

Feminist Political Thought
POS 4931 – Special Topics
Fall 2020
Tu 3:00-4:55 / Th 4:05-4:55
Online

Professor Stacey Liou
Office Hours: W 3-6 p.m.

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Anderson 317

Description

This course introduces students to feminist political thought, with particular attention to contemporary debates animating feminist thought and practice. We will read and examine texts that critically engage liberal, Marxist and other political theories, as well as actually existing forms of domination, from a variety of feminist perspectives. We will consider how feminist thinkers engage, extend and challenge each other, as well as various approaches to political action and solidarity. Among the themes we will discuss are the boundaries of the category “woman,” the historical struggle and justifications for women’s political equality, the multiplicity of women’s experiences including various axes of identity and difference, and the potential for emancipatory action. We will explore the extent to which these ideas are relevant to and visible in contemporary sociopolitical life.

Goals

You will be required to think critically and independently, and to learn how to support your arguments with logic and evidence. By the end of this class you will be able to speak intelligently about various strands of feminist political thought, key themes and issues of contention, the social and historical circumstances that have animated and reflected different ways of approaching feminist political thought, and how the problems and concepts discussed illuminate contemporary political life and envision feminist futures.

Requirements

Participation (20%)

This is an advanced undergraduate seminar. Attendance is mandatory and students are expected to attend every class session. Participation also entails active engagement in class discussions. To do this well, you should finish reading the material noted on the syllabus before each class session and be prepared to discuss those readings. Allow yourself enough time for the readings, because the texts assigned are complex and require close attention.

Excused absences must be consistent with university policies and require appropriate documentation. Additional information can be found [here](#).

Many topics covered in the course can be controversial, difficult and personally felt. You will undoubtedly disagree with some of the texts and theories that we read, just as they often disagree with each other. I encourage you to share your perspectives on them in contributing to an open and respectful discussion. While class sessions will be held online, your respect and courtesy toward others continue to be an integral part of our time together – it is key to making this course enjoyable and intellectually stimulating.

Response Paper (20%)

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You will write a short 4-5 page (1,250 words max) response paper engaging the readings from one class session, i.e., reading assignments from one Tuesday or Thursday. You may choose which session this is (please see me if you wish to write about material on the schedule after October 22). Your response paper is due by **Friday, October 22**. Submit it on Canvas assignments.

Instead of merely summarizing the readings, you should critically engage their themes, assumptions and arguments, noting parallels and points of agreement and difference. Present your stance in relation to them, making a persuasive and reasoned case for this stance by referencing previous material discussed in class and/or contemporary political events.

Group Presentation (20%)

You will be responsible for preparing a group presentation to introduce one course session of your choosing, beginning with the readings on October 20. This will be at 12-15 minute group presentation on Zoom, and it can take a variety of forms: artwork, podcast, video, Powerpoint presentation, lecture, performance and so on. The presentation should outline two specific themes or ideas of the readings (do not merely summarize), comparing and contrasting them with previous discussions, related outside readings or contemporary sociopolitical phenomena. Pose some key questions for the class to consider to elicit discussion. More detail will be provided at our first session, and I encourage you to consult with me about your presentation beforehand.

Research Paper (40%: 10% peer review, 30% final)

You will write a research paper, of 10-12 pages (2,500-3,000 words), on a topic of your choice that engages the themes we discuss in our class. Analyze a contemporary political phenomenon (major event, recent development, current condition, notable trend, etc.) through the lens of one or more of the feminist political thinkers or theories we have read during the semester. You should make primary use of the reading material assigned, though you are of course welcome to do outside research. You have broad leeway to engage a political phenomenon that you find relevant and interesting, and I strongly encourage you to come talk with me during office hours about your project.

On Tuesday, November 24, you will participate in an in-class peer review session with a pre-assigned partner. This will require that you submit your 5-page (1,250 words) draft on Canvas assignments and share it with your partner via Canvas message by **Thursday, November 19**. Submit your final research paper on Canvas assignments by **December 10**.

Grading Policy

Late assignment submissions will not be accepted. Requirements for class attendance and assignments are consistent with university policies that can be found at: catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/.

The following cutoffs will be used for grades:	A 93–100%	A– 90–92%	
B+ 87–89%	B 84–86%	B– 80–83%	
C+ 77–79%	C 74–76%	C– 70–73%	
D+ 67–69%	D 64–66%	D– 60–63%	E < 60%

Office Hours

Office hours will be held on Zoom at the hours indicated above. You may make an appointment at www.calendly.com/staceyliou. Please take advantage of this time. It is especially important to contact me if you feel confused or that you're falling behind. You may also send me any concerns or questions

you have, or if you need to meet outside designated office hours. Email me at my UF address or message me on Canvas, though for FERPA reasons I encourage you to communicate via Canvas when discussing any confidential matter.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/>. I take this feedback seriously and use your constructive feedback to improve the course for future offerings. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at the link provided above.

Resources

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, you will receive an accommodation letter to share with me. If you need accommodation please follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Crisis Resources

If you or someone you know is struggling with any crisis including but not limited to gender, sexual, racial, or domestic violence, there are many community and University of Florida resources available. Some of these include:

- U Matter, We Care (umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, umatter.ufl.edu)
- RESPECT – UF Division of Student Affairs (respect.ufsa.ufl.edu)
- Counseling and Wellness Center – available 24/7 (352-392-1575, counseling.ufl.edu)
- Student Health Care Center (352-392-1161, shcc.ufl.edu)
- Multicultural & Diversity Affairs (352-392-1217, multicultural.ufl.edu)
- UFPD Office of Victim Services (352-392-1111, police.ufl.edu)
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center (352-733-0111)

Financial and Covid-Related Services

In case of emergency financial need, UF's Aid-a-Gator program that provides students with emergency funding: <https://www.sfa.ufl.edu/aidagator/>. The program is intended to "help our students need to cover costs related to unanticipated travel, additional technology requirements, or other needs related to an emergency situation."

If you have a family member whose financial situation was affected by the Covid-19 crisis, especially loss of work hours or job, you can submit a revision petition for consideration of having that income reevaluated. UF is encouraging these students to complete the Financial Aid Revision Petitions for 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Academic Integrity

All students are required to abide by the University of Florida's Academic Honesty Guidelines, which may be viewed at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php>. Most obviously, this means cheating on exams and plagiarism on papers is completely unacceptable. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to: submitting entire papers written by others, submitting portions of papers written by others, copying text without quotations and proper citation, or

paraphrasing text without proper attribution in a footnote. In addition to harming your professional career, academic dishonesty will destroy your ability to learn from this class. Consequences for academic punishment can range up to automatically failing the course. If you have any questions about whether something counts as academic dishonesty, please contact me. I am happy to clarify these rules further.

Privacy

I encourage you to turn on your camera during classes to help facilitate discussion and class engagement. For additional privacy, you may wish to use Zoom's free "virtual background" feature: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/210707503-Virtual-Background>. As in all UF courses and in order to protect student privacy, recording class sessions is prohibited.

Required Texts

All readings can be found as PDFs on the course's Canvas page. Course material and details in this syllabus are subject to change. I will announce any such changes in class and on the Canvas course page.

Schedule

T, September 1 **Introduction**

R, September 3 **Equality**

- Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (dedicatory letter, introduction, chs. 1-4)
- Olympe de Gouges, "Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen"
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments"

T, September 8 **Equality (cont.)**

- NOW Statement of Purpose
- Catherine MacKinnon, "Reflections on Sex Equality Under the Law"
- Wendy Brown, *States of Injury* (selection)

R, September 10 **Class Cancelled**

T, September 15 **Public / Private**

- Carole Pateman, "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy"
- Ananya Bhattacharjee, "The Public/Private Mirage"

R, September 17 **Reason / Emotion**

- Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (ch. 13, review ch. 1)
- Alison M. Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge"

T, September 22 **Representation**

- Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women?"
- Margaret Marshment, "The Picture is Political"

R, September 24 **Capitalism**

- Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex"

- Zillah Eisenstein, "Constructing a Theory of Capitalist Patriarchy and Socialist Feminism"

T, September 29 **Work + Wages, Class**

- Silvia Federici, "Wages against Housework," "Why Sexuality is Work" and "Reproduction and Feminist Struggle in the New International Division of Labor"

R, October 1 **Household + Reproductive Labors**

- Saidiya Hartman, "Belly of the World"
- Angela Davis, "Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights"

T, October 6 **Who is Feminism For? Subjectivity + Identity**

- Sandra Harding, "The Instability of the Analytical Categories of Feminist Theory"
- Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (selection)
- Barbara Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism"

R, October 8 **Race**

- Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement"
- bell hooks, "Postmodern Blackness" and "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness"
- Patricia Hill Collins, "Learning from the Outsider Within"

T, October 13 **Race (cont.)**

- Gloria Anzaldúa, "La conciencia de la mestiza / Toward a New Consciousness"
- Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (ch. 2)
- Trinh Minh Ha, "Difference" and "Not You / Like You"

R, October 15 **Intersectionality**

- Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"

T, October 20 **Decolonizing Feminist Political Thought**

- Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited"
- Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent"

R, October 22 **Decolonizing Feminist Political Thought (cont.)**

- Paula Gunn Allen, "Who Is Your Mother?"
- Andrea Smith, "Native American Feminism, Sovereignty, and Social Change"
- María Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism"

Friday, October 22 – Deadline to Submit Response Paper

T, October 27 **Sex / Gender**

- Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (selections)

R, October 29 **Transgender Politics**

- Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (introduction)

T, November 3 **Queer Theory + Sexualities** (Election Day - vote if you're able)

- Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens"

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- Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality & Lesbian Existence"
- Cressida Heyes, "Feminist Solidarity after Queer Theory"

R, November 5 **Redistribution or Recognition?**

- Nancy Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics"

T, November 10 **Freedom**

- Nancy J. Hirschmann, "Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom"
- Angela Davis, speech at University of London's Birkbeck School of Law
- Linda Zerilli, *Feminism & The Abyss of Freedom* (selections)

R, November 12 **Feminism Beyond "Woman"**

- Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto"

T, November 17 **Feminist Possibilities**

- Alicia Garza, "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement"
- Angela Davis & Elizabeth Martínez, "Coalition Building Among People of Color"
- Adelyn Lim, "Transnational Organizing and Feminist Politics of Difference and Solidarity"
- bell hooks, "Sisterhood"

R, November 19 **How?**

- Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," "Uses of Anger" and "Uses of the Erotic?"
- María Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception"

Thursday, November 19 – 5-Page Draft

Submit on Canvas Assignments and message to peer review partner

T, November 24 **Peer Review Session**

R, November 26 **No Class – Thanksgiving**

T, December 1 **Writing + Imagination**

- Hélène Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa"
- Audre Lorde, "Transformation of Silence into Action" and "Poetry is not a Luxury"
- Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (selection)

R, December 3 **Abolition**

- Jordie Davies, "Political Possibilities"
- Mimi E. Kim, "Anti-Carceral Feminism"
- Ruth Wilson Gilmore, podcast interview with The Intercept (*optional*)

T, December 8 **Conclusion**

Thursday, December 10 – Research Paper Due

Submit on Canvas Assignments