POLS 4933: FEMINIST THEORY  
Midwestern State University  
Fall 2012  
Tuesday, Thursday, 11:00 AM --12:20 PM  
PY 209

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Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 12-2 PM, Tuesday/Thursday 8-10:30 AM, Tuesday 2-3 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of this course is to begin to examine philosophical and practical issues associated with the consideration of women and gender in society. In other words, we will consider what it means to do academic work on women and gender and contemplate how that work changes the scope and manner of our endeavors. This course will be interdisciplinary, and will take both a historical and thematic approach. We will begin our journey through feminist theory in the Enlightenment and conclude in our contemporary period. We will explore issues such as the meaning “woman” and “gender,” as well the connection between social movements and theory and the intersection of systems of inequality in the lives of women and the feminist project. As important as our discussions of what it means to study women and gender, will be how we can study gender or how the study of women and gender can influence research throughout the academy and beyond. The readings we will examine this semester, although primarily works of feminist theory, will use a variety of methodological approaches. The consideration of how scholars have sought to support their arguments and design their research is just as crucial to our discussion as their arguments themselves.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


Additional Readings available on Blackboard

RECOMMENDED:


BREAKDOWN OF GRADES:

10% Reflective Analysis
Two two-to-three-page essay reflecting on one or more reading. It summarizes the readings and analyzes the key themes brought up.

15% Midterm Exam

10% Quizzes, Homework and Classwork and Participation
This category includes all ancillary work including quizzes, in-class assignments and homework.

5% Attendance and Engagement
This category includes attendance engagement during class periods

15% Analytical Essay
A four-to-six-page paper conforming to the assignment.

10% Reading presentation
Students will choose one unassigned reading from Feminist Theory and give a presentation on it to the class.

15% Final Paper

20% Final Exam  Tuesday, December 11

POTENTIAL PITFALLS
Feminist Theory is, on many levels, a challenging course. You will need to put forth quite a bit of effort to reach your goals in the class, so I would suggest steering clear of some easily avoidable problems:

- **Weak Attendance and Participation** – Although our class is online, you should not treat it too differently from an in-person course. You should attend class. There is work to complete each week and the discussion board on which to participate. To do well in this course, you will have to keep up with the material daily. If you do miss an assignment, quiz or exam, the only excused absences will be those accepted are for a 1) university-excused absence, 2) illness with a doctor’s note, and 3) legal proceedings. All excuses must be delivered in writing. **Any student with 5 or more unexcused absences may be dropped without notice.**

- **Lateness** -- I will take attendance at each class meeting. Students arriving after the role has been called will not be counted as on-time and will be listed as tardy. Two tardies will be the equivalent to one absence. Students arriving more than 15 minutes late to class will be counted as absent for that class meeting.

- **Late Work** – All assignments will lose one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late. For example, a B+ paper that is two days late will be marked down to a C+. This count begins immediately after assignments have been collected. No assignments will be accepted after the final exam. No assignment will be accepted once it is more than 7 days late. A zero for the assignment will be given instead. Written assignments will be assigned in advance of due dates. In other words, being sick on a Tuesday does not excuse work from being due on a Thursday. Classwork cannot be made up.
Quizzes and Exams – quizzes will be unannounced and relate to the readings. No make-up quizzes will be given without an excuse meeting the requirements listed above.

Make-up Exams – Students are expected to be present for all exams on the dates which the class will take them. If a student has a university-approved excuse and the instructor is notified IN WRITING, PRIOR to the examination, arrangements for a make-up exam will be made. If a student fails to notify the instructor, the student will receive a zero for the exam. Unless arrangements have already been made in accordance with this policy, no exam may be administered after the graded exam is returned to the class. Only under extraordinary circumstances can a student take an exam early. Only university-approved excuses, death in the family, or illness be considered for taking an exam early. The request for an early exam must be made IN WRITING.

Plagiarism – Any work that is not that solely of the author and not properly credited according to academic conventions will be considered academic dishonesty. I have NO TOLERANCE for plagiarism or cheating of any kind, though I do have extensive experience identifying and proving academic dishonesty. Plagiarized assignments will receive an F, and the student or students in question may receive an F in the course and be turned over to the University.

A Note about Written Assignments and Format:

- Papers must be submitted via Blackboard and in-person on the due date.
- All students are expected to keep a copy of their work and produce it upon request.
- Essays must be formatted according to the specifications given with the term paper assignment sheet.
- All papers must be original work by the student for this class POLS 4933-Fall 2012. Any assignment that is not original to this course and original to the student will be subject to the plagiarism policy.
- No use of Wikipedia will be allowed.

Professionalism and the Learning Environment:

We will have discussion throughout the course, sometimes of controversial topics. A classroom, including a virtual classroom, thrives on mutual respect. I expect considerate behavior from each of you, as well as for you to be respectful of your classmates, in order to make the most of your time in class. Our class will contain written communication between students and the professor. During communication:

- Do not read non-class materials during class time (novels, the newspaper, textbooks for other classes, etc.) and do not be otherwise distracting. Talking, passing notes, etc during lecture or while other students are asking or answering questions. In other words, you are expected to behave like responsible adults in class. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated and will result on removal from the class.
- Please turn off cellular phones, pagers, extraneous computer programs, or any other noisy/distracting device. Anything that might happen during class will be waiting for you when class is over. No cell phones or electronic devices may be used during the exam. Students observed looking at cell phones or other similar electronic devices during quizzes or exams will receive an automatic zero on that exam or quiz.
- Participation is a graded component of the course, but keep in mind that you should be considerate of other students when you are participating. Stay on topic and think about
what you are saying. Also, do no monopolize the conversation; you can learn quite a bit from your classmates.

- At all times, adopt a tone that is respectful of your classmates’ racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds; religious and political beliefs; sexual orientations; and gender. The University will not tolerate verbal or written abuse. Disrespectful behavior towards the instructor or fellow classmates will not be tolerated and will result in removal from the course.

- Similarly, the University takes a very strict view on matters of academic integrity, especially in cases involving plagiarism and illegitimate assistance. The best academic communities consist of students and teachers who are at all times considerate and respectful of the contributions and work of others. Further details regarding these issues please consult the student handbook.

- Discussion of Grades: If you have questions about your grades, please make an appointment to discuss it with me. Discussion of grades is a matter between the instructor and the student. This may only be done in my office during my office hours or a pre-arranged appointment. I will not discuss an individual student’s grade in the classroom, hallway, or via email. If the grading concern is in regard to a fellow student receiving more points for an answer, both students must be present at the grade discussion appointment.

- Communication: The best way to reach me outside of class is to visit me during my office hours or contact me via email. My email address is listed on the first page of the syllabus. When emailing me, if you would like a response, you must include your name, a subject in the subject line, the name of the course in which you are enrolled, and your question. Please use full sentences and not texting language. During the week, I will usually respond within 24 hours, however, it may be 48 during the weekend.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Office of Disability Service in the Clark Student Center. The telephone number is 940-397-4140. Please be sure contact me privately regarding your specific needs. If you have not yet registered and need to do so, please contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible.

**CLASS OUTLINE:**

The following is a tentative outline of the semester. Students will be notified of any changes. Readings starting with “FT” are from Feminist Theory: A Reader. Other readings will be on Blackboard.

**Week 1: Introduction to Course and the Study of Feminist Theory**

Tuesday, August 28: Introduction to course

Thursday, August 30:

FT: Paula Treichler and Cheris Kramarac, “Feminism” pp. 7-11

**Weeks 2-3: The First Wave**

September 4 and 6:

FT: Mary Wollstonecraft, Chapters II, IX, and XIII from *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), 60-64.


FT: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Seneca Falls “Declaration of Sentiments” from *The History of Women’s Suffrage* (1848), pp. 67-69.

Film: *One Woman, One Vote*

September 11 and 13:

FT: Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman?” (1851), p. 75


FT: Margaret Sanger, “Birth Control – A Parents’ Problem or Woman’s? from Woman and the New Race, pp. 126-127.

**Week 4: The Second Wave: Beginnings**

September 18 and 20

**Tuesday, September 18: Reflective Analysis Due**

FT: Simone de Beauvioir, “Introduction” and Chapter 12 from *The Second Sex* (1949), FT 147-159

FT: Betty Friedan, “The Problem That Has No Name” from *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), FT 162-166.

1950s Ads:
[http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/adaccess_BH0214/](http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/adaccess_BH0214/)

Film excerpt: *Mad Men*

**Week 5: Sex, Violence and the Body**

September 25 and 27


Film: *Killing Us Softly*: 4

**Week 6-7: Motherhood**

October 2 and 4, October 9


FT: Carol Gilligan, “Images of Relationship,” 312-318


FT: Kolmar and Bartkowski “Sexual Division of Labor,” 49-50

**Thursday, October 11: Midterm Exam**

**Week 8: Difference and Contesting Essentialism**

October 16 and 18


FT: Norma Alarcón, “The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism,” pp. 426-441.

**Week 9: The Third Wave Begins: Multiculturalism, Diversity and Change**
October 23-25


FT: Joan Scott, “Deconstructing Equality-versus-Difference, or, the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism,” 388-396.


**Tuesday, October 23: Analytical Essay Due**

Week 10:
October 30 and November 1


**Week 11: Performativity**
November 6-8

FT: Anne Fausto-Sterling, “Should There Be Only Two Sexes?”, pp. 516-521


FT: Judith Butler, from *Undoing Gender*, pp. 546-552.


**Week 12-15: New Work in Feminist Theory**

November 13-29, December 4-6

No class on September 22: Thanksgiving Holiday
Shira Tarrant and Marjorie Jolles, eds. *Fashion Talks: Undressing the Power of Style*

**Thursday, December 6: Paper 3 Due**

**Final Exam: Tuesday, December 11, 1-3 PM**