

WS 400 Feminist Theory
Prof. Haas/ Tu 6-8:30pm
Fall 2005

“Are there women really?”

--Simone de Beauvoir

This course explores a few of the themes and dimensions of feminist theory in the last two centuries, focusing predominantly on theories arising within, or in contestation with, the European intellectual tradition. Our aim will be to examine some of the complex ways in which gender organizes our social, political, psychological and intellectual realms. To begin, we will problematize the terms of our endeavor—“feminism,” “women” and “theory.” We will then examine the emergence of different forms of European feminist thought arising from nineteenth-century Liberal theory of rights and equality. We will then look at twentieth-century critiques and revisions of these theories, especially those indebted to psychoanalysis, post-structuralism and post-colonialism. We will conclude by examining links and tensions between feminist theory and “queer” theory.

Required Texts (available at Rhodes College Bookstore)

Course Packet **CP**

Kolmar, *Feminist Theory* **FT**

Selected readings **on reserve** at Barret Library

Selected readings available on-line **E***

Requirements

5 one-page, single-spaced papers (10% each)	50%
Presentation	10%
Attendance and participation	10%
Final paper (10-15 pages)	30%

The **one-page papers** may either focus on one aspect (possibly a passage) of a particular reading or you may formulate a question and look at how one or two readings address that question. You may choose any of the readings from the section that precedes the designated due date. The aim of these short papers is to explain and explore some aspect of the reading. Since these are short papers, you need to get to the substance of your point right away and be sure to edit carefully. I will be looking to see how well you understand and synthesize ideas and concepts, and I will grade based on the depth and sophistication of your discussion.

Note: I will not be handing out individual topics for the short papers.

The short papers will be due on, or before, the following dates:

paper #1 by 9/16	paper #4 by 11/11
paper #2 by 9/30	paper #5 by 12/6
paper #3 by 10/14	

You will each sign up to give a **ten-minute presentation** on one of the course readings. After your presentation you will turn in your **typed** notes to me. Your presentation should be on a reading that you have not already covered in a short paper.

Final Paper: For your final paper of 10-15 pages, you have two options:

- 1) investigate a problem, issue, cultural phenomenon, cultural object, etc. that can be better understood or critiqued through a particular angle of feminist theory. The topic might be something raised in class or something arising from your own interests.
- 2) Choose one angle of theory that we've covered in class and explore it in greater depth.

Either of these options will require some use of outside sources. All use of sources must be fully documented using either MLA or the documentation style appropriate to your major.

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 circumstances, I will grant extensions on a paper; however, the extension must be negotiated *in advance* of the due date of the paper and *not* the night before.

Preparation 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 some cases, more than once. Make sure you come to class with questions and particular passages you would like to discuss.

Attendance Policy: You can miss up one class for any reason without risking your grade. Further absences will affect your grade. Repeated absence is grounds for failing the course.

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

406 Halliburton Tower
843-3076, haasj
office hours: M 1:30-3, W 12:30-1:30

WS 400 Feminist Theory

Fall 2005/J.Haas

Schedule of Readings and Assignments (subject to revision as needed)

8/30 Introductions

Gender/Feminism/Theory

9/6 **What is feminism? What are women?**

Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" **FT**

Denise Riley, "Does Sex Have a History" **FT**

Lugones and Spelman, "Have We Got a Theory for You!" **FT**

Elizabeth Grosz, "Sexual Difference and the Problem of Essentialism" **E***

[Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" **FT**]¹

9/13 **The Problem of Theory**

Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory" **CP**

Audre Lorde, "Poetry is Not a Luxury" **FT**

bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice" **FT**

Gloria Anzaldua, "La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness" **FT**

9/16 **paper #1 due**

"Origins" of Western Feminist Theory

9/20 **Liberal Theory**

Mary Wollstonecraft, from *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* **FT**

John Stuart Mill, from *The Subjection of Women* **FT**

Harriet Taylor, "Enfranchisement of Women" **FT**

Anna Julia Cooper, "The Status of Woman in America" **FT**

9/27 **Problems in Feminist Liberal Theory**

Wendy Brown, "Liberalism's Family Values" **CP**

Joan Scott, "Universalism and the History of Feminism" **E***

9/30 **paper #2 due**

10/4 **Socialist Theory: Is gender oppression a product of capitalism?**

Friedrich Engels, "The Family: Its Past, Present and Future" **CP**

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

Linda Nicholson, "Feminism and Marx: Integrating Kinship with the Economic" **CP**

[Angela Y. Davis, "Outcast Mothers and Surrogates" **FT**]

[Kollantai, "Working Woman and Mother" **FT**]

Feminism and Psychoanalysis

10/11 Sigmund Freud "Femininity" **on reserve**

Jacqueline Rose, "Femininity and Its Discontents" **CP**

Sigmund Freud, "Medusa's Head" (handout)

[Karen Horney, "The Dread of Woman" **FT**]

¹ Bracketed texts are optional.

10/14 paper #3 due

10/18 Fall Break /no class

10/25 French Feminist Theory

Luce Irigaray, "The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine" **CP**

"A Very Black Sexuality?" **CP**

"Woman Is a Woman as a Result of a Certain Lack of Characteristics" **CP**

Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa" **FT**

[Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as Masquerade" **FT**]

Postmodernity and Poststructuralism

11/1 Joan Scott, "Deconstructing Equality-versus-Difference" **FT**

Michel Foucault, excerpts from *The History of Sexuality*, volume I, *An Introduction* **on reserve**

Eurocentrism and Postcolonial Theory

11/8 Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" **FT**

Aihwa Ong, "Colonialism and Modernity: Feminist Representations of Women in Non-western Societies" **E***

Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Not You/Like You: Post-Colonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference." **E***

[Gayatri Spivak, "Postmarked Calcutta" **on reserve**]

11/11 paper #4 due

Theorizing Gender and Sexuality

11/15 Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" **FT**

Cherrie Moraga and Amber Hollibough, "What We're Rollin' Around in Bed With" **CP**

Walker, "How to Recognize a Lesbian" **E***

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay" **E***

11/22 Judith Butler, from *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* **FT**

Evelynn Hammonds, "Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality" **E***

11/29 Judith Halberstam, "The Brandon Archive" **CP**

Judith Butler, "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?" **E***

[Gayle Rubin w/Judith Butler, "Sexual Traffic" (interview) **E***]

12/6 Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" **FT**

Rosi Braidotti, "Meta(l)morphoses: The Becoming Machine" **FT**

Paper #5 due