

WGST 3775/POLS 3770/PHIL 4800 — Feminist Theory: Gender Justice
Spring 2023, MWF 10-10:50 am, Davis-Shaughnessy Hall 173

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CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Feminist Theory: Gender Justice examines the various ways of understanding gender by looking at a variety of theories and philosophical perspectives within feminist thought, especially as it is formed by political philosophy including liberal, radical, Marxist, and postmodern feminism. Sub-field in political science is Political Thought.

DETAILED COURSE OVERVIEW

What is justice? How does gender and other intersecting axes of social identity like race, ethnicity, indigeneity, sexuality, religion, age, dis/ability, and socioeconomic status inform our understandings of "justice" and what it means to have a "just" society? How can feminist, womanist, and related theoretical frameworks (including intersectionality, feminist political thought, and Black Feminist Thought) be used to achieve "justice" at the interpersonal, local, national, and international levels?

In this course we will analyze how different feminist theoretical frameworks have been, are, and could be used to identify injustice and create a more just society. This course is deliberately designed around institutions, organizations, and mechanisms of inequality instead of axes of social identity that are often historical, contextual, geographic, and socially constructed (and are frequently mechanisms of oppression themselves). We'll trace the history of intersectionality and other feminist theoretical frameworks and discuss how they have and might be used in the future to build coalitions and create social change. In doing so, we will deliberately engage with work from multiple disciplines, including gender studies, political science, philosophy, sociology, criminology, and law. We'll also strive to avoid "single axis" or additive analyses (unless it's reflective of the reading) and interrogate our privilege. Finally, we'll discuss the erasure and invisibility of some historical feminist movements and knowledge.

Effectively engaging in this work requires us to have complex and vulnerable conversations about intersectionality, power, oppression, visibility, and erasure in feminist movements. This includes the centering of whiteness in the feminist movement, white feminism, white fragility, the privileging of cis bodies, transphobia, colonization—and how these problematic power dynamics have had destructive consequences for multiply marginalized individuals and the perpetuation of broader social inequalities.

As a case study, we'll examine the injustice of gender violence, focusing on domestic violence in the United States. We'll discuss the battered women's and feminist anti-violence movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the disagreements between the movements as to how to best address gender violence, and how the battered women's movement worked to have domestic violence criminalized in the 1990s—culminating in the 1994 Violence against Women Act. We'll also use intersectional feminist theory to understand how this well-intentioned "solution" has had destructive consequences on multiply marginalized survivors, including their arrest and incarceration.

Finally, what does it mean to discuss and engage in feminist gender justice at a Jesuit institution? Do we have different responsibilities as to how we approach this topic and what we do with what we learn?

Throughout the course, we'll also learn about the importance of radical self-care and practice techniques employed by feminist activists. You should be aware that the materials in this course are both explicit and inherently emotive. If at any time during the course you feel overwhelmed by the material, you may step out of class. Please check in with me so that we can strategize how to handle that section of the course.

UNIVERSITY CORE CURRICULUM

This course is part of the Saint Louis University Core, an integrated intellectual experience completed by all baccalaureate students, regardless of major, program, college, school, or campus. The Core offers all SLU students the same unified approach to Jesuit education guided by SLU's institutional mission and identity and our nine undergraduate [Core Student Learning Outcomes](#) (SLOs).

Identities in Context

Identities in Context is one of 19 Core Components. The University Core SLO(s) that this component is designed to intentionally advance are listed below:
University Core Student Learning Outcomes The Core SLO(s) that this component is intentionally designed to advance are:
SLO 5: Analyze how diverse identities influence their lives and the lives of others

Additionally, the Core Component-level Student Learning Outcomes are listed below:
Component-level Student Learning Outcomes Students who complete this course will be able to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine interdependent / interrelational qualities of identity categories such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, race, class, ability, and sexual orientation • Analyze how interdependent / interrelational identities are constructed through and shaped by relations of power • Assess how other people's social identities and biases shape and are shaped by their interactions within a social context • Articulate how one's own notions of identity and otherness are contingent on the social contexts in which they develop and which they in turn shape

Dignity, Ethics, and a Just Society

Dignity, Ethics, and a Just Society is one of 19 Core Components. The University Core SLO(s) that this component is designed to intentionally advance are listed below:
University Core Student Learning Outcomes The Core SLO(s) that this component is intentionally designed to advance are:
SLO 1: Examine their actions and vocations in dialogue with the Catholic, Jesuit tradition
SLO 3: Assess evidence and draw reasoned conclusions
SLO 7: Evaluate the extent to which social systems influence equity and reflect innate human dignity

Additionally, the Core Component-level Student Learning Outcomes are listed below:
Component-level Student Learning Outcomes Students who complete this course will be able to:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze the cultural-institutional conditions and causes of just and unjust social systems using such concepts as social location, relationships, power, privilege, and vulnerability |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply such ethical concepts as human dignity, equity, well-being justice, and the common good to critically evaluate both existing social systems and proposals for social change |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Envision and articulate systemic social changes and other ways to promote flourishing, well-being, equity, justice, and the dignity of the human person |

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN RELATION TO THE CORE:

- Explain how different feminist theories have been used to identify and address injustice;
- Apply key feminist theories and concepts to analyze how different axes of oppression and social identities (such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, and documentation status) operate to replicate inequality and reinscribe injustice in different social contexts;
- Compare and draw insights from multiple feminist thinkers about the dignity of the human person, and the requirements of equity and justice in a variety of social contexts;
- Reflect on and evaluate written and oral arguments, as well as your own actions and choices, through multiple feminist lenses; and
- Construct persuasive theoretical arguments supported with evidence from primary sources.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There are no required books for this course. Instead, we will read a series of articles and book chapters. These are listed in the course schedule and can be found on Canvas - it is your responsibility to download and read them before class. There are also several podcasts, TED talks, and other multimedia elements of the course. Links will be available on Canvas.

Please do all the required readings before coming to class. For each of the readings:

- Know the basic argument the authors are making.
- Evaluate the evidence offered in support of that argument.
- Be able to explain how that reading fits in with the other readings for the week and the course.
- Decide whether you agree with the authors and be ready to explain why you agree or disagree.

REQUIRED COURSEWORK, EVALUATION, AND GRADING

Students will complete a series of four short written assignments (20 points each), a 10-15 minute multimedia group presentation (50 points), a paper proposal (30 points), and a final paper (6-8 pages, 80 points). I reserve the right to integrate creative assignments into the class to formally recognize the labor we'll engage in on this journey. Your paper proposal and final paper should be typed, double spaced, paginated, with citations and a reference section. Either APA or MLA should be consistently used as your citation style.

I do not accept late assignments unless you have a university approved absence such as university travel or illness or have an accommodation through the university. All written work should be submitted electronically through Canvas unless otherwise indicated. There are no exams.

I do routinely allow students to do one 10-point extra credit assignment as long as it's submitted at least three weeks prior to the last day of class. Generally, this involves attending an external event (like a speaker or movie) and writing a two-page paper discussing it using the themes of the class. You must

submit your extra credit request in writing and receive approval prior to the event. I do not allow students to do more than one extra credit assignment or turn in extra credit after the date noted on the class schedule at the end of this syllabus.

I will evaluate your work in terms of how well you use relevant concepts and theories from lectures, discussions, and the readings in your written work. Your familiarity with the course material and your opinion/evaluation of that material should be evident—if not, you will receive a lower grade.

Be sure to check your grade on Canvas throughout the semester. I will not make changes after the last day of class (5/8/23).

Points for the course will be allocated as follows:

Written assignments (20 pts each)	80 points
Group presentation	50 points
Paper proposal	30 points
<u>Final paper</u>	<u>80 points</u>
Total Points	240 points

Grades will be calculated using the following scale:

97-100%	A+	87-89%	B+	77-79%	C+	60-69%	D
94-96%	A	84-86%	B	74-76%	C	<60%	F
90-93%	A-	80-83%	B-	70-73%	C-		

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance and participation are an integral part of the learning experience. This class moves through a significant amount of theoretical material quickly, so I strongly suggest that you attend every class.

At the beginning of each class, I will distribute an attendance sheet. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet each day or you will be marked absent. Students with perfect attendance will receive 20 extra credit points at the end of the semester. If you must miss class or come late, please let me know as soon as you can and get the notes from another student in the course. Keep up with the readings and assignments, and come into office hours or make an appointment if you have questions about the readings, etc.

Please come to class prepared to participate. This often means bringing your questions, not just your answers, and actively listening to other people rather than formulating a response while they are still speaking. Show respect for your fellow students by staying off your phone, using your computer for the purposes of this class only, and checking your privilege (make sure you're not interrupting, invalidating someone's experience, silencing other viewpoints, or taking up all the space in the room). If you're not familiar with the concept of active listening, please ask!

OTHER UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Use the QR code below to learn about SLU's Academic Integrity policy, Disability Accommodations, Title IX resources, Student Success Center, University Writing Services, Mandatory Face Masks Statements, and In-Person Class Attendance and Participation Statement.



BASIC NEEDS AND SECURITY SYLLABUS STATEMENT

Students in personal or academic distress and/or who may be specifically experiencing challenges such as securing food or difficulty navigating campus resources, and who believe this may affect their performance in the course, are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office (deanofstudents@slu.edu or 314-977-9378) for support. Furthermore, please notify the instructor if you are comfortable in doing so, as this will enable them to assist you with finding the resources you may need. In addition, here are some off-campus options:

- Food security: St. Louis Food Bank, stlfoodbank.org
- Domestic violence (includes confidential chat): The National Domestic Violence Hotline, thehotline.org
- Sexual violence (includes confidential live chat): RAINN, <https://www.rainn.org/resources>

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 (1/18, 20)

Introduction to course, creating community dialogue

Readings:

1. Mikki Kendall, "Feminism claims to represent all women. So why does it ignore so many of them?" *Time*, <https://time.com/5789438/feminism-poverty-gun-violence/>
2. Kimberlé Crenshaw, "https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2015/09/24/why-intersectionality-cant-wait"
3. Audre Lorde, "The transformation of silence into language and action" from *Sister Outsider*.
4. National Black Justice Coalition, Words Matter: Gender Justice Toolkit. <https://nbjc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Words-Matter-Gender-Bias-Toolkit-2019-vFINAL.pdf>.

Please listen:

5. Luvvie Ajayi Jones, "Get comfortable with being uncomfortable"
 - For you, is being "fearless" speaking hard truths? Or actively listening to hard truths? Taking space and being visible? Or stepping back and decentering yourself?
 - "Everyone's well-being is community business"—what does that mean to you? What do you think it means for our class?

Week 2 (1/23, 1/25, 1/27)

Feminist theory and inclusive anti-racism work

Readings:

1. Audre Lorde, "Age, race, class, and sex: Women redefining difference." *Sister Outsider*.
2. Rajah, V., Palmer, J., & Duggan, M. (2022). The personal is political and so is discomfort: Intersectional, anti-racist praxis in feminist criminology. *Race and Justice*.
3. Srivastava, S. (2005). "You're calling me a racist?" The Moral and Emotional Regulation of Antiracism and Feminism. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 31(1), 29-62.

Please listen:

1. 'Not Racist' Is Not Enough: Putting In The Work To Be Anti-Racist (NPR). <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/24/905515398/not-racist-is-not-enough-putting-in-the-work-to-be-anti-racist>

Week 3 (1/30, 2/1, 2/3) Standpoint theory

Assignment #1 due 1/29 by 11:59 pm on Canvas

Readings:

1. Nancy Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Toward a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism"
2. Susan Heckman, "Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited"
3. Patricia Hill Collins, "Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited': Where's the power?"

Week 4 (2/6, 2/8)

Intersectional feminist theory and gender justice

Embodied activism & radical self-care (2/10 is Wellness Day, no class)

Week 5 (2/13, 2/15, 2/18)

Moving beyond identities to structural analyses

Assignment #2 (wellness day analysis) due 2/12 by 11:59 pm on Canvas

Week 6 (2/20, 2/22, 2/23)

Gender (in)justice? Feminist theories and white feminism

Week 7 (2/27, 3/1, 3/3)

Occupying the "third space"

Week 8 (3/6, 3/8, 3/10)

Midterm exam week, small group formation & initial work

Paper proposal due 3/10 by 11:59 pm on Canvas

3/13-17

SPRING BREAK

Week 9 (3/20, 3/22, 3/24)

Feminism, justice, and the "carceral creep"

Week 10 (3/27, 3/29, 3/31)

Imperfect victims and criminalized survivors

Assignment #3 due 3/26 by 11:59 pm on Canvas

Week 11 (4/3, 4/5)

Queering (In)justice

Week 12 (4/12, 4/14)

Alternative perspectives: Restorative and transformational justice

Assignment #4 due 4/11 by 11:59 pm on Canvas

Week 13 (4/17, 4/19, 4/21)

Alternative perspectives: Abolition feminism

Extra credit submission deadline is 4/17 at 11:59 pm, no extensions

Week 14 (4/24, 4/26, 4/28)

Where do we go from here? Mobilizing for social change

Weeks 15 and 16 (5/1-5/8)

Group presentations

FINAL PAPER IS DUE ELECTRONICALLY 5/12 BY 11:59 PM ON CANVAS