picture and essential concepts. Nuanced reasoning is not demonstrated. Material may contain material or structural errors.

D: Below average. Thought is not carefully reasoned or organized, insufficient depth of insight and/or use of texts. Student failed to respond adequately to the assignment and its intentions. Writing contains errors that interfere with the comprehensibility of the assignment.

F: In one or more of the following ways the student: a) did not turn in the assignment at the assigned time, b) did not respond to the assignment as giving, c) submitted work so thoroughly flawed as to indicate that the student did not make a serious effort, d) involved plagiarism or cheating.

**Attendance is extremely important.** As this is a discussion-based class, the questions and comments of you and your colleagues are at the center of the course. (And most likely, exam questions will come out of our discussions.) Therefore, you will get the most out of this class by attending regularly, and being prepared. If it is inevitable that you miss class, I request that you inform me beforehand if at all possible.

Fewer than two unexcused absences will not adversely affect your grade. *Each subsequent unexcused absence will result in a 5% drop in your participation grade.* An absence is considered excused if accompanied by documentation from a doctor, judge, coach, etc.

**Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information on examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or papers. This is in accordance to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts and Sciences.

**Academic Assistance:** Any student who feels that he/she may need academic accommodations in order to meet the requirements of the course, as outlined in this syllabus, due to presence of a disability, should contact the Office of Disability Services, room 131 in the Academic Resources Center, 3840 Lindell Blvd. Phone: 314.977.2930. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.
Reading Schedule:

Readings are listed on the day we’ll talk about them. Please come to class having read what is indicated for that day, having reflected on your responses to the reading questions, and ready to participate in the discussion.

1. Questions of Difference and Feminist Responses:

What is feminism? What does it do?
Tues Aug 29 Introduction to Women’s Studies, feminism, the course, your colleagues.

Thurs Aug 31 Shaw & Lee (SL): Ch. 1 (pp. 1 – 21); Adrienne Rich, Claiming an Education (pp. 22-24); Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon, Dear Sisters (pp.28-41), Susan B. Anthony, Constitutional Argument (pp. 637-638)

Privilege and inequality in women’s lives
Tues Sept 5: SL: Ch. 2 (61-75); Marilyn Frye, Oppression (84-86); Peggy McIntosh, White Privilege and Male Privilege (91-98); Lois Keith, Tomorrow I’m Going to Rewrite the English Language (86-87)
Response Writing (RW) 1 due

Thurs Sept 7: SL: Patricia Hill Collins, Toward a New Vision (76-84); Suzanne Pharr, Homophobia, A Weapon of Sexism (87-91); Donna Langston, Tired of Playing Monopoly? (101-109)
bell hooks (bh): introduction, ch. 1 (vii-6)

Feminist theories: responding to inequality
Tues Sept 12: SL: Ch. 11 (615-636); Sharon Hays, Flat broke with children (90-91);
bh: ch. 2 – 4, 7 (7-24, 37-43)

Thurs Sept 14: e-Reserves: Marilyn Frye, The Possibility of Feminist Theory; Helene Cixous, Castration or Decapitation

Gender differences as social constructs
Tues Sept 19: SL: Ch. 3 (124-138); Judith Lorber, The Social Construction of Gender (141-144); Mariah Burton Nelson, Boys Will be Boys and Girls Will Not (144-149)
e-Reserves: Lois Gold, X: A Fabulous Child’s Story
RW 2

Gender and sexuality
Thurs Sept. 21: SL: Judy Wajcman, Virtual Gender (151-153); T. Eve Greenaway, Trans On Campus (154-157); ch 4 (165-179); Pepper Schwartz and Virginia Rutter, Sexual Desire and Gender (180-187); Cherrie Moraga, La Güera (199-202)
* e-Reserves: Joan Roughgarden, “Introduction”, chapters 1, and 2 from Evolution’s Rainbow (1-29)
2. Women in Society

**Family**

Tues Sept 26  **SL:** ch 7 (372-385), Emma Goldman, *Marriage and Love* (389-391); Miranda Kennedy, *Cheaper than a Cow* (391-395), Sandra Cisneros, *Only Daughter* (426-427)

**RW 3**


**bh:** ch 13, 14 (72-84)

**Work: perceiving work as gendered**


**bh:** ch 9, 12 (48-54, 67-71)

* e-Reserves: Redstockings

**RW 4**


Synthesizing: womens’ issues and feminist responses in American society

Tues Oct 10  Group discussion of midterms review questions; “second looks” at articles as decided by the class; definitions of terms

**Analyzing and creating culture:**

Thurs Oct 12  **Take-home midterm exam due at the beginning of class.**

In-class film, *Killing Us Softly III* and analysis.

Tues Oct 17  **SL:** ch. 9 (503-517); Susan Douglas and Catherine Orenstein, *Pop Culture Is Us: Two Essays on a Theme* (525-527); Jennifer L. Pozner and Jessica Seigel, *Desperately Debating ‘Housewives’* (528-531); Alison Pollet and Page Hurwitz, *Strip Till You Drop* (548-552)

**bh:** ch 6 (31-36)

**RW 5**

Thurs Oct 19  **SL:** Virginia Woolf, *Thinking About Shakespeare’s Sister* (518-520); Audre Lorde, *Poetry Is Not a Luxury* (520-522); Gloria Anzaldúa, *The Path of the Red and Black Ink* (522-524); Joan Morgan, *From Fly-Girls to Bitches and Hos* (532-534). Bring a poem to share that you believe illustrates Lorde’s essay.
3. Women’s Bodies: Beauty, Health and Power

Tues Oct 24  No class – Fall Break.

Gender and the body
Thurs Oct 28  SL: ch 5 (229-247); Joan Jacobs Brumberg, Breast Buds and the “Training” Bra (253-258); Gloria Steinem, If Men Could Menstruate (258-259); Lisa Rubin, Mako Fitts and Anne Becker, Body Ethics and Aesthetics Among African American and Latina Women, (259-270); Lisa Miya-Jervis, Hold That Nose (282-284)
RW 6

Health, healthcare and the female body
Tues Oct 31  SL: ch 6 (301-331); Vivian Dickerson, The Tolling of the Bell: Women’s Health, Women’s Rights (335-341); RW 7

RW 8

Thurs Nov 2  SL: Margaret Sanger, My Fight for Birth Control (352-354); Jael Silliman et al., Women of Color and Their Struggle for Reproductive Justice (354-362); Eleanor Cooney, The Way It Was (363)
 bh: ch 5 (25-30)
* e-Reserves: Mary Anne Warren, On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion.

In-class conversation with Alison Gee, VP of Public Policy for Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region

Abstract for project due

Violence against women
Tues Nov 7  SL: ch 10 (554-577); Debra Anne Davis, Betrayed by the Angel (589-592); Arnold S. Kahn, What College Women Do and Do Not Experience as Rape (593-600)
 bh: ch 11 (61-66)
RW 8

Sex for sale: prostitution and pornography
Thurs Nov 9  SL: Alice Leuchtag, Human Rights: Sex Trafficking and Prostitution (581-587); Kimberly Klinger, Prostitution, Humanism, and a Woman’s Choice (498-501); Mariana Katzarova, Letter from Juárez (587-589); John Stoltenberg, Pornography and Freedom (609-612); Helen Clarkson, War Crimes (613-614);
* e-Reserves: Catherine MacKinnon, Not a Moral Issue
4. Feminisms of one’s own

*In His Image? Religion and Spirituality in Women’s Lives*

**Tues Nov 14**  
*SL:* ch 12 (666-679); Karen McCarthy Brown, *Fundamentalism and the Control of Women* (681-685); Asra Q. Nomani, *The Islamic Bill of Rights for Women in Mosques* (689-694); Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai* (694-697)  
*RW 9*

**Thurs Nov 16**  
*SL:* Alicia Ostriker, *Everywoman Her Own Theology* (697); Paula Gunn Allen, *Grandmother of the Sun* (686-689); Starhawk, *Witchcraft and Women’s Culture* (698-700); Pythia Peay, *Religion and Feminism’s Fourth Wave* (700-702)

*End of semester Synthesis*

**Tues Nov 21**  
Group discussions of final review questions; “second looks” at articles as decided by the class; review of definitions of key terms

**Written portion of the Research Project due (in my office by 5pm)**

**Thurs Nov 23**  
**No class – Happy Thanksgiving**

**Tues Nov 28**  
**In-class exam**  
Sign up for project presentations

*Your findings, your analysis, your questions: presentations of final projects*

**Thurs Nov 30**  
Project presentations: subjects TBA, peer-chosen readings may be required.

**Tues Dec 5**  
Project presentations: subjects TBA, peer-chosen readings may be required.

**Thurs Dec 7**  
Last day of class: wrap-up and course evaluations

**Writing Center:** I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Center’s services; getting feedback benefits all writers. The Center helps with writing projects, multimedia projects, and oral presentations. They offer one-on-one consultations that address everything from generating and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documentation. Call 977.2930 to schedule an appointment. They also accept drop-ins when consultants are available. For locations and hours, visit [http://www.slu.edu/departments/sesc/acadresources/writing/index.html](http://www.slu.edu/departments/sesc/acadresources/writing/index.html)