

Fall 2015

WGS 2090

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Introduction to Women's Studies
Fall 2015 11-11:50 MWF LA 356
Instructor: Dr. Shelby Richardson
Office: LA 343, ext.6472
Office Hours: MWF 10-11 and 12:30-1; TR 1-2
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Course Description:

This course introduces students to women's and gender studies, an interdisciplinary field that explores questions about the meaning of gender in society. Students will become familiar with important issues and debates in historical and contemporary women's and gender studies scholarship as they learn to think of gender as a social construct or performance. The course will also emphasize the intersection of women's and gender studies with intellectual interrogations of race, class, nationality and ethnicity, as well as sexual orientation. Using a variety of texts, including visual images, popular magazines, short stories, and dramatic works, we consider gender means—and why the subject so often elicits intolerant, and even violent responses from society.

Student Learning Objectives:

By the end of the semester, students will be familiar with the three major “waves” of feminism. They will be able to effectively identify and analyze trends in feminist thought and scholarship and will have developed an understanding of how ideas about gender have changed over time. Additionally, they will demonstrate their ability to use supplementary readings and research materials to support their own carefully crafted analyses as they work to develop their own research projects that they will present to the class, demonstrating their ability to construct and articulate complex arguments.

Text:

A History of U.S. Feminisms, by Rory Dicker—Seal Press—2008

*This text and all additional Readings will be posted on Moodle.

Course Requirements:

Students are responsible for all assigned reading and should be prepared to discuss the readings as indicated on the syllabus. You must complete all assigned work (including in-class and homework assignments) in order to receive credit for this course. Attendance is required. More than five unexcused absences will negatively impact your final grade and you may not be able to pass the course. At this stage, I will expect you to schedule an appointment with me to discuss your ability to complete the course successfully. I do understand, however, that students get sick, so if you must miss a class, please e-mail me about your circumstance as soon as possible and be prepared to provide documentation to explain the absence.

Breakdown of Grades:

Participation, in-class writing and homework assignments: 20%
Paper #1 and #2: 20% each
Midterm and Final: 20% each

Cell phones and personal computers: Cell phones and personal computers disrupt class work and should be turned off during class sessions. They should be put away at the beginning of class. Do not leave phones on vibrate unless there is a genuine emergency you have discussed with me before class.

Plagiarism: Do not consider it. If I have any suspicion that your work is not original I will not hesitate to report you. Academic dishonesty simply will not be tolerated. Refer to the UNO judicial Code for further information (see Syllabus Attachment for further information).

Preliminary Syllabus:

August

W 19 Course Introduction; : Read Chapter 1 in your text (pages 1-20; posted on Moodle)

F 21 Discussion: Feminism; HW: Writing Assignment

The author of your text asks “What is Feminism, Anyway?” (18). For this writing assignment, you should attempt to answer this question in a typed, informal essay of at least one page (double-spaced, 12pt font). Please do not use any outside source material for this assignment—I want to know what you think!

What does the word “feminism” mean to you? What do you associate with the term? Are your impressions of “feminism” and/or “feminists” positive or negative, or do they fall somewhere in between? On what information and/or experiences do you base your understanding of the term? How influential are your parents and peers in influencing your opinion? What about the media? Do your best to explain your understanding of the term in your own words and provide at least one specific example from your own experience to illustrate your definition.

M 24 Discussion: Writing assignment; HW: Read Orenstein’s “Should the World of Toys be Gender Free”?

W 26 Discussion: Orenstein; HW: Read Pollen’s “Performing Spectacular Girlhood...”

F 28 Discussion: Pollen; HW: Writing Assignment on Children’s Toys

Please visit a toy store or the toy aisles of a large retailer like Toys R US, Target, Kmart, etc (or you may, if absolutely necessary, visit a store online) and choose one toy from the girl's aisle and one from the boy's aisle that particularly catch your attention because of the way the toys are marketed to a child of a particular gender. Be sure to take a photo for later reference!

Now, compare the two toys. How are they packaged? How do you know which gender of child the toy is geared to attract? Does the play the toy encourages a child to participate in seem to rely on gender stereotypes (ex. girls as nurturing, boys as tough...)? Try to focus on specific details as you write about what this comparison illustrates about the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes. Everyone should aim for at least one full typed page (double-spaced, 12pt font) of writing in which you describe your experience (and provide images if possible). Don't worry too much about editing this assignment-- just type up your immediate impressions.

M 31 Discussion: Children’s Toys/Writing Assignment; HW: Begin reading chapter 2 in your text (pages 21-35)

September

W 2 Discussion: First Wave Feminism; HW: Excerpts from Wollstonecraft's "Vindication...." and Truth's speeches

F 4 Discussion: Wollstonecraft and Truth; HW: Finish reading Chapter Two

M 7 No class: Labor Day Holiday

W 9 Discussion: First Wave Feminism continued; HW: Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*

F 11 Discussion: *The Yellow Wallpaper*; HW: excerpts from Markham’s *West with the Night* and complete a 1-2 page topic proposal for paper #1

Preliminary Syllabus Continued

September

M 14 Discussion: Markham; HW: excerpts from Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*

W 16 Discussion: Woolf; Begin Chapter 3 of your text (pages 57-68)

F 18 Discussion: Second Wave Feminism; HW: Complete Draft of Paper #1

M 21 Paper #1 Drafts; HW: Selections from Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*

W 23 Discussion: Friedan; HW: Finish reading Chapter 3

F 23 Discussion: Second Wave Feminism; HW: Complete Paper #1 and read Mainardi's "The Politics of Housework" and Brady's "I Want a Wife"

M 28 Paper #1 Due; Discussion Mainardi and Brady HW: Walker's "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens"

W 30 Discussion: Walker; HW: Read Hayden and King's "A Kind of Memo" and Lorde's "Poetry is Not a Luxury" and "The Transformation of Silence..."

October

F 2 Discussion: Hayden and King, Lorde; HW: Prepare for Midterm Exam

M 5 Midterm Exam: Part 1

W 7 Midterm Exam: Part 2; HW: TBA