

Feminism in Action!

Fall 2019

Office: McGannon 137

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Office hours: M 10-12, Th 9-11, &
always by appointment

Feminism, we all know, is a broad movement for social change, aimed at greater gender justice and deeply allied with other progressive social movements. But what are the means that can be used to *attain greater consciousness* of gender-based problems and to *effect real change* in the world? Toward exactly what ends are we working? What inspires people to engage in feminist activism? What sustains them in their activism, through all the troubles and work?

There is a personal element to political activism. What sorts of feminist activism do you imagine *yourself* as willing and able to engage in? What resources and commitments do *you* bring to *your* social justice work? What issues are *you* most passionate about?

After this course is over, and long after, I hope that you will be a more effective and confident feminist activist, motivated and knowledgeable enough to work with others to confront effectively the injustices you see or experience in the world.

You can attain this goal! We will work toward it together!

By coming to class prepared, curious, open-minded, and ready to be a good feminist citizen of our little community, you will, by the end of the semester, be able to:

- *Identify* the range of issues feminists address through activism (Show & Tell; Journal; class readings and discussion);
- *Compare* and ultimately *draw from* past and current examples of feminist strategies for effecting feminist social change (Stage 3; Show & Tell; Journal);
- *Undertake* an activist project, *analyzing* a problem well and *applying* appropriate, effective forms of activism, thinking both practically and creatively (Ally-ship; Activist Project—5 stages);
- *Engage* your classmates (and their knowledge and skills, of course) in devising and carrying out your project, and *contribute* your feedback and skills to their projects (Activist Ally-ship).
- Deftly *employ* core concepts and practices in planning and carrying out your activist projects (Activist Project; Journal; class readings);
- *Read* more thoughtfully and *write* more comfortably and competently, in a variety of formats (Journal; Final Paper); and
- Better *envision* yourself as an empowered, effective feminist activist, including *assessing* your strengths and weaknesses, and *identifying* the issues about which you are most passionate and the means most at your disposal (Activist Project; Journal).

Assessment:

How do you get to show yourself and me that you have achieved the learning objectives above?

You will have the opportunity to show your work and be assessed using multiple forms of learning: participation; short writing assignments; project ally-ship; and a major activist project, with both an action and writing component. Further, you will have a great deal of choice in deciding what formats to use in your writing, and what projects to work on in what ways.

Still, rubrics or specific guidelines are always offered to guide your work. The criteria in these guidelines are carefully considered—in many cases, in order to meet the learning objective, you have to fulfill all the criteria. Meet the specs, and you get full credit. Don't meet them, and you get no credit. If you don't meet them, you have *one week* to re-do the work, and then get full credit.

I am always available, online and during office hours, to answer questions.

Your **PARTICIPATION (10%)**, which presumes attendance, is absolutely critical to both your success and the success of the course! Through active listening, asking and responding to questions, sharing ideas from your writing, and participating in classroom activities, you clarify your own thinking and understanding and that of your classmates. *Keeping up with the readings and your journal entries will make participation easier, and make you an even more interested and prepared discussant!* I call this feminist citizenship.

We will all strive to create and sustain a *risk-supported classroom* environment—one in which people are *always respected*, especially in their differences, and viewpoints are questioned only in an attempt to develop them better.

Your two **“SHOW AND TELLS” (5%)** will be fun and informative 5-minute oral presentations at the beginning of class that a) share the contents of a news story, blog, song, etc., and b) link it to what we are learning in class about the motives, ends, and means of feminist activism. At least half of the time should be on the links to class, rather than having the class watch a video, etc., for the whole time. Present one before and one after fall break. See the assignment sheet on Blackboard for detailed specs.

Your **ACTIVIST JOURNAL (37%)** is your personal, reflective, evolving record of your understanding of feminist activism, of yourself as a feminist activist, and of your activist project. All assignments are intended either to inspire and direct your reading, check your understanding, prepare you for upcoming discussion, or build toward your big project. It is handed in each Thursday when you have an entry, approximately 8-10 times (this will vary, as we'll discuss). There are several types of entries:

Reading responses → (12%) You will submit a total of 6 of these (2% each), at least 2 of each form, in weeks chosen by you, but spread out over at least 8 weeks. (You can submit a 7th for a little extra credit, if you desire.)

- 1) “3 lessons, 1 question.” See Blackboard for specs.
- 2) “Freer-write.” See Blackboard for specs.

Short writing exercises→ (10%) You will see some of these described in the syllabus, and others will be assigned as we go. These assignments include both in-class and take-home work, some submitted to the discussion board (but then printed out and put into your journal).

Stages of activist project→ (15%)

The idea of the three stages is to scaffold your work and to give you maximum feedback on your project as it develops. *Your final project will really benefit from the time you invest here.*

Specific directions for each stage are given on Blackboard.

STAGE 1: The problem

What problem are you hoping to address? Why is it a problem, and for whom? What kind of problem is it? What gets your blood boiling, frustrates you, gets you fired up, etc.?

STAGE 2: Imagining alternatives

Dream a little! How do things look *ideally*? What *better* situation are you hoping to come close to?

STAGE 3: Learning from others and deciding upon actions

What can you learn from examples of feminist activism *around similar issues* or *in similar environments*? Which strategies suit your resources? What resistance or obstacles can you expect to encounter? What will your final “product(s)” be?

YOUR ACTIVIST PROJECTS (40%):

You will be **a/the main actor in one project** and an **ally** to other students on one or more other projects, depending upon your degree of involvement.

For your ally-ship projects (10%), you need only submit a 1-2-page paper that lists (as a log or chart is fine): the tasks you did when, the amount of time you spent on them, and how they contributed to whose project. A paragraph of reflective comments closes it up. The total amount of time on your secondary project(s) should be approximately 4 hours. This includes such acts as doing graphics or photography for someone, helping set up an event, participating in a meeting, etc. Put this assignment in your journal.

Your major project will take approximately 10 hours. **Keep a log** of how much time you spend doing what.

STAGE 4: THE ACTION: (15%)

This is where you carry out the plan you have worked on in STAGES 1-3. You can make a podcast, teach a class, produce and distribute a zine, make a public presentation, post infographics, display artwork, distribute informational tri-folds, hold an event, hold up signs, create a You Tube video, or come up with still other means not listed here.

What for you constitutes a successful action, and *how will you measure that?*

Remember the ends you are after.

Be inclusive and intersectional.

STAGE 5: THE FINAL PAPER: (20%)

Now is the time to bring everything together—your journaling, short papers, conversations, actions, and reflections. (*You have already done so much of the work for this!*) Your final paper will i) define the problem in some detail; ii) describe what you were trying to accomplish, and why; iii) describe the efforts for change you engaged in, including why those strategies were chosen from among all the alternatives, where you looked for support, and where you hit and how you dealt with obstacles; iv) describe the results of your activism, including the product(s) you produced, and some response to your action (how do you measure its success?); and v) conclude with some reflections on your activist journey. Attach to the end of the paper a log of your hours spent working and a very brief description of each activity. More details are in Blackboard.

STAGE 6: Final presentation (5%): Each project will be presented in a public forum, to which we will invite WGS faculty and your friends. Your presentation should include an enticing Powerpoint. You will describe the basic elements of your paper listed above. Time for presentation will vary depending upon how many projects the class as a whole engages in, but you can expect them to be *about* 8-10 minutes, with 2-3 minutes for questions.

Portfolio entries of work from this course (required of all WGS majors, encouraged for WGS minors). WGS has an online portfolio program that is easy to set up and use. Jenni Semsar (WGS Administrative Assistant) or I will provide you with all the information you need to do so. WGS majors (and minors, hopefully) will add their paper from this course to this portfolio. You may also want to use the portfolio at this time to organize material from your other courses, but that is completely optional.

Electronic devices: To enhance learning, students will limit their use of electronic devices in class (including cell phones, tablets, and laptop computers) to what is essential for class. Do not distract yourself or your neighbors with online shopping, email, twitter, etc., during class!

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is “the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity.” Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service through which SLU fulfills its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern. The full University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be found on the Provost's Office website at: https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/policy_academic-integrity_6-26-2015.pdf.

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has adopted its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites. All SLU students are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions, and appeals. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Dean/Director of the College, School or Center in which your program is housed.

Academic Support for Students

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. The Student Success Center assists students with academic and career related services, is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331) and the School of Nursing (Suite, 114). Students can visit www.slu.edu/success to learn more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, academic coaching, career services, and/or facets of curriculum planning).

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must formally register their disability with the University. Once successfully registered, students also must notify their course instructor that they wish to use their approved accommodations in the course.

Please contact Disability Services to schedule an appointment to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Most students on the St. Louis campus will contact Disability Services, located in the Student Success Center and available by email at Disability_services@slu.edu or by phone at [314.977.3484](tel:314.977.3484). Once approved, information about a student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors by email from Disability Services and within the instructor's official course roster. Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one also are encouraged to contact Disability Services. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Title IX

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g., sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident that involves a Title IX matter, **that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX coordinator (or that person's equivalent on your campus) and share the basic facts of your experience.** This is true even if you ask the faculty member not to disclose the incident. The Title IX contact will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

For most students on the St. Louis campus, the appropriate contact is Anna R. Kratky (DuBourg Hall, room 36; anna.kratky@slu.edu; 314-977-3886). If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK. To view SLU's sexual misconduct policy, and for resources, please visit the following web addresses: <https://www.slu.edu/here4you> and <https://www.slu.edu/general-counsel>.

Schedule (Blackboard readings are available on the course Home Page):

Tuesday August 27:

Introduction to each other, feminist activism, and the course.

Big question: What inspires people to engage in feminist activism, how do they do what they do, and can I actually be a feminist activist?

Assignment: 10 post-it notes. See description on Blackboard.

Thursday August 29: No class

Homework: Do some feminist activism with your post-its! See Blackboard for specific guidelines. Note that your project must be completed and posted on Blackboard Discussion Board by **Friday at 4:00 p.m.**, and that your comments on 3 classmates' projects are due by **Saturday at 11:59 p.m.**

I. What is/counts as feminist activism?

Tuesday September 3

- *Grassroots*: Introduction, Prologue, Chapter 1, and Appendix A.
- Look at the [Feminist Poster Project at the University of Dayton](#).
- Look at "[23 Ways Feminists Have Made the World Better for Women](#)."

Want more? Look at *Bust's* "[A Feminist Guide to the Resistance](#)."

Thursday September 5

- Sara Ahmed, "The Killjoy Manifesto" (this is lengthy and wonderful, so give yourself time to ponder). Blackboard.
- Ted Talk, Roxanne Gay, "Bad Feminist" (11:29 minutes).

Free-write ideas: How do these writings make you think about your own feminist activism? How do the two pieces speak to each other?

Tuesday September 10

- Waves of Resistance Conference, "[Manifesto of the First Pan-Canadian Young Feminist Gathering](#)" (2008).
- Feminista Jones, "#BlackFeminism 101." *Reclaiming Our Space: How Black Feminists are Changing the World from the Tweets to the Streets* (Beacon Press, 2019). Blackboard.
- Look at Gene Sharp's "[Methods of Nonviolent Action](#)."

Thursday September 12

- Check out "[11 Projects that Will Inspire You to Fight Gender Stereotypes](#)"
- Feminist speed dating exercise. Come to class with prepared short versions (2.5 total minutes) of: a) "Some activist experience I already have (if any), and the kinds of skills I have to share" (I'm great on twitter, for example, a good writer, really familiar with SLU organizations, or excellent with graphics); b) "The sorts of feminist issues I'm especially passionate about and/or thinking about working on this semester" (be as specific as you can be at this early stage), and c) "The kinds of things I'm looking for in an activist 'date'" (I need help with photography, for example, or with building coalitions, or really would love someone with more social media expertise than I have).

In the issue-oriented sections of the course, questions you can consider for discussion and journaling include: How important is it that activism include consciousness raising? What is the role of emotional engagement in activism? Who is well-situated to be an effective activist on this issue? What are some characteristics of successful activist programs? What makes certain acts a form of activism? How can activist projects affect the people involved?

II. What are some of the feminist issues in education, from pre-school through adult ed, and how have they been addressed through various forms of activism?

Tuesday September 17

Our youngest citizens

- Teaching Tolerance Project, “Everybody’s Story” and “A Wider Circle,” in *Starting Small: Teaching Tolerance in Preschool and the Early Grades* (Southern Poverty Law Center, 1997), pp. 1-6 and 13-18.
http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/kits/Teachers_Study_Guide.pdf
- Susan Parkison Stern, “Conversation, Research, and Struggles over Schooling in an African American Community.” In *Community Activism and Feminist Politics*, edited by Nancy Naples (Routledge, 1998), pp. 107-127. Blackboard.

Thursday September 19

Middle and High School Activists

- *Grassroots*, Chapter 2, “Of Minor Importance.”
- Rachel, “High School Gauntlet,” in *That Takes Ovaries! Bold Females and Their Brazen Acts* (NY: Three Rivers Press, 2002), pp. 169-170. Blackboard.
- Hannah Downing (2019), “[Sexual Harassment in High School: When Saying “No” is Not Enough](#)”
- “Start Feminist Activism Early” <https://www.ulc.org/ulc-blog/start-feminist-activism-early> (Do you have a favorite?)
- A. Wendy Nastasi, “Researching to Transgress: The Epistemic Virtue of Research With” *Philosophy of Education* (2012): 258-265. Blackboard.

Tuesday September 24

Activism at college:

- *Grassroots*, Chapter 3, “Rebels with Causes”
- Jackson Katz, “Mentors in Violence Prevention,” in *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology*, ed. Estelle Disch (McGraw-Hill, 2009), pp. 399-412. Blackboard.
- bell hooks, “Toward a Revolutionary Feminist Pedagogy,” in *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989). Blackboard.

Thursday September 26

Continuing Adult Education:

- Hal Adams, “A Grassroots Think Tank—Linking Writing and Community Building,” in *Teaching for Social Justice* (NY: The New Press, 1998), pp. 81-97.
- National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), “Every Woman’s Right to Learn: The Manifesto.” Blackboard.

Tuesday October 1: STAGE 1 of your project is due. Bring a clean, printed copy of your paper to class to discuss in groups. **DO NOT MISS THE DAYS FOR FEEDBACK!**

III. Feminist activism around gender non-conformity

Thursday October 3

- Radicalqueens, "[Manifesto #2](#)" (1973)
- Third International Intersex Forum, "[Public Statement](#)" (2013)
- [#Nonbinary](#) (what are the issues, controversies, hurdles, forms of activism, etc.?)

Tuesday October 8

- *TransJustice, "Trans Action for Social and Economic Justice," in *Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology* (Boston: South End Press, 2006). Blackboard.
- "[10 trans and gender-nonconforming youth activists of color changing the world](#)"
- [#WontBeErased](#) (what are the issues, forms of activism, hurdles, controversies, etc.?)
- Visitor: Metro Trans Umbrella Group

Thursday October 10 (time to dream):

- World March of Women, "[Women's Global Charter for Humanity](#)" (2005)
- **STAGE 2** of your project is due. Bring a clean, printed copy of your paper to class to discuss in groups. **DO NOT MISS THE DAYS FOR FEEDBACK!**

CONCEPT DAY: Community

Tuesday October 15

- Elster, Linehan, Weiss, and Zangari (1994), "[Building \(the\) New Community \(School\)](#)." *The Educational Forum*.
- Bell hooks (1984), "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women." *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Blackboard.

Short writing assignment: *Put these two readings into conversation with one another by comparing them on topics they both raise (you can do this via dialogue that uses some of their words and some of your, with clouds, etc.) or having them raise questions of each other (something like "since I notice X about community, and you emphasize Y, I wonder what you think about Z." Then figure out the response.). Post your comments on the discussion board by 11:00 a.m. prior to this class meeting. Also print and put your comments into your journal. If you can, skim one another's entries before class to bring more insights and questions to class discussion.*

IV. Activism concerning health issues

Thursday October 17

- Film, "Taking Our Bodies Back: The Women's Health Movement," shown in class.
- Read: Boston Women's Health Book Collective, "Organizing for Change," Chapter 32 in *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), pp. 748-58. Blackboard.
- Look at the website of the [Emma Goldman Clinic](#).

Short writing option: *Make elaborated lists (most than just a word for most items) with headings like "Things I didn't know about the history of the women's health movement," "Why I didn't know," and "What difference it makes (for myself, for feminist activism, for women's health, etc.) to know these things."*

Tuesday October 22: Fall Break

Thursday October 24: STAGE 3 is due. Bring a clean, printed copy to class to discuss in groups. DO NOT MISS THE DAYS FOR FEEDBACK!

Activism around reproduction

October 29

1. The debate in Spain (2013) in very short readings:
 - “Decidir Nos Hace Libres” (Deciding Makes Us Free) (Blackboard)
 - Sandra Ezquerro, “[Feminism on the Offensive](#)”
2. Check out the website “[Feminists for Life](#)” especially “Vision” and “Work”
3. Loretta Ross, “The Color of Choice: White Supremacy and Reproductive Justice” *Incite!* Blackboard.
4. Check out the website of [NARAL Pro-Choice America](#), especially the “Issues” section
Visitor, Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Missouri

October 31

- Byllye Avery (1990), “Breathing Life into Ourselves: The Evolution of the National Black Women’s Health Project.” *The Black Women’s Health Book*, ed. Evelyn C. White. Blackboard.
- Feminista Jones, “Black Mamas Matter.” *Reclaiming Our Space*. Blackboard.
Visitor, Jamaa Birth Village

Activism around disability

November 5

- “[The Future of Disability Rights Activism is Female](#)” (read, and also watch Flores Tedx talk embedded in the article [8:20 minutes]) *Ms.* 4/12/18
- “[8 Disability Rights Activists Changing the World](#)” (2018)
- Nirmala Erevelles, “Disability in the New World Order,” in *Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology* (Boston: South End Press, 2006): 25-31. Blackboard.

November 7

- Changing Borders Conference, “Priorities for Action” and “Conclusions” (1998)
- Women’s Network of Disability Organisations, “Action Plan” (2006)
- Visitor, Annesley Clark

November 12: CONCEPT DAY: Coalition

- Bernice Johnson Reagon, “[Coalition Politics: Turning the Century](#)”
- Elizabeth Martinez, “Unite and Rebel! Challenges and Strategies in Building Alliances” *Incite!* 191-195. Blackboard.

Short writing assignment: *Put these two readings into conversation with one another by comparing them on topics they both raise (you can do this via dialogue that uses some of their words and some of your, with clouds, etc.) or having them raise questions of each other (something like “since I notice X about community, and you emphasize Y, I wonder what you think about Z.” Then figure out the response.). Post your comments on the discussion board by*

11:00 a.m. prior to this class meeting. Also print and put your comments into your journal. If you can, skim one another's entries before class to bring more insights and questions to class discussion.

November 14: How's it going with STAGE 4? Discussion and Coordination

Looking back and looking ahead

November 21:

- Judith Nies, "Mother Jones," in *Nine Women: Portraits from the American Radical Tradition*. Blackboard.
- "[An Introduction to the Life and Spirituality of Dorothy Day](#)."
- Pick a third historical activist about whom you'd love to learn a little more. Bring some information on them to class to share.

November 26

- Watch the documentary, "She's Beautiful When She's Angry," available on multiple streaming services (1-1/2 hours).

Short writing option: *Make elaborated lists (most than just a word for most items) with headings like "Things I didn't know about the movement for suffrage," "Why I didn't know," and "What difference it makes (for myself, for feminist activism, for women's political participation, etc.) to know these things." Any headings you'd like to use ("Forms of activism they employed in the movement," etc.) that distill what you've learned are fine.*

November 28: THANKSGIVING BREAK

December 3: Grassroots, "The Revolutionary Next Door" and "The Activist at Work"

December 5: FIRST SET OF PRESENTATIONS (STAGE 5)

December (TBD, probably December 10): Second set of presentations.