WGS 393 – Introduction to Feminist Theories

3108 Burlington Labs T/H 11:45-1:00
Dr. Deborah Hooker
248 Tompkins
dahooker@ncsu.edu
Office hours: W, 2-3:30 or by appointment
Prerequisites: WGS 200

Course Description: This course provides students with an overview of feminist theoretical perspectives. Specifically, WGS 393 examines the way in which gender (even if it was not referred to as such) became a site of contention in the early modern period, and how that category and the claims made in its name were complicated by other considerations -- such as race, class, global politics, economics, and sexuality -- in modern and postmodern cultures. Thus, the course will identify the recurring themes in feminist (and other) perspectives, the chief contemporary debates, and the prognosis for contemporary feminisms as viable forces in our brave new world.

Some prominent issues will be:

- understanding the social and material forces that distinguish modernity and postmodernity and how they relate to the emergence of specific feminist perspectives
- becoming conversant in the primary principles that underwrite various feminist perspectives: these include liberal feminisms, radical feminisms, socialist and Marxist feminisms, multicultural feminisms, ecofeminisms, third wave, post-colonial, and transnational feminisms.
- understanding the relationship of Queer and transgender theory to postmodern feminism
- assessing the utility, promise, and limitations of each perspective through frequent applications to contemporary social events, texts, films, etc.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Recognize and describe the chief distinctions between various feminist perspectives
- Articulate the chief critiques and limitations of these feminist theoretical perspectives
- Explain the reflexive relationship between feminist theories and feminist practices
- Recognize the primary cultural and material distinctions between modern and postmodern culture and how these shape and are shaped by feminist theory
- Apply these feminist theoretical perspectives in analyses of contemporary issues or texts

This course prepares students for further work in Women’s and Gender Studies, including WGS 492, Theoretical Issues in Women’s and Gender Studies. It is also helpful for International Studies students and others interested in transnational issues.

Course Policies

Attendance: Since all test materials will be derived from the lectures and discussions that take place during class, it behooves you to attend. You also have a
responsibility to contribute to all class meetings. Work can be made up for those anticipated absences in which you

- represent the university at an official function
- appear in court
- observe religious holidays
- serve military duty

In order for these absences for be excused, I should be notified ahead of time. Excuses for emergency absences (illness or injury, family emergencies) should be provided as soon as possible within the first week after your return to class. Typically, all work should be made up within a week after your return to class, but depending upon the circumstances, more time may be provided. For more information about the university's policies on attendance, consult http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/academic_policies/attend/reg.htm

A total of 4 unexcused absences (i.e., those not fulfilling the above criteria) will result in a deduction of 1/3 letter grade from your final course grade, 5 = 2/3 grade deduction, etc. That is, you get three absences (not fulfilling the excused criteria above) with no penalties. The fourth and all succeeding ones carry a penalty. This is a seminar class, so your attendance and participation are crucial.

Coming to Class Late: Please try to avoid this. If you know this is going to be a chronic issue, please notify the instructor early on.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability or suspect that you have one that should be diagnosed, you should contact Disability Services at:

1900 Student Health Center Voice: 919-515-7653 FAX: 919-513-2840 Campus Box 7509, Raleigh NC 27695-7509 TDD: 919-515-8830 or visit their website at http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/offices/affirm_action/dss/

They will notify me by mail, and I will be happy to make any accommodations called for. Please feel free to drop by my office (Tompkins 248) to discuss the accommodations at any time.

Late Work: While it is undeniable that at times major assignments or tests in several classes may converge, I will accept late work only if you have talked to me ahead of time. I am reasonable; if you have a good argument for turning in work after the assigned date, I will certainly consider giving you an extension. Ask me. If an emergency arises to make this impossible, contact me as soon as you return to campus. Notification by email (dahooker@ncsu.edu) is preferable to notification by phone. The instructor reserves the right to assess penalties on late
work depending upon the circumstances.

**Grades:** I use the following grading scale: 100-98 = A+; 97-95 = A; 94-92 = A-; 91-98 = B+. The only exception is that the grade of F (i.e., anything lower than a D-) receives no points on the scale. Tests will receive a numerical grade; papers will receive comments and a letter grade. When I average in letter grades (e.g. A), I use the middle number for the average; in the case of an A, that would be 96.

**Requirements for Credit-Only (S/U) Grading:** In order to receive a grade of S, students are required to take all exams and quizzes, complete all assignments, and earn a grade of C- or better. Conversion from letter grading to credit only (S/U) grading is subject to university deadlines. Refer to the Registration and Records calendar for deadlines related to grading. For more details refer to http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-20-15.

Requirements for Auditors (AU): Information about and requirements for auditing a course can be found at http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-15-4.

**Policies on Incomplete Grades:** If an extended deadline is not authorized by the instructor or department, an unfinished incomplete grade will automatically change to an F after either (a) the end of the next regular semester in which the student is enrolled (not including summer sessions), or (b) the end of 12 months if the student is not enrolled, whichever is shorter. Incompletes that change to F will count as an attempted course on transcripts. The burden of fulfilling an incomplete grade is the responsibility of the student. The university policy on incomplete grades is located at http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-50-3.

**Academic Integrity:** I take seriously (and share) the university's position on academic integrity. If you violate the university's academic integrity code, I will respond in accordance with university regulations. The university defines violations of academic integrity below: "A student shall be guilty of a violation of academic integrity if he or she:

- represents the work of others as his or her own;
- obtains assistance in any academic work from another individual in a situation in which the student is expected to perform independently;
- gives assistance to another individual in a situation in which that individual is expected to perform independently
  - offers false data in support of laboratory or field work."
- For further details, consult the online Student Code of Conduct.

**Privacy:** Students may be required to disclose personally identifiable information to other students in the course via electronic tools like email or web-postings,
where relevant to the course. Examples include online discussions of class topics and posting of student coursework. All students are expected to respect the privacy of each other by not sharing or using such information outside the course.

**Non-Discrimination Policy**: NC State University provides equality of opportunity in education and employment for all students and employees. Accordingly, NC State affirms its commitment to maintain a work environment for all employees and an academic environment for all students that is free from all forms of discrimination. Discrimination based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation is a violation of state and federal law and/or NC State University policy and will not be tolerated. Harassment of any person (either in the form of quid pro quo or creation of a hostile environment) based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation also is a violation of state and federal law and/or NC State University policy and will not be tolerated. Retaliation against any person who complains about discrimination is also prohibited. NC State's policies and regulations covering discrimination, harassment, and retaliation may be accessed at http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-04-25-02 or http://oied.ncsu.edu/oied/harassment.php

Any person who feels that he or she has been the subject of prohibited discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should contact the Office for Equal Opportunity (OEO) at 515-3148.

**University Course-Instructor Evaluations**: Online class evaluations will be available for students to complete during the last week of class. Students will receive an email message directing them to a website where they can login using their Unity ID and complete evaluations. All evaluations are confidential; instructors will never know how any one student responded to any question, and students will never know the ratings for any particular instructors.

Evaluation website: https://classeval.ncsu.edu  
Student help desk: classeval@ncsu.edu  
More information about ClassEval: http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/classeval/

**CHASS Career Development Services**: Explore career options related to your major, make decisions about your major or minor, build resumes and cover letters, prepare for interviews, develop internship/job search strategies, maximize career fairs, and more. Make an appointment with your career contact, Jane Matthews (A---H) jane_matthews@ncsu.edu or Woody Catoe (I---Z) woody_catoe@ncsu.edu, through ePACK. Career Development Center, 2100
Course Schedule of Readings and Writings

"The purpose of theory . . . is not to provide a pat set of answers about what to do, but to guide us in sorting out options, and to keep us out of the 'any action/no action' bind. Theory . . . keeps us aware of the questions that need to be asked." -- Charlotte Bunch

Required Textbook:


- Price: paperback: $95.39; rent: @ $15.50; used, on Amazon, from $71.00 (The book is expensive b/c it is very comprehensive.)
- NCSU libraries do NOT have a copy; however, the book can be requested from Duke or UNC via interlibrary loan.

All readings from *Doing Feminist Theory* will be referred to as "Mann" in the syllabus. Other readings will be linked to the syllabus or handed out in class as appropriate. YOU SHOULD PRINT OUT ANY LINKED READINGS AND BRING THEM TO CLASS ON THE APPROPRIATE DATES, unless otherwise indicated.

Schedule of Readings and Writings

**Week 1:**

8.21 - Introduction to course, requirements, and texts.

- Identifying 2 domestic topics to trace through first half of course (see 8.28 for reminder to post to course moodle site)

**Due Tuesday, 8.26:**

- Autobiographies/social location assignment (will detail in class)
- Journal Assignment: see below for description

**Week 2:**

8.26 - Mann, xvi - xx “Using This Text to Navigate Feminist Thought”

**Journal Assignment due:** outline the introduction (Mann, xvi-xx) in your journal. It consists of 18 paragraphs, so you'll likely have at least one key point from each paragraph. Intro details how to use the text, which ought to be helpful to you.

- autobiography/social location statements due

8.28 - Mann, “Liberal Feminisms,” 33-51
  (You do not have to print out any of the below texts, but do consult them.)
• The Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments
• Alice Walker reads Sojourner Truth's “Ain’t I a Woman”
• Report on 2 different versions of Sojourner Truth's speech to the Akron Convention (read the Gage and Robinson versions)
• Post a link to your research on our two domestic issues and a brief 100-200 word summary on the class forum site.

Week 3:

9.02 - Mann, “Liberal Feminisms,” 52-77 (late modernity)
You do not have to print out the texts below, but do consult them as part of your reading.

• National Organization of Women, Statement of Purpose (1966)
• Phyllis Schlafly: Conservative Activist (on the defeat of the ERA) (if you only access the main "Works" site, search for Schlafly in the search box.)
• Text of the Equal Rights Amendment & map of ratification by states

9.04 - Mann, “Radical Feminisms” 78 – 98

• Time for discussing our 2 domestic issues from a liberal pov

Week 4:

9.09 - Mann, “Radical Feminisms,” 98-111; how would radical feminists approach or assess our 2 issues (differently from liberal fems?)

9.11 - Mann, “Marxist, Socialist, and Anarchist Feminisms,” 112 – 125

• a glossary for clarifying oft-used Marxist terminology
• check out www.radicalwomen.org, esp. their explanation under the "Why Socialism?" link.
• for an anarchist website, see: www.anarcha.org

• Hour exam 1 due by Sunday, 9.14, 5:00 p.m. Post to moodle site or email it to me at: dahooker@ncsu.edu (topic: radical/liberal feminisms)

Week 5

9.16 - Mann, "Marxist, Socialist and Anarchist Feminisms," 125-141

9.18 - Mann, "Marxist, Socialist and Anarchist Feminisms," 152-159; how would they assess our two issues?

• Reading Journals DUE today.
• Provide a short list (3) of potential final projects. Identify group members.

Week 6

9.23 - Mann, "Epistemological Underpinnings of Feminist Theory," 18-29;
"New Directions in Feminist Thought Inspired by the Old and New Left," 141-152
• Bring earlier autobiographies/social location work to class.


• The Combahee River Collective Statement

• Hour exam 2 due Sunday, 9.28, 5:00 p.m. (topic: Marxism, socialist, anarchist feminisms)

**Week 7 Feminist Thought After Taking the Postmodern Turn**

9.30 - Mann, “Intersectionality Theories, 178 – 209; discussions of our two topics via intersectionality critique

10.02 – continue with discussion of readings above

• Hour exam 3 due Sunday, 10.05, 5:00 p.m. (on intersectionality)

**Week 8**

10.07 - Mann, “Postmodernism, Postructuralism, Queer and Transgender Theories,” 211-219 (intro)

-- On Moodle site: by class time today, weigh in on at least 2 international/transnational/global issues you'd be interesting in using as touchstones in the second half of the course. (Look for Forum space in Week 8 box).

FALL BREAK

**Week 9:**

10.14 – Mann, 219-229 – Foucault's influence on feminist theory

--a rudimentary Foucauldian vocabulary
-Sandra Bartky, "Foucault, femininity, and the modernization of patriarchal power," 25-45

10.16 -- continue with Mann, 219-229, and Bartky

**Week 10**

10.21 - Mann, Postmodernism, Post Structuralism, Queer and Transgender Theories, 230-248. (this section focuses on queer theory)

• we finalize 2 international issues to deal with.
• Groups also identify project they will complete for course.

10.23 -- Mann, 249-255; transgender theory

• Leslie Fineberg, "Walking Our Walk," 521-526 in Theorizing Feminisms (on Electronic Reserve, DHHill)
• Serano, "Why Nice Guys Finish Last," 189-195
Week 11

10.28 -- Invited Speaker: Jordan Rice

- 3 Poems by Jordan Rice
- 3 pieces by Jordan Rice in 2paragraphs  http://2paragraphs.com/?cat=0&s=jordan+rice

10.30 – Mann, “Third Wave Feminism,” 256-290; see Thirdwavefund.org


Week 12:

11.04 - Theory Applications -- Bridging the Local and the Global: Feminist Discourses on Colonialism, Imperialism, and Globalization,” 291 - 319

11.06 -- “Feminism and Imperialism in Late Modernity,” 319 – 339; see the UN Women's Group at www.unwomen.org

Kinkaid, “Girl”

**Hour exam #4 due Sunday, 11.09, 5:00 p.m. (third wave and/or postmodern)**

Week 13

11.11 – Feminism and Imperialism in Late Modernity, 340 - 354

11.13 -- Feminism and Imperialism in Postmodernity, 355- 367;  

Week 14

11.18 -- Feminism and Imperialism in Postmodernity - 367-386

11.20 -- Feminism and Imperialism in Postmodernity – 387-399; discuss our issue via this view

Reading Journals Due today.

Week 15

11.25 - Paradigm Shifts in Feminist Thought 400-410 (course review); workshop on projects

THANKSGIVING
Week 16
12.02 - Presentation of Projects

Exam: 12/11 8-11:00