GWS 449: From Past Feminisms to Postfeminism: Feminism for the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century

3 credit course
Special Topics Course
Investigation of specific theorists, themes, problems, or eras in feminism and social theory.
Subject differs each semester. Enroll Info: Sophomore standing and 3 credits of GEN&WS; or instructor consent.

Fall 2019
Class Time: Tuesday/Thursday 1 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.
Education Building, L185
Face-to-face instruction/Blended

Canvas Course URL
https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/165461

This class meets for two 75-minute class periods each week over the spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, etc.) for about 3 hours out of classroom for every class period. The syllabus includes more information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

Instructor: Katherine Phelps, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Gender and Women’s Studies
Email: kphelps@wisc.edu
Office: Sterling 3323
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. and by appointment

Course Description

Where have we come from and where are we going? This class is designed to take us on a journey and tell stories of knowledge building over time. Exploring feminist theories from a broad array of disciplines and perspectives, we will begin in the significance of the Second Wave, consciousness raising, political pamphlets, personal manifestos, and the emerging feminist ideology of the “personal is political.” As we continue on through the course, we will read renowned work in the scholarly arenas of Black feminist thought, psychoanalytic feminism, queer theory, theory from disability studies, fat studies, ecofeminism, and transnational and global feminisms. A central aim of this course is to identify and address
crucial areas of contestation that punctuate the dynamic relationships among texts from past and present—the arrivals, departures, and returns—in feminist theory. Together, we will listen to voices that align, and voices that dissent. We will engage with the work of writers and thinkers from the past, and bring these ideas to our current cultural configurations and conceptualizations of feminism(s) and feminist movement(s).

**Prerequisites**

None – but this is advanced feminist theory. Some of the reading is quite dense. A background in GWS 101 or 102, or related course, is strongly encouraged.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

At the completion of this course you will be able to:

- Summarize and synthesize the work of feminist theorists from the mid-20th century to the present day
- Critically analyze feminist theory in conjunction with cultural and social events, and draw connections between how feminist theory ideas align and how they differ from each other
- Critically appreciate and constructively critique texts, theoretical frameworks, ideas, and praxis (the gap between text and world)
- Articulate your own ideas about what you think feminism for the 21st century can or should look like/sound like/feel like in conjunction with historical and contemporary feminist theories and frameworks
- Build awareness and understanding of feminist principles, values, and epistemologies (knowledge development) and how these translate to praxis and feminist calls to action

*Graduate students taking this course need to meet with me at the start of the semester to discuss expectations and adjusted course assignments/assessments.*

**Required Texts**

There is no required textbook for this course.

All required readings are available on Canvas as PDFs.

**Assignments and Grading**

*Participation (30% of overall grade):* In this class, participation is crucial if you want to do well. That means accessing course readings, completing assigned readings on time, coming to class with questions and ideas related to the concepts we are discussing that day, and participating on Canvas discussions when they are assigned. Anticipate between 60 to 80 pages of reading each week, sometimes more, sometimes less. I do not have an attendance policy for this class, but bear in mind that participation is a *substantial* part of your final
grade, thus, you will be required to be in class and required to participate during class discussions and activities. This is a discussion-based course; I want to hear what YOU have to say!

This semester is also a little different – we will be doing some blended instruction at certain points in the semester, which means doing more discussion work on Canvas. When we switch to Canvas discussion, you will be in groups of approximately 10 people, and you will discuss the material among one another. These groups will be assigned and made clear to you within the first couple of weeks of class. You are expected to contribute a substantial discussion post (no less than 300 words) to your small group offering your thoughts on the readings for that week by class time (1 p.m.) on the Thursday of that class week, and you are also expected to contribute at least THREE thoughtful peer responses to other group members of at least 100 words each by Sunday at midnight of that week. Students should be fully engaged in Canvas discussion during these weeks that we are doing some blended learning, and you should be checking discussion boards regularly to write, read, and respond to posts.

The conversation continues via Canvas! Discussion threads for Canvas will be made available in advance, and you will have a clear understanding of when our online discussion weeks will be. Class participation is expected at a high level! Your flexibility is GREATLY appreciated!

Situating History and Author Contributions (10% of overall grade): At some point during our 15 weeks, you will be asked to send me information about the author(s) of our readings, as well as three examples of cultural events from the particular year that aligns with our readings that week. Each week, we will spend time discussing our readings in a context of what was happening at the time it was written. For example, Cathy Cohen wrote her Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens essay in 1997. If you are assigned to 1997, you will send me a one-page summary of information about Cathy Cohen – who is the author(s)? What is their background? What strikes you as important about them? Additionally, you will send me a set of slides (Powerpoint or Google slides) with descriptions, images, and details of at least three events or happenings from the year you are assigned. What was happening in that year? Locally and globally? In popular culture? In politics? In social movements? Was it war time? A time of peace? Provide a brief explanation of each event, and provide relevant images and/or videos related to the event as well in the slides. We will use these events and author information to inform our discussion of the feminist theory that was being produced at the time. These summaries and slides will be due on Canvas, and you will also be asked to post them to the class in an ongoing Situating History discussion thread.

The Personal is Political Responses (25% of overall grade): During the semester, you will submit five short response papers (worth five points each) that each reflects on a contemporary example of gender-based oppression. Using concepts and material from the
course, you will explore the continued relevance of the “personal is political” feminist rallying cry. These response papers are an opportunity for you to reflect on your own positionality, your own identities, and your own perspectives on feminism(s) as they relate to the current landscape of gender oppression. You can think locally, or think globally. Find specific examples in contemporary media – whether popular or news media. Recent abortion bans, lack of education in developing nations, sex trafficking and slavery, increased criminalization of women, limited media representation – these are just examples of some of the gender based oppressions you might explore. Let your mind go wild. Be your own theorist! But be sure to write in conversation with the work we read in the class – I expect to see citations and references from at least two of our class readings in each of these response papers. These papers should be 2 to 3 pages double-spaced, and standard format of Times New Roman, 12-point font, 1-inch margins.

**Position Statements on Feminist Theory (10% of overall grade):** Within the first two weeks of class, you will be asked to write a position statement on what you think feminism is and what you believe are the three biggest issues or problems facing feminism, as a movement, today. The initial position statement will be written in class, collected by me, sealed up, and stored for the semester. At the end of the semester, you will be asked to write a new position statement that offers your adjusted definition of feminism (if any), and reflection on what you have learned during the course. You will then have the opportunity to revisit your first position statement to see how your perceptions and ideologies have changed from the beginning of the semester to the end. The first position statement will be hand written during class time, and the second statement will be submitted on Canvas within the last couple weeks of the semester.

**Final Paper or Digital Presentation (25% of overall grade):** Your final paper or presentation will function as a manifesto: your vision for the future of feminism. Feminist manifestos have been the cornerstones of feminist theory in the United States for well over a century, from Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s *Declaration of Sentiments* to Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *We Should All Be Feminists*. To be clear, this does not need to be a feminist manifesto necessarily – perhaps you reject conventional ideas of feminism in favor of a new kind of language. Perhaps you want to focus solely on queer theory, or fat studies, or Black feminist thought. Perhaps you want to bring it back to the old school grassroots action of consciousness raising and knowledge sharing. Whatever your vision for the world, your task is to write it or speak it into existence. Using at least SIX readings from the class, as well as at least THREE additional sources, and knowledge you gained in our discussions, in 10 pages of writing, or via a 15 to 20 minute mixed media presentation that you will put on Canvas (speaking, Google slides, images, video, art, key
points, etc.) your assignment is to let your imagination run wild toward your vision for a (feminist) future. This manifesto should articulate intentions related to social change, specific issues you care about, perspectives on social structures and embedded norms, and ideas for calls to action. Do you want to see a revolution? Do you want a more liberal feminist model? Do you imagine a world without gender? YOU be the theorist and explore those possibilities, but be sure to frame your own theoretical contribution in reference to the theory we engaged with in class. A more comprehensive set of instructions for this manifesto assignment, as well as expectations for presentation vs. paper, will also be made available to you within the first few weeks of the semester.

**Course Grading Scale**

- **A** 93 – 100
- **A/B** 87 – 92
- **B** 83 – 86
- **B/C** 77 – 82
- **C** 70 – 76
- **D** 60 – 69
- **F** Below 60

**Policy on Late or Missed Assignments**

For every week that an assignment is late, you will incur a penalty of 10% off your total grade for that assignment. If assignments are submitted more than two weeks past the original due date, they will not be accepted for credit, except in the case of extenuating circumstances. If you have a valid reason to turn in an assignment late you must talk to me before the due date if at all possible. Final papers/presentations must be submitted on the due date – no late final projects will be accepted.

**Rules, Rights, and Responsibilities**

- See the Guide’s [Rules, Rights and Responsibilities](#)

**Academic Integrity**

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison’s community of scholars in which everyone’s academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the
integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

McBurney Disability Resource Center syllabus statement: “The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student’s educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.”
http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Institutional statement on diversity: “Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.” https://diversity.wisc.edu/

Important Notes

1. This syllabus is to act as a rough guide for the semester; it is not set in stone. The dates may shift a bit, especially given certain circumstances this semester. Certain due dates for assignments may shift slightly – but I will do everything I can to make sure
people are fully aware of changes well in advance, and to make the transition easy for folks. This class will require flexibility this term! Each group of students moves at a different pace and gets fascinated by certain topics. I will try to honor this and we may find ourselves spending more time on certain topics and less time on others. As such, by choosing to remain in this course, you agree to all of the above requirements and stipulations. **I reserve the right to alter this syllabus at any time, but with fair and appropriate warning.**

2. You may use laptops for note taking in class, but if these become a distraction or a problem, you will be asked to put it away. I ask you to please put your phones away during class. If you plan to take notes on your phone, please plan to use another device or get a notebook. If I see you answering your phone or text messaging, you will be asked to put it away. If it is a recurring problem, I will ask you to leave the classroom.

3. I will attempt to respond to student emails as promptly as I am able. I will generally check and respond to email between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. I will always try to get you a response within 24 hours. Also, please send me emails from either your student email address, or another email address that readily identifies you.

**A Final Thought – Important Content Warning**

This course is designed to be interactive, in-depth, fun, and open. All of you bring your own unique perspectives and experiences to this material, and I absolutely encourage that. That said, many of the topics we will cover and explore can become personal, and at times, difficult. At times, the readings we do in this class can be especially difficult as they deal with subjects of violence, sexual violence, and various forms of gender-based oppression. You are expected to engage with the material, but not to the point of any self-detriment. You will never be required to share something you are not comfortable sharing. However, this does not mean you are exempt from participation. You must find ways to make your voice heard. I want you to feel safe and able in this classroom to discuss experiences and opinions on any and all topics we cover. Whatever is said or written in this class stays in this class. No one should feel oppressed or stifled because of gender, race, creed, class, ability, size, status, or sexual orientation. The success of this class is a community effort!

**Class/Reading Schedule**

(Listed readings and assignments are due THAT DAY for class!)

| Week 1: 9/5 | 9/5: Introductions, syllabus overview |

01/23/18
| Week 2: 9/10 & 9/12 | 9/10: (In class exercise – feminist position statement)  
Readings due:  
- Introduction to *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir, 1949  
- The Myth of Women’s Inferiority, Evelyn Reed, 1954  
9/12:  
Readings due:  
- Funeral Oration for the Burial of Traditional Womanhood, Kathie Amatniek, 1968  
- Excerpts from Black Woman’s Manifesto, The Third World Women’s Alliance, 1970 |
| Week 3: 9/17 & 9/19 | 9/17:  
Readings due:  
- Mother Right: A New Feminist Theory, Jane Alpert, 1974  
- The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex, Gayle Rubin, 1975  
9/19:  
Readings due:  
- Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves, Angela Davis, 1972  
**The Personal is Political response 1 due**  
Canvas online discussion post due for Thursday readings |
| Week 4: 9/24 & 9/26 | 9/24:  
Readings due:  
9/26:  
Readings due:  
- Excerpts from *This Bridge Called My Back*, Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (eds.), 1981  
- The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House, Audre Lorde, 1984 (originally spoken at the Second Sex conference in 1979) |
| Week Five: 10/1 & 10/3 | 10/1: Readings due:  
- I Want a 24-Hour Truce During Which There is No Rape, Andrea Dworkin, 1984  
- Sexuality, Catharine A. MacKinnon, 1989  
10/3: Readings due:  
- Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology, Alison Jaggar, 1989 |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week Six: 10/8 & 10/10 | 10/8: Readings due:  
- Black Feminist Thought, Patricia Hill Collins, 1990  
- Eating the Other, bell hooks, 1992  
10/10: Readings due:  
- Excerpts from Massacre of the Dreamers, Ana Castillo, 1994 |
| Week Seven: 10/15 & 10/17 | 10/15: Readings due:  
- Introduction to Scattered Hegemonies, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, 1994  
10/17: Readings due:  
- Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health, Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen, 1993  
- The Politics of Women and Nature, Mary Mellor, 1996 |
| Week 8: 10/22 & 10/24 | 10/22: Readings due:  
- Excerpt from Queer Theory: An Introduction, Annamarie Jagose, 1996  
- Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens, Cathy J. Cohen, 1997  
10/24: Readings due:  |
| Week 9: 10/29 & 10/31 | 10/29: Readings due:  
- Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, 2002  
10/31: Readings due:  
- Postfeminism and Popular Culture, Angela McRobbie, 2004  
**The Personal is Political Response 4 due** |
|---|---|
| Week 10: 11/5 & 11/7 | 11/5: Readings due:  
- Aboriginal Peoples and Knowledge: Decolonizing our Processes, Leanne Simpson, 2001  
- Race, Tribal Nation, and Gender, Renya Ramirez, 2007  
11/7: Readings due:  
- Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage, Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley, 2008  |
| Week 11: 11/12 & 11/14 | 11/12: Readings due:  
- Radical Refusals: On the Anarchist Politics of Women Choosing Asexuality, Breanne Fahs, 2010  
11/14: Readings due:  
- Fat Studies: Mapping the Field, Charlotte Cooper, 2010  
- Why Fat is a Feminist Issue, Abigail Saguy, 2012  |
| Week 12: 11/19 & 11/21 | 11/19: Readings due:  
- 1% Feminism, Linda Burnham, 2013  
- Cell 16: Gender and Agency, with Digressions into Naming, Dana  |

- Excerpts from Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire, Sonia Shah, 1999
Densmore, 2014
11/21:
Readings due:
- Feminism’s There, Kate Eichhorn, 2015
- Shifting Analytics and Linking Theories, Sylvanna Falcon and Jennifer Nash, 2015

The Personal is Political Response 5 due

Week 13: 11/26 & 11/28
11/26:
Readings due:
- Playing with the Politics of Perversion, Ariane Cruz, 2016
- The State is a Man, Audra Simpson, 2016
11/28: Thanksgiving Recess – NO CLASS

Week 14: 12/3 & 12/5
12/3:
Readings due:
- Introduction to Living a Feminist Life, Sara Ahmed, 2016
- Good and Mad essay, Rebecca Traister, 2018
12/5:
Readings due:
- Excerpts from Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto, 2019
Second Feminist Position Statement due on Canvas

Week 15: 12/10
12/10: Final manifestos due on Canvas, class reflections

Kate plans to be in class, in person during the final couple of weeks of the semester – thank you for your flexibility! Check your emails OFTEN as Kate will be communicating via email a lot, especially in the latter part of the semester. We got this!

A Very Partial List of Suggested Continued Reading (In no particular order...)
This Bridge Called My Back (1981)
We Were Feminists Once, Andi Zeisler (2016)
Epistemology of the Closet, Eve Sedgwick (1990)
The Trouble with Normal, Michael Warner (1999)
Zami: A New Spelling of My Name, Audre Lorde (1982)
Land as Pedagogy, Leanne Simpson (2014)
Women, Race, and Class, Angela Davis (1983)
Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States, Audra Simpson (2014)
Black Looks, bell hooks (1992)
Gender and Power, Raewyn Connell (1987)
Tracing Native American Feminism Through Myth and Poetry, Cassidy Webber, (2017)
Decolonizing Feminism: Transnational Feminism and Globalization (2017)
The Dialectic of Sex, Shulamith Firestone (1970)
Gender Trouble, Judith Butler (1990)
Feminist Disability Studies, Kim Hall (2011)
Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings, Juana Maria Rodriguez (2014)
Feminism is for Everybody, bell hooks (2000)
We Should All Be Feminists, Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie (2015)
SCUM Manifesto, Valerie Solanas (1967)
The Creation of Feminist Consciousness, Gerda Lerner (1993)
Troubling Vision, Nicole Fleetwood (2011)
Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability, Robert McRuer (1996)
Disidentifications, José Esteban Muñoz (1999)
The Witches are Coming, Lindy West (2019)
Any poetry by June Jordan, Lucille Clifton, Gwendolyn Brooks, Marge Piercy, Audre Lorde, Sylvia Plath, Chrystos, and many, many, many others.

And literally thousands of other pieces of writing that create the tapestry of feminist thought, knowledge, production, movement, transition, and transformation – though not comprehensive, feel free to overwhelm yourself by
looking through this list: