

## Women's and Gender Studies 5010/Political Science 5760: Feminist Theories

Fall 2023, Wednesday 4:15-7pm

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This course examines developments in feminist thought at the turn of the twenty-first century. By sampling a range of theoretical texts and cultural criticism, we will explore both historical and recent perspectives on the production and disruption of categories of gender and sexuality. The course's readings, discussions, and written assignments are designed to highlight core concepts and tensions accompanying the efflorescence of feminist scholarship since the emergence of the field of women's studies in the 1970s. Readings cover a range of topics and methodologies, and students will have opportunities to investigate areas of their own interest. The course will enable students to draw connections between the intellectual, the personal, and the political, using these theoretical innovations to engage contemporary social issues.

Basic questions that guide the course include:

What are the key concepts guiding feminist inquiry, and how have the emphases of the study of women, feminism, gender, and sexuality evolved over the span of the past thirty years?

What is the relationship between gender and other categories of social difference, including race, class, nation, sexuality, and disability?

What tools are necessary for critically communicating and evaluating theoretical interventions?

### Objectives

- Gain familiarity with a range of scholarship in the field
- Increase understanding of the normative and theoretical commitments employed in feminist theorizing
- Analyze and evaluate theoretical interventions centering on women and gender and their relevance to understanding social relationships, political systems, and structures of power
- Articulate interconnections between gender and other categories of social difference, including race, social class, disability, and sexuality
- Identify the relevance of theoretical interventions on current social issues

### Required Texts

Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (any edition, 1982)

The book may be purchased from the university bookstore or from other vendors. Other readings, marked with an \* on the syllabus, will be posted to Canvas. Please pay attention to your SLU email for announcements as readings are subject to change.

Please bring your readings to class. You may consult electronic devices if you are actively referencing the reading, but other device usage, such as texting and web browsing, will result in deductions from the attendance and participation portion of your grade without notice from the instructor.

## Evaluation and Grading

1. Participation and attendance (15%): you are expected to attend class and to participate consistently by having completed any readings and writing exercises required for the session. Exercises may include discussion questions, written reflections, or informal presentations. Unexplained absences, insufficient preparation, inappropriate phone or computer use, and neglecting to make informed contributions to discussion will have an adverse effect on the participation grade. Exigencies happen, and, of course, you may sometimes find it necessary to miss class or skimp on preparation, but keep in mind that consistently lackluster engagement with class sessions without a documented hardship will have an impact on this portion of the grade. Should extended absence be required, the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources can assist in the provision of academic accommodations. Please inform the instructor if you will be absent, late, or if you are experiencing adverse circumstances that affect your ability to participate sufficiently. The class modality is in-person, and there will be no Zoom option. If you cannot make the in-person meeting, you will need to take an absence for that day.
  
2. Aug. 30 in-class show-and-tell (5%): select an article- or chapter- length work of choice that you would deem a “favorite” piece of feminist theory (or, more generally, a scholarly work you think is valuable and relevant to course themes). Come with at least a full citation, or bring a copy of the work itself if possible. Be prepared to present to the group a 5 minute or so informal summary of the item’s thesis/purpose, an overview of the evidence used to make its claims, and a description of the larger social/intellectual problem it sets out to solve. Give a sense, too, of your connection to the piece. The task in question form: what is a succinct restatement of the main argument or point of this work? What evidence does the author use to prove their argument? What sort of intervention is the piece trying to make—what problems does the author want to solve? And, finally, why is this your “favorite”?
  
3. Informal in-class text presentation and discussion (10%): during a class period of your choice, you will present a short cultural work (writing, music, video, etc.) or news story related to class themes and lead a brief discussion around it. You should come prepared to a. present a text to the class, distributing or screening an item that can be read or viewed in 5-10 minutes and b. pose discussion questions that will enable your classmates to interpret the text (discussion questions should not have a yes-or-no answer or be designed to gather facts). This should not be a formal, written presentation but instead a more casual opportunity to share an item of interest and generate conversation. Please contact me with information about your text the night before the class in which you plan to present.
  
3. Book review (20%): using a book-length work on your choice of topic in women’s and gender studies, you will submit a scholarly book review based on the model of those in academic journals. Due Oct. 31.
  
4. Theory-guided reflection (15%): in this 3-4 page reflection, you will reflect on an event you attend, a situation you witness, or a cultural text of any genre (i.e. art, writing, film) using materials assigned for class. Due Nov. 14.
  
5. Final paper (35%): You will have two options for the format of this paper. The first is a 15-18 page (not including bibliography) research paper in which you conduct original research to produce an argument-driven analysis of a topic of your choice. The second is a readings paper of the same length in which you synthesize 4 book-length texts on a topic of choice. Due Dec. 15.

Further instructions will be made available for the papers. Late submissions will incur grade penalties of a 1/3 deduction per day late (or portion thereof)—that is an A will become A-, A- becomes B+, etc.

Grade scale: Except when noted, grades will be given using an A-F grade scale. Please see Canvas for a descriptive account of this scale.

#### Academic integrity and dishonesty

*Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors.* The mission of Saint Louis University is “the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity.” Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service through which SLU fulfills its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern. The full University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be found on the Provost's Office website at:

<https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/academic-integrity-policy.pdf>.

The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe, and they will be enforced. Simply put, use only your own words and ideas in coursework, and give proper attribution for any references you make to the work of others. Whether intentional or unintentional, copying or paraphrasing another's writings or ideas without attribution constitute plagiarism. This is the case for brief as well as extensive passages. The Purdue OWL <https://owl.purdue.edu/index.html> is a great resource for understanding proper methods of citation.

#### Disability Accommodations

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must formally register their disability with the University. Once successfully registered, students also must notify their course instructor that they wish to use their approved accommodations in the course.

Please contact the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources (CADR) to schedule an appointment to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Most students on the St. Louis campus will contact CADR, located in the Student Success Center and available by email at [accessibility\\_disability@slu.edu](mailto:accessibility_disability@slu.edu) or by phone at 314.977.3484. Once approved, information about a student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors by email from CADR and within the instructor's official course roster. Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one also are encouraged to contact to CADR. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

#### Title IX

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual harassment, including sexual assault, stalking, domestic or dating violence, we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident that involves a Title IX matter, **that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX Coordinator that you shared an experience relating to Title IX.** This is true even if you ask the faculty member not to disclose the incident. The Title IX Coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off

campus.

Anna Kratky is the Title IX Coordinator at Saint Louis University (DuBourg Hall, room 36; [anna.kratky@slu.edu](mailto:anna.kratky@slu.edu); 314-977-3886). If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK or make an anonymous report through SLU's Integrity Hotline by calling 1-877-525-5669 or online at <http://www.lighthouse-services.com/slu>. To view SLU's policies, and for resources, please visit the following web addresses: <https://www.slu.edu/about/safety/sexual-assault-resources/index.php>.

### Schedule

\* designates reading posted to Canvas

Aug 23: Introduction

Subjects of Feminism

#### **Aug 30: In-class "show and tell" (see #2 above for instructions)**

- \*Hartmann, "The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class, and Political Struggle: The Example of Housework"
- \*Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"
- \*Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference"
- \*Narayan, "Cross-Cultural Connections, Border-Crossings, and 'Death by Culture'"

Producing Gender, Structuring Difference

- Sep 6: \*Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*, selections
- \*Wendell, "The Social Construction of Disability"
  - \*Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, selections
  - \*Serrano, "Trans Woman Manifesto"

Poetry Makes Something Happen: Reimagining Feminist Pasts and Futures

Sep 13: Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*

Frameworks for Justice

- Sep 20: \*Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color"
- \*Alcoff, "The Problem of Speaking for Others"
  - \*Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others"
  - \*Rubin, "Thinking Sex"

#### **Sep 27: No class, wellness day**

Contexts for Justice

- Oct 4: \*Hwang and Parreñas, "The Gendered Racialization of Asian Women as Villainous Temptresses"
- \*Crenshaw and Ritchie, "Say Her Name"
  - \*Puar, *The Right to Maim*, selections

Re-Visions of the Feminist Subject

Oct 11: \*Sedgwick, "Queer and Now"  
 \*Butler, "Doing Justice to Someone"  
 \*Stryker and Bettcher, "Introduction: Trans/Feminisms"  
 \*Enke, "The Education of Little Cis"

**Oct 18: No class, book review reading day**

**Sunday Oct. 22: book review due, 11:59 pm**

Sexuality and Reproductive Justice

Oct 25: \*Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic"  
 \*Mackinnon, "Rape: On Coercion and Consent"  
 \*Solinger and Ross, *Reproductive Justice*, selections

Temporalities

Nov 1: \*Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, selections  
 \*Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, selections

**Nov. 7: Theory-guided reflection paper due, 11:59 pm**

Labor, Reproduction, Identity

Nov 8: \*Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union"  
 \*Parreñas, "Mothering From a Distance: Emotions, Gender, and Inter-Generational Relations in Filipino Transnational Families"  
 \*Agustín, "Migrant Sex Work and Trafficking: Sorting It Out"  
 \*Hollibaugh and Weiss, "Queer Precarity and the Myth of Gay Affluence"

Decoloniality

Nov 15: \*Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism"  
 \*Smith, Linda Tuhiwai, "Research through Imperial Eyes"  
 \*Smith, Andrea, "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy"  
 \*Brown, "Indigenous Women Have Been Disappearing for Generations"

**Nov 22: No class, Thanksgiving**

Gender Futures

Nov 29: \*Tudor, "Decolonizing Trans/Gender Studies"  
 \*Butler and Gleeson, "'We Need to Rethink the Category of Woman': Interview with Judith Butler"  
 \*Clarke, "They, Them and Theirs"

Dec 6 TBA

**Dec 15: final paper due, 11:59pm**