Course Description & Requirements:

The objective of this graduate seminar is to engage critically with the foundational concepts of feminist theory and some of its most historically contentious conversations. We will examine feminism as an evolving set of intellectual and activist movements, grounding its theories in social and historical contexts. This will aid in our efforts to understand the paradigm shifts in feminist theory that have taken place in modernity, and to consider the ways in which discourses of “Western” and “non-Western” philosophies have come to influence feminist debate.

Weekly coursework (readings, presentations, discussion) will be organized around keywords. These keywords are central to feminist theory’s history, but also evoke some of the most spirited and longstanding debates within the field. Readings for this class are drawn from the work of prominent theorists and new voices in academic and movement theory. Most of these readings are available in the course reader, *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (Routledge/2013, 51), edited by Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim, with additional readings available through the Canvas course management system. These readings are organized as conversations and debates between these prominent theorists around the keyword; they also highlight feminist theory’s reciprocal and at times problematic relationship with other theoretical practices, including psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, Marxism, postcolonial theory, queer theory and posthumanism.

The seminar format for this course means each class meeting is student-centered. Each student will be required to participate in weekly pre-class Canvas activities and to contribute actively to class discussion. Each student will also lead the class in critical discussion of our primary readings at least once during the term. Written requirements include one short reflective/critical paper, and one independent research project drawing from course themes and materials (due at the end of the term – see Blackboard “Assignments” tab for more information on each assignment).

Course Learning Objectives:

Participants in this seminar will encounter critical debates, “conversations” and historical shifts within feminist theory, particularly from the mid-20th Century forward. Specifically, students will:

- be introduced to various applications of theory emerging through feminist (re)examinations of the academy and knowledge construction.
- consider the positioning of feminist theory within the academy as a venue for social transformation.
- examine tensions between feminist/women’s activism and its academic representations.
- examine relations between feminist theories and other major Western social and critical theories.
- examine the global and cultural tensions emerging around feminist theory and praxis, particularly in the later 20th Century.
Participants will also utilize coursework and assessment in order to sharpen skills of debate, analysis, rhetoric, and research. Specifically, students will

- post reading questions and observations regularly to the Blackboard discussion forum in preparation for class
- lead a seminar discussion at least once during the term
- submit a short paper (mid-semester) that engages critically with one of the readings
- submit an end-of-semester project grounded in feminist theory but reflecting their own disciplinary interests or programs

Assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation, Presentation &amp; Summaries</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation on Primary Reading</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Paper</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Research Project</td>
<td>40</td>
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</tbody>
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Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Readings in bold will constitute our primary focus on the date listed. The other readings are secondary. Your assignment each week is to read the titles in bold, as well as one secondary reading. For five of these weeks, you should prepare a brief (3-5 minute) summary of this secondary reading, covering its main points and raising questions about its connections to the keyword and/or primary reading. Your summary should reflect your own perspective. You should not conduct outside research or additional sources for this exercise, but instead develop your own critical observations and questions. Summaries should be posted to Blackboard (in narrative or bulleted form – questions included) 24 hours prior to our class meeting. Do also be prepared to verbally share your summary/questions about this secondary reading during the class meeting.

Course Schedule

September 6: Current Conversations

(2021) Zakaria, *Against White Feminism* (excerpt available on Canvas)
September 13: Gender

Required readings in bold; other titles optional

Beauvoir, “The Other” & Rubin, “The Sex/Gender System”
Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”
Oyewumi, “Visualizing the Body: Western Theory and African Subjects”
Connell, “The Social Organization of Masculinity”
Fuss, “The Risk of Essence”

September 20: Oppression/Resistance

Kandiyoti, “Bargaining with Patriarchy”
Harmange, “I Hate Men”
Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”
Bunch, “Lesbians in Revolt”
Reed, “The Poetical Is The Political: Feminist Poetry and The Poetics of Women’s Rights”

September 27: Difference

Martinez, “La Chicana”
Mies, “Moving Toward the Ugly: A Politics Beyond Desirability”
Lugones and Spelman, “Have We Got a Theory for You!”
Abji, Korteweg, and Williams, “Culture Talk and the Politics of the New Right: Navigating Gendered Racism”
Glymph, Out of the House of Bondage (excerpt)
Koyama, “The Transfeminist Manifesto”

October 4: Movements

Collins, “Defining Black Feminist Thought”
Chu, “On Liking Women”
Heyes, “Feminist Solidarity After Queer Theory”
Nicholson, “Feminism in ‘Waves’: Useful Metaphor or Not?”
Awkward-Rich, “Trans, Feminism: Or, Reading like a Depressed Transsexual”
Taylor and Rupp, “Forging Feminist Identity in an International Movement”

October 11: TBA

October 18: Space

Pough, from Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and The Public Sphere
Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy”
Young, “Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility and Spatiality”
Puar, “A Transnational Feminist Critique of Queer Tourism”

October 25: Borders and Intersections

Anzaldua, “Mestiza Consciousness”
Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins”
Nash, “Rethinking Intersectionality”
Johnson, “Quare Studies, Or (Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother”
Dill and Zambrana, “Critical Thinking About Inequality”

**November 1: Gaze**

Kaplan, “Is the Gaze Male?”
Sturken and Cartwright, “Spectatorship, Power and Knowledge”
Butler, “Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions” (excerpted from *Gender Trouble*, p.128)
Watch: *Paris is Burning*
Jackson, “We Need to Talk About Digital Blackface”

**November 8: Power**

Bartky, “Foucault, Feminism and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power”
Michel Foucault, “Normalizing Judgement”¹
Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes, Revisited”
hooks, “Is Paris Burning?”
Hartsock, “The Feminist Standpoint: Toward a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism”
Said, *Orientalism* (excerpts)

**Deadline (11/8) for Short Paper**

**November 15: Epistemologies**

Haraway, “Situated Knowledges”
Narayan, “The Project of Feminist Epistemology”
Haraway, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy”
Abu-Lughod, “Orientalism and Middle East Feminist Studies”
Allen, “The Patriarchalization of Native American Tribes”

**November 22: Economies, Nation-States, (Trans)Nationalism**

Sinha, “Gender and Nation”
Parrenas, “Servants of Globalization”
Enloe, “Crafting a Global ‘Feminist Curiosity’ to Make Sense of Globalized Militarism”
Sassen, “A Feminist Analytics of the Global Economy”

**November 29: Project Discussion and Workshop**

¹ Summary excerpts from *Feminist Theory Reader*
December 6: Bodies

Richardson, “Plasticity and Programming: Feminism and the Epigenetic Imaginary”
Fausto-Sterling, Sexing the Body (excerpt)


December 13 OPTIONAL class: Project Support

Final Projects Dues Monday, December 19 by 9 AM