GSS 400 Feminist and Queer Theory
CRN 23343
Spring 2011/Prof. J. Haas
MW 3-4:15/Barret 020
haasj@rhodes.edu
Office hours MW 9-10, and by appt.

This course offers an introduction to the theoretical work that has both influenced and arisen from feminist and queer politics as they have developed over the last two centuries. We will cover the modern “origins” of western feminism, the debates within feminism around race, class, sexuality, and religion, the emergence of queer theory and sexuality studies, and the influence of postcolonial studies on feminism and queer theory.

Required Texts
All readings are posted on Moodle. Please print out all readings and bring them to class on the day the reading is due.

Grading and Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 take-home exams (20% each)</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Article presentation</td>
<td>05%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final project (including presentation)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Exams: you will have three take-home, essay exams. These exams will ask you to demonstrate your ability to explain, synthesize, and critique the concepts and arguments we encounter in the course. Typically, each take-home exam will require two essays, on different topics, of 3-4 pages each.

Preparation, attendance and participation are crucial for the success of this seminar. Most of the readings are very dense and difficult. You will need to read slowly and, in many cases, more than once. Make sure you come to class with questions and particular passages you would like to discuss. The best and most productive questions are (almost) always the most basic ones—NOT the questions that you ask because you want to look smart.

Article presentations: each member of the class will sign up to give a short, introductory presentation on one of the course readings. The aim of the oral presentation is to explain and open up the article for discussion in about 5-8 minutes. You will not be able to explain everything; you will need to narrow down to what you think is most important. Your oral presentation should include (some of) the following:
- paraphrase the thesis of the article and point to where the article presents its thesis
- summarize what you see as the most important ideas and/or observations that the article makes
- consider how this article connects to other articles we have read
- explain, as best you can, what you don’t understand
- provide a question, or refer to a specific passage that you find most intriguing, troubling, or confusing, giving your analysis of it and then, opening up discussion to the class.

Your presentation should have a clear beginning, middle and end. That is, it should NOT be a disconnected list of things that the author talks about. Make sure you come in with a clear sense of what you want to say about the article, what you want your audience to come away with. You will turn in one-page write-up of your presentation.

Final project: you will do your final project in groups (of 3, if possible). Your group will present your project on one of the last days of class.

Option 1: Investigate a problem, issue, social phenomenon, cultural object, current event, etc., that can be better understood or critiqued through a particular angle of feminist or queer theory (e.g. a tv show, an advertisement, a song, a political campaign, an event, etc etc). The topic might be one that was raised in class or something arising from your own interests. Whatever object you choose, it is likely that part of your investigation will involve looking at how this thing has
been talked about in the media. In addition to giving a 15-20 minute group presentation to the class, each member of the group will turn in a 5-page analysis of the object (ideally each would be from a different perspective). You will receive individual grades for your work on the presentation and paper. Your critique must make use of a minimum of 2 texts from the course and 2 scholarly sources found through outside research.

**Option 2:** Drawing on specific texts, tools, and concepts from the course, create a feminist alternative to some current cultural system, institution, or problem. This could take almost any form (a film, a work of art, a website, a political campaign, a service project . . .) as long as it is something you can present to the class. Whatever project you come up with will be accompanied by a 5-page paper in which you explicate, contextualize, (historicize), and analyze your project in relation to relevant theoretical readings. You must draw on at least 2 major readings from the course and 2 outside scholarly sources.

**Extra Credit Opportunities:**
It is possible to earn extra credit by attending or participating in GSS-related events, including the Gender and Sexuality Studies Symposium, visiting lecturers, etc. Please note that all “extra credit” will be require a one-page write-up of the event and credit will be added to your participation grade.

**Late papers** will be deducted 1/3 of a grade per day. Papers later than a week will not be accepted. You must complete and hand in all assignments (in a timely manner) in order to pass the course. Under certain, rare, circumstances, I will grant extensions on an assignment; however, the extension must be negotiated in advance of the due date of the paper and not the night before (or the day of). E-mail is rarely, if ever, an appropriate medium for negotiating any sort of dispensation.

**Attendance/Absence Policy:** You can miss up to two classes (i.e. one full week of class) for any reason without risking your grade. It is up to you to choose the best use of these “free” absences. Except for cases of real emergency or truly extraordinary events (i.e. you are being hospitalized for the rest of the semester), I do not wish to know the reason for your absence. If you choose to make use of one or both of these absences, I will assume that you are using them wisely. Further absences will affect your grade in the following way:
- 3 absences will result in a deduction of .2 from your final grade;
- 4 absences will result in a .3 deduction from your final grade;
- 5 absences will result in a .6 deduction from your final grade
- 6 absences will result in a full point (1 full letter grade) deduction from your final grade
- More than 6 absences will severely jeopardize your ability to pass the class.

**Guidelines for class discussion**
Class discussion, at its best, is a conversation. Having a conversation with a room full of people is a tricky thing, and it requires that everyone be deliberate and thoughtful about how they engage. For the most part, the same qualities that make people good conversationalists are the ones that make for a good discussion. Discussion is a group effort.

Qualities that make for a bad conversation: showing off, interrupting others, talking about topics that no one else knows about, telling lengthy personal stories, digressing, not knowing when to stop talking, giving one or two-word answers, looking bored or disengaged.

**Participation Evaluation:**

**A:** You attend every class prepared. You appear alert and engaged. You make significant contributions to discussion by asking productive questions of the instructor as well as of your peers. You listen to, and respond to the comments of your peers. You make clear and insightful connections to the course readings and important concepts. You are able to bring the conversation to a higher level. At the same time, you do not let your own brilliance carry you away so that others don’t have a chance to get a word in edgewise.

**B:** You attend every class prepared. You appear alert and engaged. You may not always understand the material, but you come in with questions, you do your best to answer questions, you bring up aspects of the reading that are interesting
or difficult, you listen to and respond to comments of your peers. You demonstrate that you have done the reading and that you are a responsible citizen of the class.

C: You look like you are bored and disengaged. You may have a problem with arriving on time. You rarely have any questions. When called on, you almost always pass. When you do contribute, it may not be clear how your contribution relates to the material of the class.

D: Like “C” but more so. Perhaps compounded with incivility, sullenness, or sleeping.

F: What are you doing in this class?

Other policies:
- Always bring the day’s reading to class. If the reading is from Moodle, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have access to a printer to print it out. Failing to bring the reading to class will count as an absence.
- Unless you have particular circumstances that require it—and you get permission from me—laptops may not be used in class.
- Make sure all electronic devices are turned off when you get to class.
- You are expected to arrive on time and stay for the entirety of the class. Getting up in the middle of class to leave is very distracting.
- Coffee and other caffeinated beverages are always welcome in class (decaf is okay, but what’s the point?). If you can’t survive without a snack, it’s okay to bring on, as long as it’s not distracting.

Use of Sources and Plagiarism: The bulk of the work in this course requires writing about difficult concepts. You will find that there are a multitude of resources on the web that can help you understand aspects of the material, and from time to time I will point out some particularly useful and reputable sources. However, you must be aware that any use of a source must be fully and correctly documented. Failure to adequately document a source of any kind, whether or not intentional, constitutes plagiarism and must be dealt with by the Rhodes Honor Council. For a quick reminder of how to recognize and avoid plagiarism, see the Rhodes Writing Center website: http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/group_b/plagiarism.html

All work for this course must be in compliance with the Rhodes College Honor Code.

GSS 400 – Feminist and Queer Theory/ Spring 2013

Schedule of Readings and Assignments: *Subject to revision as needed*

All readings are posted on Moodle, unless otherwise noted.

W 1/9 Introductions

M 1/14 The Politics and Practice of Theory
Terms and concepts: social construction; essentialism, what is a “discipline”?, critique
bell hooks, “Theory as Liberatory Practice” from Teaching to Transgress
[recommended: Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”]

W 1/16 The Category of “Woman”: Are there Women really?
Terms and concepts: woman/women, sex vs gender; patriarchy, intersectionality
Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman?”
Patricia Hill Collins, “Black Feminist Thought in the Matrix of Domination”
[recommended: Simone de Beauvoir, Introduction to The Second Sex]

M 1/21 MLK, Jr Holiday – no class

W 1/23 What/Who is the “proper” subject of feminist theory?
Terms and concepts: essentialism, equality vs difference; [politics vs “truth”]
Elizabeth Grosz, “Sexual Difference and the Problem of Essentialism”
Leora Auslander, “Do women’s +feminist+men’s+lesbian and gay+queer studies =gender studies?”
(differences Fall 1997)

**Race**

**M 1/28**
Evelynn Hammonds, “New Technologies of Race”
Angela Davis, “Rape, Racism, and the Myth of the Black Rapist”

**W 1/30**
**Classical Liberalism and the “Woman” Question**
Terms and Concepts: liberalism, social contract, state of nature, progress, liberty, rights, universal subject, equality of opportunity
John Locke, from *The Second Treatise of Government*
John Stuart Mill, from “The Subjection of Women”

**M 2/4**
**Feminist critiques of liberalism**
Terms and concepts: public/private split, separate spheres
Wendy Brown, “Tolerance and/or Equality? The Jewish Question and the Woman Question”
Carol Pateman, “Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy”

**W 2/6**
**Marxism and Feminism**
Terms and concepts: historical materialism, ideology, capitalism and capital, commodities
Marx, from *The German Ideology and Capital*
Engels, from *The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State*

**2/11**
**Social Reproduction/Women’s Work**
Terms and Concepts: social reproduction, motherhood vs. breederhood
Alexandra Kollantai, “Working Woman and Mother”
Angela Davis, “Outcast Mothers and Surrogates”

**W 2/13**
Exam #1 due by 4:15 pm
Regular class cancelled
5:15 pm Screening of *Aliens* (Dir. James Cameron, 1986) 137 minutes (bring your own dinner)

**M 2/18**
**(Post-)Modernity, Identity, and the De-centered subject**
Terms and concepts: the subject, subjectivity, postmodernity, post-structuralism
Stuart Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity”
Rosemarie Tong, “Postmodern and Third Wave Feminism” from *Feminist Thought*

**W 2/20**
**Regimes of Power and the Docile Body**
Terms and concepts: discipline, docile bodies, embodiment, power and knowledge, cultural institutions
Sandra Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power”
Michel Foucault, selections from *Discipline and Punish*
[ Optional: Dani Cavallaro, from *The Body for Beginners* ]

**M 2/25**
**Gendering the Body**
Elizabeth Spelman, “Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views”
Ania Loomba, “Gender, Sexuality, and Colonial Discourse,” from *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*

**W 2/27**
**Desire and the Body**
Luce Irigaray, “This Sex Which Is Not One”  
Sigmund Freud, “Femininity”

M 3/4  
Judith Butler, “Bodies That Matter” from Bodies That Matter, and “Subversive Bodily Acts” from Gender Trouble

W 3/6  
Group project topics and proposals due  
Reading TBA

M 3/11 Spring Break  
W 3/13 Spring Break

Sexuality: Pleasure and Danger

M 3/18  
Catherine MacKinnon, “Sexuality”

W 3/20  
Moraga and Holibough, “What We’re Rollin’ Around in Bed With”  
Nestle, “My Mother Liked to Fuck”

Genders and Sexualities

M 3/25  
Anne Fausto-Sterling, “The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough”  
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Queer and Now” in The Routledge Queer Studies Reader

W 3/27  
E. Patrick Johnson, “‘Quare’ Studies, Or ‘(Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother”

Fri 3/29  
Exam #2 due by 4pm, outside my office

M 4/1  
Gayle Rubin, “Of Catamites and Kings”  
Judith (Jack) Halberstam, “Transgender Butch: Butch/FTM Border Wars and the Masculine Continuum”

Gender and Sexuality in a Transnational Frame

W 4/3  
Gender and Globalization  
Film: Maquilopolis

Public Lecture by Edwin Cameron, “Gay Rights as Civil Rights”  
7pm, Blount Auditorium

M 4/8  
Feminism and Colonial Discourse  
Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”

W 4/10  
Feminism and Islam  
Fadwa El Guindi, “‘Veiling Resistance’”

M 4/15  
Leti Volpp, “Framing Cultural Difference: Immigrant Women and Discourses of Tradition”

W 4/17  
Sex work/Sex Traffic  
Susan Bernstein, “Militarized Humanitarianism Meets Carceral Feminism” (Signs 2010)  
Phyllis Chesler and Donna Hughes, “Feminism in the 21st Century”  
M 4/22  project presentations
W 4/24  project presentations

Final take-home exam: due Tues April 30, by 4pm