Special Topics: Women of Color Feminisms
Fall 2016, GSWS 1141 – 1060
Tuesday/Thursday 1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.
402 Cathedral of Learning

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. & by appointment

Course Description:
This course is an interdisciplinary exploration of the theoretical and practical frameworks of feminisms developed by women of color. It is designed to introduce and familiarize students with the contributions of Black and African American, Latina/Chicana, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, and Arab-American women. We will explore the complex politics of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and other categories of power in the lives of women of color in the United States. Students will develop intersectionality as a theoretical tool to use in analyzing oppressions. We will examine key themes in women of color feminisms, including the politics of representation, stigmatization, multiple forms of state and interpersonal violence, intersecting forms of oppression, economic justice, reproductive justice, queerness/sexuality/lesbianism, and strategies of empowerment and resistance. We will also engage in a critical exploration of identity as a challenge to hegemonic feminism and a social location from which to struggle, and explore critiques of identity politics, drawing from theoretical and practical attempts at transcending socially constructed categories while acknowledging material inequalities that persist. We will critically analyze texts, discuss and present ideas in class, and complete written analyses. (Prerequisite: At least one course on gender or permission of the instructor.)

Course Objectives: By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Describe the different theoretical contributions to feminist thought developed by women of color
- Explain the complex politics of categories of power in the lives of women of color
- Define intersectionality and explain its theoretical development
- Analyze oppressions through an intersectional lens
- Compare, contrast, and critique various perspectives of identity as a tool of analysis and resistance

Required Readings:

Anthology. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Articles, essays, and chapters will also be assigned as required readings for this course. See the Class Schedule below. They will be available under the “Course Documents” heading on CourseWeb at http://courseweb.pitt.edu.

* This syllabus is subject to change. You will be notified in advance of changes.
Course Requirements and Point Distribution:
Your final grade for this course will consist of five Key Themes and Concepts posts, a Spotlight Presentation, two papers, a peer review, a final presentation and abstract, and participation points. Your grade is calculated as a percentage of 100 possible earned points in the class.

Key Themes and Concepts (5 x 3)  15pts
Spotlight Presentation    15pts
Paper #1     20pts
Peer Review     10pts
Paper #2     20pts
Final Presentation and Abstract  10pts
Participation     10pts

Letter Grades and Percent Ranges
A+ 97-100 B+ 87-89 C+ 77-79 D+ 67-69  F 0-59
A 93-96   B 83-86   C 73-76   D 63-66
A- 90-92   B- 80-82  C- 70-72  D- 60-62

Key Themes and Concepts (KTCs): You are responsible for posting five KTCs to the Course Web Discussion Board throughout the semester. Choose one of the readings on your assigned day for your KTC. I will assign the class sessions for which you are responsible for producing a KTC. The schedule can be found on Course Web after September 8. The KTCs will consist of two elements: First, choose one new key theme or concept introduced in the reading and, in a few sentences, explain it in your own words. Secondly, pose two questions for class discussion. For example, are there new questions or challenges posed by the key theme or concept? What are the implications of the concept? Please do not pose yes or no (or closed) questions. Also refrain from asking vague general questions that could be applied to any reading, such as, “What do you think about…?” Additionally, please do not submit the same key theme/concept or questions as another poster. These KTCs are worth up to 3 points each. You must post your KTC to the Course Web Discussion Board by 1pm the day before the class in which we will discuss the assigned readings. For example, if you are assigned the readings for Tuesday, September 13, you must post your KTC to the Discussion Board by 1pm on Monday, September 12. KTCs posted after this time are not accepted for credit. You are not permitted to do “make up” KTCs. If you are unable to come to class on the day of your assigned reading, you must still post the KTC on Course Web in the days leading up to that class.

Spotlight Presentation: For this assignment, you will work with another classmate and deliver a 15-minute presentation. The presentation will begin with a summary of the assigned reading. You will be expected to explain the main points of the author/s. Then you will give a summary of an organization, effort, or personality that illustrates this perspective on feminist thought. Finally, you will pose at least two questions and
facilitate class discussion. You will sign up for your reading/group in class at the beginning of the semester. This assignment is worth up to 15 points.

**Paper #1:** For this 3-4-page paper, you will describe feminist thought from the perspective/s of one of the communities of women of color we have been discussing. Explain the history, key issues, and ways these perspectives differ from or overlap with hegemonic feminism. Research movement organizations that claim this identity. Choose one group or effort. Describe it in detail and discuss how it illustrates or complicates this feminist thought. If you presented on an organization or effort in your spotlight presentation, you must choose a different organization or effort for this assignment. We will discuss this paper in class in further depth. You must bring a hard copy of this paper to class. This paper is worth up to 20 points and is due: **Thursday, November 10.**

**Paper #2:** This 6-7-page paper will be a revision and extension of Paper #1. You will first incorporate my feedback (and, eventually, the insights of your classmates from our peer review session). You will then briefly explain the debates over identity as a tool of analysis and resistance (from weeks 10 and 11). Finally, you will choose one of the positions on identity that resonates with you and discuss its implications, making a connection to the effort/s presented earlier in the paper. We will discuss this assignment in further depth in class. This paper is worth up to 20 points. The first draft is due **Thursday, December 1.** You must bring a hard copy of this paper to class. The final paper is due in my mailbox by 5 p.m. on **Tuesday, December 13.** Please attach a copy of your peer reviewer’s feedback when you submit this final paper.

**Both papers should be typed and double-spaced in Times New Roman 12pt. font with 1 inch margins.**

**Peer Review:** On Thursday, December 1, we will have an in-class peer-review session. You will bring a hard copy of Paper #2 to class and work with another classmate to improve your paper. You will generate a 2-page review of suggestions and constructive criticism. This review must be attached to the final draft of your paper, due at the end of the semester. I will also be available for consultation. The peer review is worth up to 10 points.

**Participation:** You are strongly encouraged to attend all classes, as your presence is required to earn participation points. Your active participation and attendance is important to the success of the course for both you and your classmates. Therefore, you are expected to arrive on time and stay for the entire class period. **Chronic absences will negatively affect your grade.** Class sessions will consist of lectures, discussions, in-class activities, the sharing of short homework assignments, and small group exercises. Your participation in these activities counts toward the 10 possible participation points you can earn, and they cannot be made up!
**Extra Credit:**
You may earn up to 2 points of extra credit throughout the semester by attending one of the GSWS events listed in this syllabus and writing a 2-page essay about it. You will have 1 week after the event takes place to turn in the paper. Provide a brief (1-2 paragraphs) summary of the event, then make connections to one of the theorists we have read this semester. Finally, discuss whether you agree or disagree with the ideas presented at the event (and be sure to clearly explain why).

The complete calendar of GSWS events can be found on the GSWS website: [http://www.gsws.pitt.edu](http://www.gsws.pitt.edu).

**Classroom and University Policies**

**Gender-Inclusive/Non-Sexist Language Statement:** Aspiring to create a learning environment in which people of all identities are encouraged to contribute their perspectives to academic discourse, The University of Pittsburgh Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies Program provides guidelines and resources ([http://gsws.pitt.edu/node/1432](http://gsws.pitt.edu/node/1432)) regarding gender-inclusive/non-sexist language. Following these guidelines fosters an inclusive and welcoming environment, strengthens academic writing, enriches discussion, and reflects best professional practices.

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Just as sexist language excludes women’s experiences, non-gender-inclusive language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Identities including trans, intersex, and genderqueer reflect personal descriptions, expressions, and experiences. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (for example, first year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, etc.). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students, faculty, and staff may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored. These guidelines fulfill the best intentions of the University of Pittsburgh’s Non-Discrimination Policy (see below).

**Academic Integrity:** Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, from the February 1974 Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom reported to the Senate Council, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz or exam will be imposed. View the complete policy at [www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html](http://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html).

**Attendance:** Students who miss 10 or more classes will not pass the course.

**Classroom Recording:** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written
permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

**Disability Resources:** If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890/412-383-7355 (TTY), as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

**Electronic copies** of assignments are not accepted. Do not send papers via email.

**Email Policy:** Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address.

**Cell phone and laptop policy:** All cell phones and other electronic communication devices are to be turned to the off setting during class. Laptops are to be used for note-taking only.

**Late policy:** In-class activities and Key Themes and Concepts posts cannot be made up. No exceptions. Papers will be reduced by 2 points for each day late (this includes after class).

**Non-Discrimination:** As an educational institution and as an employer, Pitt values equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic and cultural diversity. Accordingly, the University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, disability, or status as a veteran. Visit [http://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/07/07-01-03.html](http://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/07/07-01-03.html) for more information.

**Content Warnings and Classroom Climate**
Our course readings and classroom discussions will often focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging topics. As with any course in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies Program, course topics are often political and personal. Readings and discussions might trigger strong feelings—anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the readings; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers’ understanding of the readings; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually
rigorous and respectful. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom.

I expect everyone to come to class prepared to discuss the readings in a mature and respectful way. If you are struggling with the course materials, here are some tips: read the syllabus so that you are prepared in advance. You can approach your instructor ahead of time if you’d like more information about a topic or reading. If you think a particular reading or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, you can arrive to class early and take a seat by the door so that you can easily exit the classroom as needed. If you need to leave or miss class, you are still responsible for the work you miss. If you are struggling to keep up with the work because of the course content, you should speak with your instructor and/or seek help from the counseling center.

**Class Contacts**
If you must miss a class, please check-in with a fellow student to get the notes and discuss missed information. The two people to contact about this are:

Name: ______________________  E-mail: _____________  Phone: _______________

Name: ______________________  E-mail: _____________  Phone: _______________
Course Schedule

WEEK 1

**August 30: Introduction to Women of Color Feminisms**

**September 1: Defining and Negotiating Identities**


WEEK 2

**September 6: Race, Discrimination, and Inequality**

In class: Watch *RACE: The Power of an Illusion - Episode 3: The House We Live In* (PBS Documentary)

**September 8: Intersectionality and Women of Color Organizing**


WEEK 3

September 13: Native American Feminisms


September 15: Native American Feminisms


Extra Credit: General lecture by Emily Crosby (GSWS) on “Authentic Artifice: Dolly Parton’s Negotiations of Sontag’s Camp.” Thursday, Sept. 15, 4 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. in 501CL

WEEK 4

September 20: Black and African American Feminisms and Womanism


**September 22: Black and African American Feminisms**


*Extra Credit*: Colloquium by Rostom Mesli (GSWS and the Humanities Center) on “The Complexities of Intersectionalities.” Thursday, Sept. 22, 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.

**WEEK 5**

**September 27: Victoria Law: Resistance Behind Bars**

[Note: for today’s class, we will meet in the Graduate School of Public Health, Room A115.]


**September 29: Black Feminism and the Politics of Representation**


WEEK 6

October 4: No! The Rape Documentary
In class screen: No!: The Rape Documentary, a film by Aishah Shahidah Simmons

October 6: Latina Americana and Chicana Feminisms

Extra Credit: GSWS Graduate students Laura Stamm (Film Studies) and Donica O’Malley (Communication) present their research on “Ginger and Gender, Queer Cinema and AIDS.” Thursday, Oct. 6, 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. in 402CL.

WEEK 7

October 11: Señorita Extraviada
In class screen: Señorita Extraviada (Missing Young Woman), a documentary by Lourdes Portillo

October 13: Latina Americana and Chicana Feminisms


WEEK 8

October 18: No class, Fall Break

October 20: Asian American and Pacific Islander Feminisms


WEEK 9

October 25: Asian American and Pacific Islander Feminisms


**October 27: Arab American Feminisms**

In class screen: *Feminism Inshallah: A History of Arab Feminism*, by Feriel Ben Mahmoud.


Extra Credit: General lecture by Tey Meadow, Columbia University, on “Being a Gender: The Transgender Child and Changes in the Self.” Thursday, Oct. 27, 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., 501CL.

**WEEK 10**

**November 1: Arab American Feminisms**


**November 3: Revisiting Intersectionality**


Extra Credit: Ann J. Cahill, Elon University, on “Unjust Sex vs. Rape: A Feminist Analysis of the Heteronormative Sexual Continuum.” Thursday, Nov. 3, 9:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. in 501CL.
Extra Credit: Ann J. Cahill, Elon University, on “Must Survivors of Sexual Violence Disclose their Assaults? Title IX, Mandatory Reporting, and the Role of the Confidant.” Thursday, Nov. 3, 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. in 602CL.

WEEK 11

November 8: Race Traitors and Challenging Identity


November 10: In Defense of Identity Politics
Paper #1 is due! Please bring a hard copy to class.
Rostom Mesli (reading TBA and discussion)

Extra Credit: LGBT activist Maurice Tomlinson on “A Case for Tolerance: Challenges to Anti-Gay Laws in the Caribbean.” Thursday, Nov. 10, 4 p.m. to 5:15 p.m., University Club, Gold Room.

Extra Credit: Film screening of The Abominable Crime followed by discussion with LGBT activist Maurice Tomlinson. Thursday, Nov. 10, 8 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. in the Frick Fine Arts Auditorium.

WEEK 12

November 15: State, Economic, Medical, and Domestic Violence


November 17: Choice, Justice, and Transformation


Extra Credit: Annual Iris Marion Young Event and Awards for Community Engagement with presentations on “Expressing the New Pittsburgh: Art, Gentrification, and Urban Communities.” Thursday, Nov. 17, 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., William Pitt Union, Kurtzman Room.

WEEK 13

November 22: Women of Color Organizing: Strategies and Solutions (part I)


November 24: No class, Thanksgiving
WEEK 14

November 29: Women of Color Organizing: Strategies and Solutions (part II)


December 1: Peer Review

*Paper #2 Draft is Due! Please bring a hard copy to class.*

WEEK 15

December 6: Presentations (Group I)

December 8: Presentations (Group II)

**FINAL PAPERS DUE:** Tuesday, December 13 by 5pm, in my mailbox in GSWS. Remember to include a copy of the review of your paper by your partner.