Instructor: Ina C. Seethaler, Ph.D.
Office: Saint Louis University Main Campus, McGannon Hall, Room 143A
Office Hours: M 10-11AM and T/R 1-2PM and by appointment when schedules conflict
E-mail: iseethal@slu.edu (you can usually expect a response email from me within 24h)

Course Description and Goals

Women’s and Gender Studies is a broad, interdisciplinary field that covers a vast range of issues. This class will give you insight into some of the historical foundations, theoretical concepts, political manifestations, and social issues at stake. This course will explore the great variety of ways in which people who are inspired by feminist ideas have worked for social justice. We will begin by focusing our classroom readings and discussions on feminist activism at all levels of education, followed by activism around health issues, and then end the semester with issues of violence against women and activism in the workplace.

In addition to your weekly preparation for class, you will contribute to our class blog to record your ideas, complete a number of in-class short writing assignments, readings, and peer feedback, give a presentation, and attend 1 Women’s Studies-related event. Finally, you must meet with me two times for a short conference during the semester to assess your progress.

Objectives:

✓ Knowledge of different types of feminist activism;
✓ Being able to use feminist concepts and ideas to analyze how culture and social institutions shape possibilities for justice in everyday life;
✓ Skills to implement intersectional theories and concepts to participate in community action or service;
✓ Analysis of the mutual influence of theory and practice in American feminism; and
✓ Engagement in two feminist activist projects.

Required Texts

Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, Grassroots (NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005) [GR] and

As the course progresses, we will also work with a number of additional reading material and handouts, which you will be able to find on Bb. Learn.

Grading

✓ Class Blog and participation 5%
✓ Show and Tell 5%
✓ Discussion Leader 10%
✓ Minor Activist Project 25%
✓ Main Activist Project (group) 45%
✓ Presentation 5%
✓ Class Portfolio 5%
The grading scale is:

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Note: Grades are not negotiable. I do NOT discuss grades over e-mail, and I do NOT discuss them until 24 hours have elapsed, which should give you ample time to reflect on my comments and to prepare specific questions.

**Class Blog/Participation (5%):** This class cannot work without you actively participating regularly during in-class discussions. In order to continue our discussion outside of the regular classroom, I have created a class blog for us (you should have received an invitation to join this blog from me by now). On this blog we will all share our reactions to the readings and discussions in class. You will post 1 blog entry per week (no matter what day of the week, but the cut-off is Sunday at midnight). Please refer to class readings and discussions as much as you can and always make clear how you post relates to feminist activism. Additionally, you will comment on 2 entries by your fellow students. This medium should be a carefree environment in which we can share our ideas on an informal, yet appropriate level.

**Show & Tell (5%):** To personalize our classroom setting, I ask you to bring an item for “show and tell” 2 times over the course of the semester. You can “show” or “tell” anything you want, as long as it concerns feminist activism. At the beginning of our class periods, we will have time for “show and tell” before discussion of the day’s readings. This should be fun and exciting. Bring a picture of your grandma, a song with a feminist theme, an article from the newspaper, a YouTube video you found provocative, etc., and talk about why you brought it in.

**Discussion Leading/Reading Presentation (10%):** Once during the semester, you will lead class discussion on one of the readings for the week. You will summarize and present the readings(s) and initiate the conversation with some questions. You’ll choose from a list of topics during the second week of class. You’ll be given 20 minutes, which you are expected to use. Please provide me with an outline of your discussion on the day that you are leading class.

**Activist projects.** Each student must engage in two projects of their own choosing. These projects must either be different from your current volunteer activities or must take your current volunteer work in a new direction. One of the two projects will be your main project and the other will be your minor project:

**Minor project—Informational Interview with a Feminist Activist (25%):**
- Find a feminist activist (students, staff, family members, a person in a professional field that you are interested in, etc.) and interview them about themselves, their activism/feminism, etc.;
- Compose a creative project (video, prezi, a play, etc.) or a 4-5 page paper about your findings (What did you learn from them? How do they define feminist activism? Etc.). Make connections to at least one article we read in class. Attach your interview questions at the end of the paper (does not count toward pages).

**Main activist project (45%):**
- Students will work in groups of 3-4 and will have to find a faculty or staff member to mentor the project in addition to Ina;
- 15 hours of work/each student plus a 13-15 page final paper. In this paper, you will incorporate what you have learned in the course that is relevant for the project. You will use scholarly sources for this paper. I will provide more details about the format, etc. in a few weeks;
- Attach to the end of the paper a log of your hours spent working and a very brief description of each activity (journal entries submitted to me after EACH visit through Blackboard Learn).
For the main project, groups can choose from the following three categories:

1. **Activist project in the Women’s and Gender Studies Department.** Women’s Studies has its roots in feminist activism and, more than most academic programs, still has a commitment to action. You can develop your own contribution to the Women’s Studies Program or choose from the following:
   - learn about and assist with an ongoing project (e.g., Brown Bag Speaker Series, Take Over Thursdays, or the Women’s Studies Newsletter);
   - contribute something new that adds to current programming;
   - use your particular skills to advertise, fundraise, enhance the website, etc.; or
   - contribute to longer-range planning for the department (e.g., help plan for Women’s History Month).

   Your goals are to learn about organizations and organizing, build your skills, and add to your experience. The Women’s and Gender Studies Administrative Assistant, Jennifer Semsar, can give you additional information about the current needs of the Program.

2. **Activist project on SLU’s campus.** You may work in an ad hoc fashion on a particular issue (for example, sexual assault policy or body image) or with an existing organization, depending on what skills you are trying to gain and what your interests are. Again, your goals are to learn about organizations and organizing, build your skills, and add to your experience. You may work individually or in groups.

3. **Activist project involving the St. Louis community.** Working individually or in groups, create your own community project or volunteer at an agency with broadly feminist aspirations. There are notebooks in the Women’s Studies office with information about a wide variety of organizations. Here, your role may include that of a participant-observer, learning from and about the agency, the staff, and the clients.

**In-class presentation about your main project (5%)**: These will be scheduled during the final class period. Please make sure to use PowerPoint or a similar presentation tool.

**Class Portfolio (5%)**: The Women’s Studies Program has designed an online portfolio program with which you can collect materials that you will have created in your Women’s Studies classes over the course of our studies. We will watch a YouTube video that will explain you exactly how to create such a portfolio. You are to set up your site, upload at least one item (paper, video, etc.), and write a brief commentary on your selection.

**GUIDELINES AND GROUND RULES**

1. **Attendance and Participation**
   Attendance and participation are required. **More than 3 unexcused absences will move your grade down by 1/3 of a letter with each additional absence.** If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to talk with a classmate and share notes. You will be able to find all assignments that are given out in class on Blackboard. **Work that is handed in late** will have 1/3 of a letter deducted for each day that it is late.
   If you must miss a class on a day that an assignment is due, please send your assignment to me as an email attachment or make arrangements to send your work with a classmate.
   
   I expect you to prepare for and to participate in discussions. **We all share the responsibility of making this class interesting and engaging.** Everyone reads differently and will have something different to say about a subject. Your comments help others to see topics in a different light.
   
   Individual conferences with me count as regular class meetings; missing a conference is like missing a class. Individual conferences will not act as make-up sessions for missed classes; if you want to know what happened in the class you missed, please come to my office hours.
2. Time
All of our time is valuable. I expect you to come to class on time – to be here and ready to start class by 9:30 a.m. **Excessive or continuous lateness will not be tolerated;** if you are more than 15 minutes late on three separate occasions, I will count them as one absence.

3. Academic Integrity and Honesty
Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to your course instructor, who will investigate and adjudicate them according to the policy on academic honesty of the College of Arts and Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion by the University.

4. Electronic Devices
Please turn off (NOT on vibrate) all cell phones, laptops, iPods, and other annoying electronic devices before class. **Texting in class will not be tolerated as it shows disrespect to your instructor and your classmates.**

5. Students with Special Needs and Disability Services
In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about: 1) Course-level support (faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor. 2) University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to www.slu.edu/success.

Students who believe that they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services (314-977-8885) or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

If you have other personal, health, or family issues or needs that could potentially affect your performance in class, please also see me at the beginning of the semester so that we are in communication about these issues before adverse circumstances arise. For general questions about or concerns with this class please contact Dr. Penny Weiss, the Director of the Women’s Studies Program (pweiss1@slu.edu).

8. Course Content Disclaimer
In this course, students may be required to read texts or view materials that they may consider offensive. All ideas are to be examined in the context of intellectual inquiry of the sort encountered at the university level. Arrangements may be made to substitute certain works if students contact the instructor prior to the assignment. The ideas expressed in any assigned text or viewing material do not necessarily represent the views of the instructor, Women’s Studies Program, or Saint Louis University. Course materials are selected for their relevance to Women’s Studies.

9. Feedback
I am very interested in hearing from you throughout the semester. Please don’t hesitate to e-mail me, leave a note in my box, or see me during office hours to talk about what works and what doesn’t in the course. **The ultimate goal of good writing is good communication,** and I hope you will communicate with me whenever you have any frustrations or concerns.

**A Note on Reading:**
Active reading is essential to your success (and enjoyment) in this course. **You should be reading with a pen in hand, taking notes in the margins and underlining words as you read.** Your comments will provide you with a record of your own initial response to the reading, which is invaluable as you prepare for discussion and to write your essays. Be sure to read when your concentration is at its peak. Read and re-read: read for pleasure and initial comprehension first, and then read again for increased understanding and analysis. Take note of any phrases/passages that confused you – chances are that if you didn’t understand, someone else in the class didn’t, either! So **don’t be shy about asking for help.**
Specific Assignments Schedule
(Note: This schedule is preliminary and may be subject to modifications)

T 08/25: Introduction
R 08/27: Feminist Foundations
Staggenborg and Taylor, “Whatever Happened to the Women’s Movement?” (Bb. Learn) [NOTE: Read only pages 41-47]
Evans, “Personal Politics” (Bb. Learn)

T 09/1: What is feminist activism?
Introduction, Prologue, Chapter 1, and Appendix A (GR)
Feminist poster series at Stetson University:
http://www.udayton.edu/womenscenter/feminist_poster_project/index.php
Sharp, “Methods of Nonviolent Action” (Bb. Learn)
PICK: Reading to lead

R 09/3: GUEST SEMINAR: Service Learning

T 09/8: Feminist Concepts
Collins, “Some Group Matters: Intersectionality, Situated Standpoints, and Black Feminist Thought” (Bb. Learn)
Frye, “Oppression” (Bb. Learn)

R 09/10: Ferree and Martin, “Doing the Work of the Movement” (Bb. Learn)
WORKSHOP on reflection

T 09/15: Bays, “Works, Politics, and Coalition Building” (CAFP, Ch. 13)
Park, “Navigating the Anti-Immigrant Wave” (CAFP, Ch. 7)

R 09/17: Finley and Stringer, excerpts Beyond Burning Bras: Feminist Activism for Everyone (2 files, Bb. Learn)

T 09/22: Women of Color and Activism
Kendrick, “Producing the Battered Woman” (CAFP, Ch. 6)
Pardo, “Creating Community” (CAFP, Ch. 12)
Send Ina INFO ON MINOR PROJECT

R 09/24: GUEST VISIT: SLU Community Activism

Feminist Activism and Education

T 09/29: K-12 Education
Bell, “Changing Our Ideas About Ourselves: Group Consciousness Raising with Elementary School Girls as a Means to Empowerment” (Bb. Learn)
Teaching Tolerance Project, Ch. 1 “Everybody’s Story” & 2 “A Wider Circle” (Bb. Learn)
R 10/1: “Of Minor Importance” (GR. Ch. 2)
   Howe, “Gender, Race, and Community Activism: Competing Strategies in the
   Struggle for Public Education” (CAFP, Ch. 10)

T 10/6: University-level Education
   “Rebels with Causes.” (GR, Ch. 3)
   Adams, “A Grassroots Think Tank—Linking Writing and Community Building” (Bb.
   Learn)

R 10/8: GUEST VISIT: Feminist Activism in the STL Community
   SIGN-UP: Midterm conferences

R 10/15: Silliman et al., “Founding the National Black Women’s Health Project” (Bb. Learn)
   Look at the website of the Emma Goldman Clinic at http://emmagoldman.com (specifically
   the “Mission” and “Challenging” sections)

T 10/20: Fall Break

R 10/22: In-Class Presentations: Minor Projects

T 10/27: Silliman et. al., “The National Asian Women’s Health Organization” (Bb. Learn)
   Boston Women’s Health Book Collective: http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/about/default.asp

R 10/29: NO CLASS—Ina is at a conference (use the time to work on your major projects!)

Contemporary Feminist Activism

T 11/3: Read these online articles about SlutWalks:
   --Here is an account of the origin of SlutWalks:
   http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/42927752/ns/us-news-life/t/cops-rape-comment-sparks-wave-
   slutwalks/
   --This link shows how the organizers were attempting to raise money to finance the actions:
   http://www.slutwalktoronto.com/
   --Here is a link to Jessica Valenti’s opinion piece about SlutWalks in the Washington Post:
   http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/slutwalks-and-the-future-of-
   feminism/2011/06/01/AGjB9L1H_story.html
   --Here is a critique of SlutWalks from an intersectional perspective, by the Crunk
   Feminist Collective: http://crunkfeministcollective.wordpress.com/2011/05/23/slutwalks-v-
   ho-strolls/
   --Here is a response to the critique from a woman of color (that is, a defense of slut walks):
   http://www.alternet.org/story/151390/does_slutwalk_speak_to_women_of_color
   --And, finally, a defense of SlutWalks by Katha Pollitt in The Nation:
   http://www.thenation.com/article/161728/talk-talk-walk-slutwalk
Feminist Activism and Violence against Women

Simmons, “The War against Black Women, and the Making of NO!” (Bb. Learn)

R 11/12: Grove, “Engaging Men against Violence” (Bb. Learn)
“The Activist at Work” (GR, Ch. 5)

T 11/17: Sista II Sista, “Sistas Makin’ Moves” (Bb. Learn)
Martinez, “Unite and Rebell!” (Bb. Learn)

R 11/19: Nies, “Mother Jones” (Bb. Learn)
Seitz, “Class, Gender, and Resistance in the Appalachian Coalfields” (CAFP, Ch. 9)
SIGN-UP: End-of-year conferences

T 11/24: Internet Activism
Read: Internet links

R 11/26: Thanksgiving Break

T 12/1: Feminist Activism Revisited
“The Revolutionary Next Door” (GR, Ch. 7)
Martin, Hanson, and Fontaine, “What Counts as Activism? The Role of Individuals in Creating Change” (Bb. Learn)

R 12/3: Last Day of Class: Major Project Presentations
MAJOR PROJECT PAPERS DUE

T 12/15 by 12:00PM Final Exam Day: CLASS PORTFOLIO DUE