

WST 395: Feminist Theories
Fall 2005
Wednesdays 5:00-7:30
Merrick Building Room 306

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer L. Mandel (Janek) Email: jmandel@miami.edu
Office: 221 Ferre Building Office Phone: 305-284-4781
Mail Room: 225 Ferre Building Department Phone: 305-284-4087
Office Hours: Monday 4:00-5:00 PM & Wednesday 1:00-2:00 PM

Course Description: This course has three parts. Initially we will examine the evolution of feminist thought from its beginnings in the Woman Controversy of the early 17th century, through first, second and third wave feminism. Secondly, we will examine definitions and movements around feminist thought. Thirdly, we will consider various feminist theoretical perspectives and their use in a variety of academic disciplines in both the humanities and the social sciences. Two aspects of feminist theory will be particularly important in our inquiry. *First, to what extent and with what success does each formulation of feminist theory help us understand women's oppression in a variety of historical and geographic contexts? Second, in what ways does each of these formulations provide insight(s) into how to bring about social change with respect of gender relations specifically?*

This course will be run largely as a seminar, which means that a significant portion of the grading will be based on class attendance and participation in discussion. In keeping with feminist pedagogy, I anticipate the course being student driven rather than instructor driven. This course is after all for your benefit and to answer your questions regarding feminist theory. Thus, our learning will be constructed collaboratively and will depend on everyone's active participation. Given that there is no coverage requirement for this course, there will be in class exams. However, you will be asked to do a fair amount of writing as we explore these issues. Everyone will receive writing credit for this class.

Course Goals: I hope when you're finished with this course you will: 1) have an understanding of how theory is developed and evolves over time; 2) understand specifically the historical and geographic evolution of feminist theory as well as its applications in a variety of disciplines; 3) further developed your analysis, critical thinking, and communication skills, as well as those specifically related to writing, specifically the construction and defense of a coherent argument.

Texts:

McCann, Carol R. and Seung-Kyung Kim. 2003. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*. New York & London: Routledge. (FTR)
Zack, Naomi. 2005. *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality*. Rowen & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Useful Website:

Feminist Theory Website (includes bibliographies) - <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/enin.html>

Course Requirements:

Attendance, Class Participation, Discussion Leadership (50%): I will not formally take attendance, but as the success of the class depends on everyone's active participation, regular attendance is imperative. If, for some critical and unavoidable reason, you must miss a class, please notify me as early as possible by email, phone message or in class. Active participation entails completion of all reading assignments and active, constructive participation in class discussions. To ground our weekly conversations everyone should **submit a few questions/discussion issues via email to me no later than 10:00 AM on Wednesdays**. I will then assemble these into themes (without attributing anyone's name to a particular question) and bring the list to class. These **questions/discussions issues should be based on the week's readings** and will ground our

conversation in class. I will use weekly your email submissions as a major component of your participation grade.

Final Presentation (10%): During the last several classes I would like everyone to give a brief presentation summarizing their thoughts on what we have learned over the course of the semester. Again, you can frame this in terms of the big questions that structure the class. Your presentation should also critically review the literature we have read, considering where feminist theory has been and where it is going.

Take Home Essay Exam (40%): I will give you a list of questions from which you will choose a subset on which to write. You may collect the list of questions from the box outside my office door on the Monday before Thanksgiving. Your essays in response to the questions will be due on Friday, December 2nd by 5:00.

FOR WRITING CREDIT: Critical Reading Response Essays: Each of you who would like to earn writing credit for this class should write **three** critical reading response essays. You may select any three week's worth of readings. For each set of readings, I would like you to write a brief (2-3 page) evaluative essay that critically reviews the readings. You might frame these in terms of the questions raised in the class description portion of this syllabus.

Plan for the Class and Reading List (subject to change):

August 24 – Introduction to the Class

August 31 – Where it all began

Shneir, Miriam. 1994. *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings*. New York: Vintage Books.

September 7 – Feminist Thought in the 20th Century: 1st & 2nd Wave Feminism

Shneir, Miriam. 1994. *Feminism in our Time: The Essential Writings, World War II to the Present..*
New York: Vintage Books.

September 14 – Feminist Thought in the 20th Century: 3rd Wave Feminism

Zack – entire book

September 21 – Structuralist Feminism

FTR – Section III: Introduction, pp. 278-289

Coan, Richard W. “Dimensions of Masculinity and Femininity: A Self-report Inventory” *Journal of Personality Assessment* 53(4) 1989, pp. 816-826.

September 28 – Post-Structural Feminism

FTR – Section III, Part 2: Poststructuralist Theories, pp. 364-436

October 5 – Standpoint Feminism

FTR – Section III, Part 1: Standpoints, pp. 292-361

October 12 – European Feminisms

October 19 – Latin American & Caribbean Feminisms

FTR – Section II: Definitions – “La Chicana,” pp. 41-44

FTR – Section I2: Movements – “Female Consciousness or Feminist Consciousness?: Women’s Consciousness Raising in Community-Based Struggles in Brazil,” pp. 126-137

FTR – Section II1: Race and Nation – “La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a new Consciousness,” pp. 179-187

FTR – Section II2: Class – “Mobilization without Emancipation? Women’s Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua,” pp. 231-239

Roweley, Michelle “Reconceptualizing Voice: The Role of Matrifocality in Shaping Theories and Caribbean Voices” in *Gendered Realities Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought*, Patricia Mohammed (ed.), Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad & Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, pp. 22-43.

October 26 – African Feminisms

FTR – Section I2: Movements – “African Feminism: Toward a New Politics of Representation,” pp. 103-112

Oyewumi, Oyeronke "Introduction: Feminism, Sisterhood, and *Other* Foreign Relations" in *African Women and Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood*, Oyeronke Oyewumi (ed.) New Jersey & Eritrea: Africa World Press, Inc., pp. 1-24.

Mbire-Barungi B, "Ugandan feminism: Political rhetoric or reality?" *Women's Studies International Forum* 22 (4): 435-439 JUL-AUG 1999.

Steyn M, "A new agenda: Restructuring feminism in South Africa" *Women's Studies International Forum* 21 (1): 41-52 JAN-FEB 1998

November 2 – Middle Eastern Feminisms

FTR – Section II: Definitions – "We Egyptian Women," pp. 26-31

FTR – Section III: Race and Nation – "The Preferential Symbol for Islamic Identity: Women in Muslim Personal Laws," pp. 188-196

Freedman, Marcia "Theorizing Israeli Feminism, 1970-2000 in *Jewish Feminism in Israel: Some Contemporary Perspectives*, Kalpana Misra and Melanie S. Rich (eds.) Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, pp. 1-16.

Dahan-Kalev H "Tensions in Israeli feminism: The Mizrahi Ashkenazi rift" *Women's Studies International Forum* 24 (6): 669-684 NOV-DEC 2001

Saliba T, "Arab feminism at the millennium" *Signs* 25 (4): 1087-1092 SUM 2000

Samman, Ghada "Our Constitution – We the Liberated Women" in *Opening the Gates: An Anthology of Arab Feminist Writing*, 2nd edition, Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke, (eds.), Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 137-143.

November 9 – Asian Feminisms

Sobritchea, Carolyn I "Representations of Gender Inequality and Women's Issues in Philippine Feminist Discourse" *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 11(2).

Leng, Chee Heng "Women in Malaysia: Present Struggles and Future Directions" in *Positioning Women in Malaysia: Class and Gender in an Industrializing State*, Cecilia Ng (ed.), New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 169-189.

Omvedt, Gail "Women's Movement: Some Ideological Debates" in *Feminism in India*, Maitrayee Chaudhuri (ed.), London & New York: Zed Books, Ltd., pp.177-186.

Lu, Hwei-syin, "Transcribing Feminism: Taiwanese Women's Experiences" in *Women in the New Taiwan: Gender Roles and Gender Consciousness in a Changing Society*, Armonk and New York: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 223-243.

John, Mary E "Women's Studies in India and the Question of Asia: Some Reflections" *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 11(2).

November 16 – Transnational Feminism & Global Feminist Movement(s)

FTR – Section II: Definitions – "Globalization of the Local/Localization of the Global: Mapping Transnational Women's Movements," pp. 68-82

FTR – Section I2: Movements – "Ecofeminist Appropriations and Transnational Environmentalisms," pp. 113-125

Haarawi, Huda, "Pan-Arab Feminism" in *Opening the Gates: An Anthology of Arab Feminist Writing*, 2nd edition, Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke, (eds.), Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 337-340.

Busia, Abena "In Search of Chains without Iron: On Sisterhood, History, and the Politics of Location" in *African Women and Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood*, Oyeronke Oyewumi (ed.) New Jersey & Eritrea: Africa World Press, Inc., pp. 257-267.

Gaskell J, Y& Eichler M, "White women as burden: On playing the role of feminist "experts" in China" *Women's Studies International Forum* 24 (6): 637-651 NOV-DEC 2001

Noonan, Debroah A. "No Longer Sisters? Thinking Feminism Across Difference" *Southern African Feminist Review* 4(2).

Handout Take-Home Final Exam

November 23 – No Class

November 30 –Presentations& Take-Home Final Exam Due in Class