

FEMINISM IN ACTION

WSTD 385

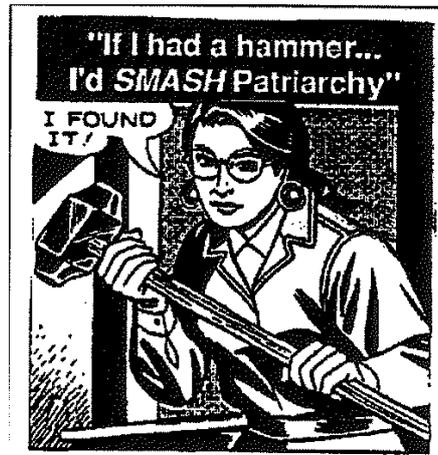
MW Padre Rubio 4

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Office Hours 4-5 Monday

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REQUIRED TEXTS:

Nancy Naples, *Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing Across Race, Class, and Gender* (Routledge 1998)

Jennifer Baumgardner & Amy Richards, *Grassroots: A Field Guide for Feminist Activism* (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2005)

Additional required texts to be posted on SLU Global.

COURSE GOALS

Thinking through the feminist concept of intersectionality, this course will encourage students to consider how different forms of oppression are woven together. The struggle for equality and justice among genders pushes us to struggle for equality between races and classes and sexualities, to work for justice in the environment and in immigration laws. Uniquely, this course will take us beyond the important work of thinking through these issues and will move headlong into the field of acting on the radical ideas we discuss. We will study grassroots models of activism, read and discuss case studies of activist accounts, and will utilize the knowledge we gain as a foundation from which to launch our own activist campaigns. Students will work alongside and learn from social justice activists in the Women's Studies Program, in the broader Saint Louis University Madrid community, and in the community of Madrid. At the same time, students will tap into their own insight and experience to launch fresh modes of activism to eradicate oppression in its many guises and to cultivate an environment of peace, equality, and tolerance. In this way, the class will directly fulfill Saint Louis University's mission to "*link University resources to local, national and international communities in collaborative efforts to alleviate ignorance, poverty, injustice and hunger; extend compassionate care to the ill and needy; and maintain and improve the quality of life for all persons.*"

This class will be a learning community where students can share struggles and strategies in their work as we also read and discuss the struggles and strategies of those who have gone before us. Student writing and student activism will be a major driving force in shaping the energy and direction that the course will take. I envision that the work begun in this course will prove to be a jumping-off point for activist projects and habits of living that we will carry on far beyond the last day of class. Student projects in the Women's Studies Program and in the community of Saint Louis University Madrid may become traditions which next year's students will enter into. Alliances

formed with social justice organizations in Madrid may continue to benefit both the University and the organization through community solidarity and energy as well as providing activist resources. Finally, the work of transforming one's life so that one's ideals and one's practices are in accord is a personal endeavor which may become a life practice that changes the way we interact with the world.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Activist Journal (15%)

Students will keep a journal throughout the course, both over the readings and over their activist work. The journal has 2 sections: "Readings" and "Actions." The "Readings" section contains your reflections on the assigned readings. At times, I will assign specific questions for your reflection and writing. Often, the direction of your writing will be up to you. The "Actions" section includes a "time log" that simply records time spent on your projects, and "reflections" that link your actions with our readings and discussions. You will turn entries in weekly, and will meet with me individually approximately 3 times over the semester to go over your journal and your progress in the course.

2. Activist Projects (approximately 10 hours each) (60%)

Throughout the course, students will participate in 3 activist projects:

One project will take place in the Women's Studies Program. Women's Studies has its roots in feminist activism and, more than most academic programs, still has a commitment to action. Your choices include: learning about and assisting with an ongoing project; contributing something new that adds to current programming; using your particular skills to advertise, fundraise, enhance the website, etc; or contributing to longer-range planning for the program. Up to half of these hours can be as participant observer in WS events.

One project will take place on the SLU campus. You may work in an ad hoc fashion on a particular issue (sexual assault policy or body image, for example), or with an existing organization, depending on what skills you are trying to gain, and what your interests are. As with Women's Studies, your goals are to learn about organizations and organizing, build your skills, and add to your experience. You may work individually or in groups.

One project involves the Madrid community. Working individually or in groups, volunteer at an agency with broadly feminist aspirations. Part of your work for this project will be research into what organizations are out there and what they are doing. Here, too, you will be a participant observer, learning from and about the agency, the staff, and the clients.

3. Class Community Involvement (15%)

Yes, this is just another way to say "Participation." I phrase it this way because, especially for this course, the success of the class will largely depend on the kind of community that is formed among the students and the instructor. Even one student (or instructor!) who is detached, habitually negative, or regularly absent can damage the community as a whole. For

this reason, it is imperative that you (and I) are *present* in class every day. This means not only that your body is here, but that you are engaged—both listening and speaking as the moment demands. Since we will only meet twice a week, **students who miss more than 3 classes will lose a half a letter grade per additional absence.**

4. Final Exam Presentation (10%)

As a final exam, students will present a synthesis of one of their projects to the class. This presentation will describe the process you went through in conceiving of and carrying out this project. The best presentations will not only use engaging formats to share their work, but will also show evidence of reflection about the process and the outcomes of the work you did. You do not only need to share how awesome your work is; you should also consider where your project may have fallen short, or where you made your biggest errors or cultural faux pas. These mistakes and what you learned from them may be of the most help to other activists.

The final exam presentations will take place on **December 19th from 3:30-6:30** and will be open to the Women's Studies community. This will provide an opportunity for the community to share in the work you have been doing, to be encouraged and inspired by it and to provide encouragement and feedback in turn.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Grades will be distributed in the following way:

Journal: 15%

Activist Projects: 60% (20% each)

Final Exam Presentation: 10%

Class Community Involvement: 15%

Of course, your performance in the course will depend on how well you are integrating all of the aspects of the course. The journal should be a vehicle to process the readings, which should complement the activist projects, and your engaged participation in class should grow organically from all of these. The final presentation will be a way to synthesize your experiences and share them with the class in a formal manner. I understand that the grade breakdown is superficial in a class of this nature. However, I keep it so I can have an 'objective' way to keep track of your progress.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Students may use laptops or iPads to read course material during class. Any student who is using this technology for other purposes (Facebook, checking email, searching the internet) will lose the privilege of using this technology in the classroom and will be required to print out the articles and journal entries for each class. Likewise, students are asked not to text during class. Using such technology during class time creates an atmosphere of distraction and disrupts the engaged community we are trying to build. I respectfully ask you to respect this community by

not misusing technology during class. Such misuse will result in a substantially lowered participation grade.

POLICY STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The following is a statement of minimum standards for student academic integrity at Saint Louis University.

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity, such as would be expected at a Jesuit, Catholic institution. As members of this community, students, faculty, and staff members share the responsibility to maintain this environment. Academic dishonesty violates it. Although not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, it can be said in general that soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of any work submitted toward academic credit is dishonest. It not only violates the mutual trust necessary between faculty and students but also undermines the validity of the University's evaluation of students and takes unfair advantage of fellow students. Further, it is the responsibility of any student who observes such dishonest conduct to call it to the attention of a faculty member or administrator.

Examples of academic dishonesty would be copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed-book exam, submitting materials authored by or editorially revised by another person but presented 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, tampering with another student's work, 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 an act of academic dishonesty.

Where there is clear indication of such dishonesty, a faculty member or administrator has the responsibility to apply appropriate sanctions. Investigations of violations will be conducted in accord with standards and procedures of the school or college through which the course or research is offered. Recommendations of sanctions to be imposed will be made to the dean of the school or college in which the student is enrolled. Possible sanctions for a violation of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University. The complete SLU Academic Honesty Policy can be found at the following link:

http://spain.slu.edu/academics/academic_advising/docs/Academic_integrity.pdf

Students with Disabilities: Any student who qualifies for special accommodations, due to presence of a disability, and feels it necessary to utilize them in order to meet the requirements of this course as outlined in the syllabus, should contact Counseling/Disability Services. Please phone the office at 91 554-5858 (Ext. 230), or send an e-mail to disabilityservices-madrid@slu.edu. Students may also stop by the Counseling/Disabilities Services Office. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Feminism in Action
Women's Studies 385
Calendar

This calendar is tentative and subject to change.

Articles to be found on SLU Global

Friday, September 2: Introductions

Introductions, Syllabus

Week 2: Sept. 5th-7th Why Feminism?

Monday: hooks article: "feminism: a transformational politic", Valenti article: from *Full Frontal Feminism* (SLU Global)

Wednesday: "The Social Construction of Gender" and "Patriarchy" (SLU Global)

Week 3: Sept. 12th-14th Why Activism? *Grassroots: A Field Guide for Feminist Activism*

Monday: xi-xxv, Chapter 1

Wednesday: Chapters 2-4

Week 4: Sept. 19th-21st *Grassroots*

Monday: Chps 5-6

Wednesday: Chp 7, Epilogue, Appendices

Week 5: Sept 26th-28th Case Studies: *Community Activism and Feminist Politics*

Monday: Chapter 3, "Reconceptualizing Agency in Domestic Violence Court" and Chapter 6, "Producing the Battered Woman: Shelter Politics and the Power of the Feminist Voice"

Wednesday: Chapter 5, "Challenging Power: Toxic Waste Protests and the Politicization of White, Working Class Women" and Chapter 9, "Class Gender and Resistance in the Appalachian Coalfields"

Week 6: October 3rd-5th

Monday: Chapter 2, "Women's Culture and Lesbian Feminist Activism: A Reconsideration of Cultural Feminism" and Chapter 12, "Creating Community: Mexican American Women in Eastside Los Angeles"

Wednesday: Chapter 4, "Conversation, Research, and Struggles over Schooling in an African American Community" and Chapter 10, "Gender, Race, and Community Activism: Competing Strategies in the Struggle for Public Education"

Week 7: Oct. 10th-12th

Monday: Discussion

Wednesday: *Nacional de Espana*: Holiday (University Closed)

Week 8: Oct. 17th-19th

Monday: Discussion

Wednesday: Deadline to submit Midterm Grades

Readings post-Midterm *To Be Announced*

Final Exam: December 19th, 3:30-6:30