



Feminist Political Theory (PS/GWS 931-933)

Departments of Political Science & Gender and Women's Studies

Fall 2021
M 3:30-5:25 PM
Sterling Hall 3306
Canvas URL: <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/271550>

Professor Keisha Lindsay
Room 3311 Sterling Hall
263-2763

Requisites: Graduate/professional standing
Level: Graduate
Course Credits: 3 credits
Course Breadth: Letters & Sciences (LAS) and Either Humanities or Social Science (Z)

Office Hours:
M: 2:00-3:15pm

Course Description:

This course critically examines how various “schools” of feminist political thought understand the relationship between experiencing oppression and embracing a particular politics. The course pays particular attention to: 1) what feminist theorists mean when they speak of “experience” as well as 2) feminist debates about whether experiencing oppression is the motive force of progressive politics or if the opposite is true – that racist, patriarchal, and other kinds of harmful politics often shape our very understanding of what it means to experience oppression.

Section one of the course explores radical, standpoint, intersectional and other feminist theorists’ presumption that the “personal is political” or that women’s personal experience of oppression leads them to embrace anti-racist, feminist, and otherwise progressive politics. Section two complicates this understanding of the “personal is political” by exploring :1) materialist feminists’ contention that focusing on personal or individual experience mistakenly diverts attention from how women’s *structural* experience of oppression shapes their political thoughts and actions and 2) postmodern feminist theorists’ claim that social groups’ experience of oppression, is always already politicized in ways that are far from liberatory. Section three of the course interrogates “seriality” and “strategic essentialism” or feminist political theorists’ efforts to strike a “middle ground” regarding the relationship between experience and politics. The course concludes by using the literature on respectability politics to both concretize and further illuminate the feminist perils and possibilities of experience-based politics.

Course Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of this course you will be able to: 1) Identify central themes in feminist political theory; 2) Interrogate key debates and tensions in feminist political theory and 3) apply these debates and themes to your own independent research.

Regular and Substantive Interaction

This course provides regular and substantive interaction by:

- 1) Providing direct instruction once weekly by facilitating group discussion on scheduled and assigned weekly content
- 2) Assessing and providing personalized feedback on a student’s coursework throughout the semester based on the expectations of the learning activities described in the assignments section of this syllabus.

Course Readings:

The following books (B) are required reading. They are on reserve at Memorial Union Library and are available for purchase at major online book sellers:

- Betty Friedan. *The Feminine Mystique*. ISBN-10: 0393322572
- Patricia Hill-Collins. *Black Feminist Thought*. ISBN-10: 0415964725
- Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble*. ISBN-10: 0415389550
- Dean Spade. *Normal Life*. ISBN-10: 0822360403

The following texts are also available, as electronic books, via the UW-Madison Library:

- Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble*. <https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9912655265502121>
- Dean Spade. *Normal Life*. <https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9911176250602121>

All other readings (C) are available via the Canvas course page.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation (20%)

This is a discussion-based seminar in which active class participation is key to your success. Your participation will take two forms:

- 1) Listening and responding to your classmates' comments on the assigned materials (10%). Fulfilling this portion of the participation requirement requires the following:

Participation Rubric					
Points	9+	8	7	6	5-
Quality of contribution	Always well-prepared for class; shows critical thought; poses questions; moves dialogue forward; stays on topic; engages with both instructor and classmates; presumes positive intentions of classmates	Usually well-prepared for class most of the time; shows effort in critical thinking; poses questions; helps move dialogue forward; often stays on topic; shows effort to engage with both instructor and classmates; usually presumes positive intentions of classmates	Sometimes well-prepared for class; makes attempts to engage in critical thought; makes attempts to move dialogue forward; sometimes goes off topic; shows some effort to engage with instructor and classmates; sometimes presumes positive intentions of classmates	Rarely prepared for class; few attempts to engage in critical thought; seldom moves dialogue forward; often goes off topic; shows little effort to engage with instructor and classmates; rarely resumes positive intentions of classmates	Almost never prepared for class; does not attempt to engage in critical thinking; does not move dialogue forward; purposes goes off topic; does not engage with instructor or classmates; never presumes positive intentions of classmates

- 2) Asking your own questions about the assigned materials (10%). In order to fulfill this portion of the participation requirement, you will submit two pre-scheduled discussion questions. Use each question to comment on anything that you find contradictory, controversial, confusing or otherwise noteworthy in one or more the day's readings. Your question may seek clarification of particular terms or ideas, challenge an assigned author's presumptions, and/or interrogate the implications of an author's claims. Discussion questions are due, via CANVAS, on Sundays at 5 pm.

Class Facilitation (15%)

You will facilitate the first 10-15 minutes of a single class session. Successful facilitation includes : a) identifying three key themes in the assigned readings; b) highlighting three "hidden" assumptions in the

assigned readings; c) using at least one visual representation (an info-graphic, short video, etc.) to illuminate a key theme and/or assumption in the assigned readings and d) preparing and asking two questions to facilitate discussion and critique of the assigned readings (at least one of these questions should highlight the readings' potential limitations).

Abstract/Proposal (20%)

You are required to write a typed, **double-spaced** 3-4 page abstract of your final research paper. Your abstract is due on **December 3 at 9:00 AM**.

Research Paper (45%)

You are required to write a 15-20 page typed, **double-spaced** research paper on a topic of your choice. Your research paper is due on **December 20 at 9:00 AM**.

Classroom Conduct: Please use smart phones, laptops, and their accompanying earpieces responsibly during class in order to facilitate a non-distracting and intellectually productive learning environment.

Grade Related Questions and Appeals: I will only discuss questions about grades during office hours or by appointment - not over email or before/after class. If you would like to challenge your grade, please wait 24 hours after receiving the grade before contacting me. Final grades will be determined according to the following official UW grading scale: A 93-100; AB 88-92; B 83-87; BC 78-82; C 70-77; D 60-69; F below 60.

Late Paper Policy: Papers and exams turned in late will be penalized by **ten (10) percentage points** for each 24-hour period after the due date.

Course Evaluations: Students will be provided with an opportunity to evaluate this course and your learning experience. Student participation is an integral component of this course, and your confidential feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation. UW-Madison uses a digital course evaluation survey tool called AEFIS. For this course, you will receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester, notifying you that your course evaluation is available. In the email you will receive a link to log into the course evaluation with your NetID. Evaluations are anonymous. Your participation is an integral component of this course, and your feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

Rules, Rights & Responsibilities:

<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#rulesrightsandresponsibilitiestext>

Academic Calendar & Religious Observances: <https://secfac.wisc.edu/academic-calendar/#religious-observances>

Academic Integrity: By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion. <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/syllabus-statement/>

Accommodations for Students With Disabilities: 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. <https://mcburney.wisc.edu/instructor/>

Diversity & Inclusion: 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/>

Sexual Harassment & Other Forms Of Sexual Misconduct: As an instructor, I am committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation. UW–Madison offers a variety of resources for students impacted by sexual misconduct. If you wish to seek out free, confidential support, there are a number of [services](#) available on campus and in the community.

If you would like to report sexual misconduct to the campus, a number of [reporting options](#) are available. In addition, each department has staff members, known as Responsible Employees, who can assist you. If you are an undergraduate student, most of the academic and career advisors you work with are designated Responsible Employees. Please note that Responsible Employees are required to report specific disclosures that you share about sexual misconduct to UW-Madison's [Title IX Office](#).

The Department of Gender & Women's Studies has the following Responsible Employees: the Department Chair, Dr. Judy Houck (jahouck@wisc.edu), the Graduate Coordinator, José Ramirez (jramirez27@wisc.edu), and the Undergraduate Advisor, Susan Nelson (susan.nelson@wisc.edu).

Privacy Of Student Records & The Use Of Audio Recorded Lecturers Statement: Lecture materials and recordings for this course are protected intellectual property at UW-Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

Introduction - The What and Why of Feminist Theory

Sept 13: Week 1

-Syllabus Review

-Meet and Greet

-bell hooks. "Theory as Liberatory Practice" (C)

Section I Personal Experience as the Grounds of Feminist Politics

Sept 20: Week 2 – The “Personal is Political”

- Betty Friedan. *The Feminine Mystique*. “Introduction to the Tenth Anniversary Addition” and Chapters 1-5 (B)
- Carole Hanisch. “The Personal Is Political” (C)
- Paula Moya. “Identity in the Academy and Beyond” (C)

Sept. 27: Week 3 – Feminist Standpoint Theory

- Nancy Hartsock. “The Feminist Standpoint” (C)
- Nancy Haraway. “Situated Knowledges” (C)
- Uma Narayan. “The Project of Feminist Epistemology” (C)

Oct 4: Week 4 – Feminist Phenomenology

- Iris Young. “Throwing Like a Girl” (C)
- Sonia Kruks. “Going Beyond Discourse” and “Phenomenology and Difference” (C)
- Linda Alcoff. “Real Identities” (C)

Oct 11: Week 5 – Intersectionality

- Patricia Hill-Collins. *Black Feminist Thought*. “The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought,” “Mammies, Matriarchs, and other Controlling Images,” and “Toward a Politics of Empowerment” (B)
- Emi Koyama. “The Transfeminist Manifesto” (C)

Section II Against Personal Experience as the Grounds of Feminist Politics

Oct 18: Week 6 – Postmodern Feminist Critiques

- Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble*. Part 1, Part 2, and “Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions” (B)

Oct 25: Week 7 - Postmodern Feminist Critiques, contd.

- Joan Scott. “The Evidence of Experience” (C)
- Wendy Brown. “Wounded Attachments” (C)
- Chandra Mohanty. “Sisterhood, Coalition, and the Politics of Experience” (C)

Nov 1: Week 8 – Materialist Feminist Critiques

- Heidi Hartmann. “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism” (C)
- Nancy Fraser. “Rethinking Recognition” (C)
- Rosemary Hennessy. “Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture” (C)

Section III Middle Ground(s)

Nov 8: Week 9 – Conceptualizing Personal Experience as a Political Claim

- Iris Young. “Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective” (C)
- Gayatri Spivak. “Subaltern Studies. Deconstructing Historiography” AND “In a Word: Interview with Ellen Rooney Differences” (C)

Nov 15: Week 10 – Conceptualizing Personal Experience as a Political Claim, contd.

- Linda Zerilli. “Introduction: Why Feminism and Freedom Both begin with the Letter F” (C)
- Johanna Oksala. “In Defense of Experience” (C)
- Diane Perpich. “Black Feminism, Poststructuralism, and the Contested Character of Experience” (C)

Section IV

Concretizing the Perils and the Promise of “Experience”

Nov 22: Week 11 – Respectability as Re-entrenchment?

- Dean Spade. *Normal Life. (except Chapter 5)* (B)
- Cathy Cohen. “Deviance as Resistance” (C)

Nov 29: Week 12 – Reading Week

Abstract Due - December 3 at 9 AM

Dec 6: Week 13 – Respectability as Resistance?

- Brittney Cooper. “Introduction: The Duty of the True Race Woman” (C)
- Michelle Smith. “Affect and Respectability Politics” (C)
- Elizabeth Higginbotham. “Wrestling with Respectability in the Age of #BlackLivesMatter” (C)
- Tom Boellstorff. “When Marriage Falls” (C)

Dec 13: Week 14 - Reading Respectability Beyond the Binary?/Conclusion

- Margaret Dazey. “Rethinking Respectability Politics” (C)
- Dara Strolovitch and Chaya Y. Crowder. “Respectability, Anti-Respectability, and Intersectionally Responsible Representation” (C)
- Summary/Discussion of Research Papers

Research Paper Due - December 20 at 9 AM