



COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Feminist Theory (WGS 300) delves deeply into the foundational and vibrantly contested debates that define the field of feminist theory. Students will become familiar with a variety of theoretical perspectives, including those influenced by queer theory, trans studies, Black feminism, transnational feminism, radical feminism, post-structuralist feminism, psychoanalysis, and more. In doing so, students will develop an understanding of the disjunctures and disagreements that have propelled feminist theory forward, making it both a dynamic field of scholarly research and an indispensable analytic that guides feminist politics. In addition to gaining a deeper understanding of feminist theory, students will also hone their analytic skill set by evaluating, interpreting, and elaborating on said theories, as well as applying those theories to current feminist debates, in the form of written assignments and engaged class discussion.

Learning Objectives: By the end of the semester, students will be able to

- Acquire a developed understanding of key concepts and debates in the field of feminist theory.
- Become familiar with a variety of feminist theoretical perspectives.
- Demonstrate an understanding of feminist theory and how it informs, enhances, and amends feminist praxis.
- Develop and demonstrate an advanced critical thinking skill set.
- Use critical and creative thinking to draw connections between course materials and current events.

Course Expectations: Students are expected to

- Attend all class meetings.
- Prepare for class by reading and/or engaging the set materials in advance of class each week.
- Actively participate in class discussion and collaborative projects.
- Prepare for and complete all individual assignments.

Course Readings will be available on Canvas through Library Course Reserves.

GENERAL POLICIES

Classroom behavior: Please arrive on time and leave after class is finished. Be prepared for your lectures, participate, and do the readings. Please do not use your phone during class time. Respect your fellow classmates during class discussions.

Formatting: All written work should be typed and double-spaced, in a standard 12-point font and with one-inch margins unless stated otherwise. The length of the assignment is based on word count, not number of pages. Please include page numbers on each page; and include the paper title and your name at the top of the first page.

Late Work: Sometimes life happens and students realize they are not going to finish an assignment on time. Reach out to your instructor once you gather you need an extension on an assignment so we can negotiate the length of that extension. If you do not have time to reach out, remember it is better to submit something – *anything* – than not submit anything at all. Undiscussed late work will be docked a full letter grade for each day it is late.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism, including the unauthorized use of AI learning systems like Chat GPT, is a serious breach of academic conduct, and it will be penalized (and I will be very annoyed at having to do a lot of paperwork). Please refer to the Emory College Honor Code, online at: tinyurl.com/2p8cf6ph

Disability: Emory University complies with the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you need a classroom accommodation, please discuss this with me as soon as possible and contact the Emory Department of Accessibility Services (DAS): 404-727-9877; <http://accessibility.emory.edu>.

Title IX Statement: I am a Designated Reporter under the University's Title IX Policy. As a Designated Reporter, I will direct students who disclose prohibited discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment or violence, to resources that can help. I am also obligated to report the information shared with me to the University's Title IX Coordinator/Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance.

Course Materials: All course materials will be made available to students through Canvas.

Blanket Content Warning: Please be aware that the nature of this course's subject matter means that we will encounter difficult material, including material that discusses sexual assault, eating disorders, self-harm, hate crimes, and institutional racism/sexism. Use your best judgment with regard to your mental health when approaching these course materials.

ASSESSMENT & ASSIGNMENTS

This course is graded on a points system, which means that students begin the course with zero points and earn points over the course of the semester with each assignment.

ASSIGNMENT	POINTS VALUE
Attendance and Participation	20 pts.
In-Class Midterm	30 pts.
Short Critical Essay	20 pts.
In-Class Final	30 pts.
Total	100 pts.

Attendance and Participation (20 pts.): This is a discussion-based class. Without your informed presence, there is no class. Thus, you are required to come to class prepared, i.e., having read and reflected on the materials and having the materials in hand, ready to discuss. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. Students are allowed four “free” absences to account for sick days or mental health days. Please use these days wisely. After four absences, your attendance and participation grade will drop a half-grade and will continue to drop with each additional absence. Arriving significantly late or leaving significantly early counts as an absence. If you have extenuating circumstances, please discuss them with me ahead of time so we can make arrangements. Note: If you contract COVID, please follow Emory protocol. I will make class materials available to you. DO NOT come to class if you are feeling ill. For grading criteria regarding attendance and participation, see the syllabus folder on Canvas.

In-Class Midterm (30 pts.): There will be an in-class essay midterm that will assess student’s understanding of the first half of the course content. The exam will consist of five (5) essay questions, from which students will select three (3). We will have a review session prior to this midterm.

Short Critical Essay (20 pts.): At the beginning of the class, students will use a [Google Doc](#) to sign up to write a short critical essay (1800-2000 words) that analyzes and critiques the argument of the reading for that day. These essays are due on Canvas before the class meeting in which we discuss that reading.

Assignment Guidelines: This assignment is dialectical in nature. In your short critical essay, you will 1) identify the argument of the piece that you have selected, 2) assess the author’s evidence in support of that argument, 3) identify and outline potential critiques or objections to that argument, and 4) synthesize the author’s analysis with your critiques. Note that your critiques of a piece do not necessarily need to be opinions or beliefs that you sincerely hold, but rather objections that others might pose to the author’s argument. This exercise is meant to show you that even the most compelling arguments have weak points that need to be shored up – this is where the conclusion of your essay comes in. In your conclusion, you will show how the original argument can be enhanced by your critiques, should the argument address them. If you would like to talk in more detail about the argument of the reading you have selected, please make an appointment to visit me during office hours.

In-Class Final (30 pts): Like with the midterm, there will be an in-class final that will assess student’s understanding of the second half of the course content. The exam will consist of five (5) essay questions, from which students will select three (3). We will have a review session prior to the final.

Grading Standards: Expectations regarding the quality of student’s work, including rubrics, can be located in the *Syllabus* folder on Canvas.

COURSE SCHEDULE

thurs	Introduction	Syllabus Review
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8/29		<i>What is feminist theory?</i>
tues 9/3	What is a Woman?	Simone de Beauvoir, "Introduction," in <i>The Second Sex</i> (1949). Available on Course Reserves.
thurs 9/5	What is a Woman?	<u>Monique Wittig, "The Category of Sex (1976/1982)" and "One is Not Born a Woman (1981)," in <i>The Straight Mind</i> (1992).</u>
tues 9/10	What is Gender?	Judith Butler, "Introduction," in <i>Undoing Gender</i> . Available in Course Reserves.
thurs 9/12	What is Gender?	(cont.) Judith Butler, "Introduction," in <i>Undoing Gender</i> . Available in Course Reserves.
tues 9/17	What is Sex?	Anne Fausto Sterling, "Dueling Dualisms," in <i>Sexing the Body</i> (2000). Available on Course Reserves.
thurs 9/19	What is Identity?	Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens," GLQ, Vol. 3, pp. 437-465. Available <u>here</u> .
tues 9/24	Feminism and Psychoanalysis	Before Reading: Watch <u>these videos</u> from the Freud Museum of London. Juliette Mitchell, "Introduction" and "Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious" and "The Castration Complex," in <i>Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing, and Women</i> (1974). Available in Files.
thurs 9/26	Feminism and Psychoanalysis	cont.) Juliette Mitchell, "Introduction" and "Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious" and "The Castration Complex," in <i>Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing, and Women</i> (1974). Available in Files.
tues 10/1	Feminists Critique of Psychoanalysis	Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which is Not One," in <i>This Sex Which is Not One</i> (1985). Available on Course Reserves.
thurs 10/3	Black Feminist Psychoanalysis	Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," (1987). (Available on Course Reserves.)
tues 10/8	Black Feminism	<i>Saidiya Hartman, "Seduction and the Ruses of Power," in Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in 19th Century America.</i>
thurs 10/10	Black Feminism	<i>WATCH: Kimberle Crenshaw on Intersectionality:</i> <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o</u>



READ: Jennifer Nash, "Rethinking Intersectionality."

Supplemental reading: Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Anti-Racist Politics." Available [here](#)

Distribute Study Guide

tues 10/15	Fall Break	No Class
thurs 10/17	Review	Review Session
tues 10/22	Assessment	Midterm Exam
thurs 10/24	Anti-Sex Feminism	Catharine MacKinnon, "Sexuality, Pornography, and Method: Pleasure Under Patriarchy," in <i>Toward a Feminist Theory of the State</i> (1989). Available here .
tues 10/29	Anti-Sex Feminism	Andrea Dworkin, "Pornography and Male Supremacy," in <i>Letters from a War Zone</i> (1981). Available here . Supplemental reading: Lorna Bracewell, "'Pornography is the Theory, Rape is the Practice': The Anti-Pornography Feminist Critique of Liberalism," in <i>Why We Lost the Sex Wars: Sexual Freedom in the #MeToo Era</i> (2021). Available through the Emory Library .
thurs 10/31	Anti-Sex Feminism?	Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?," <i>October</i> 23, AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism (Winter, 1987), pp. 197-222 (26 pages). Available here .
tues 11/5	Sex-Positive Feminism	Carole S. Vance, "Pleasure and Danger: Toward a Politics of Sexuality," in <i>Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality</i> (1984). Available in Course Files.
thurs 11/7	Sex-Positive Feminism	Ellen Willis, "Toward a Feminist Sexual Revolution," <i>Social Text</i> no.6 (1982). Available in Files. Supplemental reading: Lorna Bracewell, "'Ambivalent Liberals, Sex Radical Feminists,'" in <i>Why We Lost the Sex Wars: Sexual</i>

		<i>Freedom in the #MeToo Era</i> (2021). Available through the Emory Library .
tues 11/12	Critiquing Sex Positivity	C.E. "Undoing Sex: Against Sexual Optimism," <i>LIES</i> vol. 1. Available here
thurs 11/14	NWSA	No Class
tues 11/19	Recuperating Sex Positivity	Maggie Nelson, "The Ballad of Sexual Optimism," in <i>On Freedom</i> (2020). Available on Course Reserves.
thurs 11/21	Black Feminist Erotic	Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" and "The Uses of the Erotic," in <i>Sister Outsider: Essays, Speeches</i> (1983).
tues 11/26 & thurs 11/28	Thanksgiving Break	No classes.
tues 12/3	TERF Wars	MacKinnon on TERFs. Available here . <i>Distribute Study Guide</i>
thurs 12/5	TERF Wars	Judith Butler, "TERF and British Matters of Sex," in <i>Who's Afraid of Gender?</i> <i>Distribute Study Guide</i>
tues 12/10	Review	Review Session
<p>Final Exam: December 17th at 9am*</p> <p>*students who wish to begin their exam at the designated start time of 8am will be able to do so.</p>		