

## **Women's Studies 820: Topics in Gender, Power and Social Change**

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Class Time TBA  
Class Location TBA

### **Objectives**

The overall goal of this course is to explore the relationship of the development of feminist thought, especially historical thought, and activism to feminist theory. We will adopt an international approach and proceed by first looking at feminist methodology, generally and in regard to extrapolation of material about women from archaeological sources in particular. Then we will pursue a selective history of the development of feminist thought and activism in Western and non-Western cultures, paying particular attention to the interaction of thought and practice. We will look at how first and second wave feminist thought evolved including (but not exclusively) in relation to male thought, paying particular attention to Marx/Engels and Foucault. We will end by looking at 1990s feminist syntheses.

### **Requirements**

#### *Readings and questions*

The chief requirement of this course is to do the reading on time and to absorb it thoughtfully. To that end there are ten short written assignments scattered throughout the term that should be handed in on the day they are listed on the syllabus (unexcused late assignments are penalized one grade for every day of lateness). When there are questions on the syllabus you need to select only one from each set to answer in no more than two pages typewritten, 12 point type, 1 inch margins, double-spaced.

#### *Facilitation of discussions*

On one occasion of your choice you will facilitate discussion with a partner, meaning that you will get together ahead of time with your partner to devise discussion questions or any other creative exercise you think would be conducive to illuminating the readings for that session. Any session marked IF will be facilitated by the instructor. Also, you will be asked occasionally to hand in a discussion question for the group to consider.

#### *Presentation*

One oral presentation of five to ten minutes is required that will help us fill in around the required readings. You should analyze how the life experiences of a person listed under "Biography" on the syllabus relate to their writings (if applicable) and/or activism (if applicable), i.e., how the personal became political. You might also want to critique different interpretations of the life described, if applicable.

**Grades** will be determined as follows:

40% Questions/exercises (4% each)  
10% Facilitation of discussion  
30% Oral presentation  
20% Class participation/attendance\*  
100%

\*You are allowed one unexcused absence. Further unexcused absences each lower the attendance grade by one; the class participation grade bears a close relationship to the attendance grade and normally cannot exceed it.

## Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading
21 Sept.	Introduction and organization	

### Feminist Methodology and Epistemology

26 Sept.	IF	Feminism and historical methodology	Reader: Harding, Kelly, Fonow/Cook
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Questions:

1. What is the difference between feminist epistemology and methodology?
2. How has feminism revitalized history?
3. What qualities distinguish feminist research from other types of research? Or, Compare and contrast the research design of a feminist and a non-feminist hypothetical project in outline form.

### History and Gender Archaeology

28 Sept.	IF	Background	Gilchrist, pp.1-53
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Question:

List your strengths and weaknesses in terms of assessing research materials, keeping in mind good feminist practice of considering your own positionality (class, race, religion, sexual preference, gender or anything else you feel is relevant). How might you capitalize on your strengths and compensate for your weaknesses? You may have up to four pages for this one.

3 Oct.		Practice	Gilchrist, pp. 54-108
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Biography: Jane Goodall (this should include the implications of her work for our views of women; is Goodall solely a role model or is she also a theorist?)

Additional Sources:

Kelley Hays-Gilpin and David S. Whitley, eds. *Reader in Gender Archaeology*

Joan M. Gero and Margaret W. Conkey, eds. *Engendering Archaeology: Women and Prehistory*

Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott, eds. *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology*

Elizabeth M. Scott, *Those of Little Note. Gender, Race and Class in Historical Archaeology*

A. Koloski-Ostrow and C. L. Lyons, eds. *Naked Truths: Women, Sexuality and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology*

### Early Modern Beginnings-Feminist Thought and Activism

5 Oct.		Breaking the mold	Reader: Anderson / Zinsser II: 83-99, 341-46 de Pizan, as much as you can but esp. intro., pp. 3-32, 62-64, 67-81, 117-20, 153-55, 214-18
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Biographies: Christine de Pizan (this should include methodological considerations regarding how to obtain information about her; start with intro, to City of Ladies); Marie de Jars de Goumay

Questions:

1. What was the querelle des femmes and how did Christine de Pizan enter into it?
2. What was new about de Pizan's work in terms of approach/methodology? Is there anything distinctively feminist (define your term) about it?

### **The Late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries**

10 Oct.

Revolutions

Schneir, pp. 2-16;  
Reader: A/Z II: 278-84;  
Offen, pp. 151-54

Biographies: Mary Wollstonecraft; Olympe de Gouges

12 Oct.

Abolition and Suffrage

Schneir, pp. 76-124,  
128-78

Biographies: Susan B. Anthony, Ida B. Wells (be sure to see instructor for Wells' bio well ahead of time)

Questions:

1. Can the views of Wollstonecraft, Stanton or Anthony (select one) be defined as "liberal feminism" (define that) or do you see more radical tendencies there? Less than liberal?
2. What do you think the relationship was between activism on behalf of women and the activists' class status in the revolutionary and Civil War period? Pick a writer to discuss.
3. How did activism on behalf of women's rights relate to abolitionism for Stanton or Anthony?

17 Oct.

Workers' Rights--Marx

Schneir, pp. 49-57,  
125-27, review 93-95;  
Tucker, pp. xix-xxxviii,  
3-8, 133-42.

Biography: Karl Marx (see David McLellan, Karl Marx)

19 Oct.

Marx and Marxists

Tucker, pp. 221, 261-85,  
289bot.-93, 403-19, 422-31

Biographies: Friedrich Engels; Emma Goldman

Bring a question for discussion about Marx/ism.

Additional sources:

N. Redclift, ed. *Engels Revisited*

A. Kuhn and AM. Wolpe, eds. *Feminism and Materialism*

Z. Eisenstein, *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*

C. Ingraham and R. Hennessy, eds. *Materialist Feminism*

24 Oct. Marxism cont'd Tucker, pp. 473-91, 618-52

Questions:

1. Has the computer revolution fulfilled or contradicted Marx's predictions? Or both? Consider his ideas of relative surplus value and of the universalizing of bourgeois economy and culture, in particular.
2. Consider the Democratic and Republican platforms and their policies, their similarities and differences. How do they fit or contradict Marx's predictions? (See handouts)
3. Contrast Marx's interpretation of the 1870 Paris Commune with that of any standard European history textbook.

26 Oct. Engels and Bebel Tucker, pp. 681-759;  
Schneir, pp. 205-11

Questions:

1. What did Engels think would be necessary to liberate women? Why?
2. What did Engels' think about marriage as an institution? Has his analysis been completely invalidated now? Be sure to separate consideration of the validity of the content from considering his methodology.
3. Summarize Marx's views of history and of human consciousness, which Engels also does for you.

31 Oct. Socialist Feminism-20c. Nicholson, pp. 97-130

Everyone will select a third article to read either by Young, Carby or Ingraham from *Materialist Feminism*, ed. by Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham. These will be distributed to you ahead of time.

Biography: Hazel Carby

Questions:

1. Why does Michele Barrett say that questions concerning women's oppression are historical rather than just theoretical?
2. How do considerations of race/ethnicity or sexual preference (pick one) affect socialist approaches? Is there space for them to be productive or is it a dead end?

### **Into the Twentieth Century**

2 Nov. International Feminism Reader: DuBois, pp. 252-74;  
Baron, pp.1-37, 80-100

Biographies: Josephine Butler, Katherine Mayo

7 Nov. Egypt cont'd. Baron, pp. 103-87

Biography: Nawal el Saadawi (consult instructor well ahead of time on this one)

Question:

1. What issues most concerned literate Egyptian women between 1890 and 1919 and why? How do they compare to those dominating U.S. feminists' interests at that time?
2. Would you call the women Baron discusses feminists? Why (not)?
3. How far would you characterize the early Egyptian women's movement as being Western-inspired?

- 9 Nov. From First to Second Wave Schneir, pp. 230-46, 293-343; Nicholson, pp. 11-26; Reader: Johnson-Odim in Pierson/Chaudhuri, pp. 177-93
- Biographies: Simone de Beauvoir, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti
- Questions:
1. What assumptions or beliefs do de Beauvoir and Firestone share? Their differences are?
  2. Compare and contrast Sojourner Truth's feminism with that of the Nigerians described by Johnson-Odim. What might account for their similarities and differences?
  3. Do you see any advantages or disadvantages in Johnson-Odim's definition of feminist activism as theory? What are they?
- 14 Nov. Foucault Rabinow, pp. 51-100
- Biography: Michel Foucault
- Additional sources:
- S. Hekman, *Gender and Knowledge Elements of a Postmodern Feminism*
- L. Nicholson, ed. *Feminism / Postmodernism*
- B. Smart, ed. *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments*
- G. Gutting, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*
- C. Gordon, ed. *Power / Knowledge* (interviews and Foucault writings)
- I. Diamond and L. Quinby, eds. *Feminism and Foucault*
- 16 Nov. No class, read Foucault Rabinow, pp. 123-78, 206-13
- 21 Nov. Foucault Rabinow, pp. 292-339
- Make up a discussion question about Foucault and bring it to class.
- 28 Nov. Postmodern Perspectives Hekman, pp. 59-76, plus an unassigned Hekman article of your choice (we will go over the choices in class beforehand to try and cover all articles)
- Do a two page review of the article you selected from Hekman, (sum its main points and critique it).
- 30 Nov. Postmodern Practice? Gilchrist, pp. 109-49; Hekman, pp. 39-55
- Questions:
1. How do you think Engels would describe and assess Foucault and what would Foucault say about Engels? What are their biggest theoretical and methodological differences?
  2. Select a topic concerning women that interests you and itemize/suggest Foucauldian methods for analyzing/approaching it.
  3. Judgments of Foucault's importance may end, as they have with Engels, by saying that, while the actual history Foucault wrote was flawed, he still made a strong contribution to historical method. Identify 2 of his contributions that you find important and 2 of his flaws. Do they relate to each other? How good of a historian do you think he is?
  4. Does Foucault leave space for a history of women? How, if so?
- Final session IF Historicizing Feminism Nicholson, pp. 330-55, 379-95