

Feminist Theory: Gender Justice
Women's and Gender Studies 3775-02/ Political Science 3770-02/ Philosophy 4360-02

Fall 2017

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30-4:15, and by appointment

This course examines developments in feminist thought over the turn of the twenty-first century. By sampling a range of theoretical texts and cultural criticism, we will explore the production and disruption of social and political categories of gender and sexuality. The course's readings, discussions, and written assignments are designed to highlight core concepts in feminist scholarship, addressing the evolution of the field of women's studies since the 1970s. Readings cover a range of topics and methodologies, and students will have opportunities to investigate areas of their own interest. The course will enable students to draw connections between the intellectual, the personal, and the political, using theoretical innovations to engage contemporary social issues.

Learning objectives

Over the course of the semester students will:

- Gain an understanding of key concepts in feminist and gender studies
- Identify sources of and solutions to gender inequities
- Analyze present-day movements for social justice
- Use text-based evidence to present and critique theoretical arguments

Required texts

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, 1985

Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, 1982

The remainder of the readings, marked with a *, will be available as pdf files on Blackboard. It is the student's responsibility to gather materials from Blackboard and to pay attention to email announcements, as readings are subject to change. All students must bring the readings to class for discussion.

Course requirements

1. Attendance and participation (10% of final grade): Students must attend class, show thoughtful engagement with that day's reading, and make informed contributions to discussion. May include discussion questions, short writings, quizzes, or group work. You may miss 2 classes without affecting your participation grade—you do not need to provide an excuse. Any absences beyond 2 will be deducted from the participation grade regardless of the excuse. Students are required to bring course readings to class, in either electronic or print format. However, computer or phone use unrelated to the course readings—texting, web-browsing, and other distracting behavior—will adversely affect the participation grade. Should inappropriate computer use become a problem, use of laptops and tablets will be prohibited.
2. Media research (10%): for class on **Sep. 12**, you will complete a small-scale research project and in-class presentation that illustrate feminist theory keywords.

3. Cultural text research (10%): for class on **Sep. 28**, you will submit an in-class project based on a creative work related to gender issues.

4. Midterm paper (25%): a 5-page paper based on assigned readings by Audre Lorde and Margaret Atwood. Take-home format. **Due Oct. 20**

5. Reflection papers (2, 10% each): reflections based on presentations given by visiting speakers.
Due Nov. 7 and 21

6. Final paper (25%): research and position paper on a contemporary social movement related to gender/sexuality issues. Take-home format. **Due Dec. 14**

Make-up work: Several of the course assignments require you to attend particular days in class. Make-up assignments may be arranged should the class conflict with an official, SLU-sanctioned activity or a documented emergency. Make-up work will not be offered in case of conflicts related to Greek life, volunteer activities, club sports, vacation travel, or routine medical care. Plan ahead to ensure that you will be in class on these days, and should you have a legitimate conflict, please contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements.

Academic honesty

The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe, and they will be enforced. Simply put, use only your own words and ideas in coursework, and give proper attribution for any references you make to the work of another. Whether intentional or unintentional, copying or paraphrasing another's writings or ideas without attribution constitute plagiarism. This is the case for brief as well as extensive passages. Become familiar with proper methods of citation (the Purdue OWL, <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/> is a great resource), and review the College of Arts and Sciences full policy on Academic Integrity (<http://www.slu.edu/x16363.xml>). Again, violations of the this policy will result in disciplinary action.

Saint Louis University expects you to be familiar with its policy on Academic Integrity, which states: "The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student's own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty."

Any clear violation of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. Possible sanctions for violation of academic integrity may include, but are not limited to, assignment of a failing grade in a course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University."

Disability Services and academic accommodations

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Please contact Disability Services, located within the Student Success Center, at

Disability_services@slu.edu or 314.977.3484 to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services and viewed within Banner via the instructor's course roster.

Please contact me as soon as possible regarding accommodations.

Other guidelines

Please, no distracting or disrespectful behavior. Arrive to class on time. Put away phones. Personal laptops and tablets may be used only to take notes and consult readings. **Inappropriate computer or phone use—texts, web, email, outside work, etc.—will result in automatic deductions from your participation grade without any notice from the instructor.** Laptops will be prohibited if inappropriate computer use is a problem. No material from this class may be redistributed or posted to the web.

Schedule

Unit I: Theorizing Feminisms

Week 1	
Aug. 29	Introduction
Aug. 31	*Keywords: “Essentialism and Social Construction/Difference” *bell hooks, excerpt from <i>Feminism Is for Everybody</i>

Week 2	
Sep. 5	*Keywords: “Power” *Judith Butler, excerpt from <i>Undoing Gender</i>

Sep. 7	*Raewyn Connell, “Sexual Character”
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Week 3	
Sep. 12	Media research assignment and in-class presentation due

Unit II: The State as Site of Redress

Sep. 14	*Seneca Falls Woman’s Rights Convention, “Declaration of Sentiments” *Pauli Murray, “The Negro Woman and the Quest for Equality” *National Organization for Women, “Statement of Purpose”
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Week 4	
Sep. 19	*Keywords: “Third World/Global/Transnational Feminism” *Charlotte Bunch, “Women’s Rights as Human Rights”

Sep. 21	*Keywords: “Race/class/gender” *Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement”
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Week 5	
Sep. 26	*Iris Young, “Five Faces of Oppression”

Unit III: Culture as Politics by Other Means

Sep. 28 **Cultural text research assignment due**

*Keywords: “Epistemologies”

*Audre Lorde, “Poetry Is not a Luxury”

Week 6

Oct. 3 Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, prologue-chapter 11 (p. 3-80)

Oct. 5

Lorde, *Zami*, chapters 12-19 (p. 81-147)

Week 7

Oct. 10 Lorde, *Zami*, chapters 20-end (147-256)

Oct. 12

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, day 1

Week 8

Oct. 17 Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, day 2

Oct. 19 **No class, reading day**

Friday Oct. 20 midterm paper due, 11:59 pm

Week 9

Oct. 24 **No class, Fall Break**

Unit IV: Bodies that Matter/The Personal Is Political

Oct. 26

*Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins”

Week 10

Oct. 31 African American Policy Forum, “#Say Her Name” (6 minute video)

<https://youtu.be/M2WBu9TUmxy>

*Kimberle Crenshaw and Andrea Ritchie, “Say Her Name: Resisting Police Violence against Black Women,” Report of the African American Policy Forum

Nov. 2

Guest speaker: Rebecca Gorley, Arch City Defenders

Week 11

Nov. 7

Guest speaker reflection # 1 due

*Uma Narayan, “Cross-Cultural Connections, Border-Crossings, and ‘Death by Culture’”

Nov. 9

*Gloria Anzaldúa, excerpts from *Borderlands/La Frontera*

Week 12

Nov. 14

Guest speaker: Sara Johnson-Cardona, St. Louis Crisis Nursery

Nov. 16	*Keywords: “Bodies” *Anne Fausto-Sterling, excerpt from <i>Sexing the Body</i>
Week 13	
Nov. 21	Guest speaker reflection #2 due *Susan Wendell, “The Social Construction of Disability”
Nov. 23	No class, Thanksgiving Break
Week 14	
Nov. 28	*Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence”
Nov. 30	*Emi Koyama, “The Transfeminist Manifesto”
Week 15	
Dec. 5	TBA
Dec. 7	TBA
Dec. 14	Final paper due, 11:59 pm