



SOCI 414 - 201 (3)

Feminist Theory

Winter 2019

ANSO 134

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30 – 10:50 AM

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🕒 Office Hours: Thursdays 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM or by appointment

Academic Calendar Entry:

The emergence of feminist theory, its relationship to sociology, and the major theoretical schools of thought. The social basis and development of feminist thought from critiques of scholarship and research to contemporary debates will be addressed.

Pre-reqs: One of [SOC 100](#), [SOC 101](#), [SOC 102](#).

Course Overview:

Beginning with a short overview of a few classic texts and discussions in documentaries, this course takes its origin point in situated forms of knowledge production, particularly with respect to the intersection of feminist theory with both embodiment and the material world as well as with categories of class and race. Rather than invoking, again, standard texts from the likes of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, the core of this course involves grappling with the influence of their thought in addressing the structuring agencies of the sex/gender system and its distribution, as well as drawing from the rich array of works that seek to extend their work or to address blind spots and limitations. The resulting aim will be to see how power structures the gender/sex regime, its implication in the management of populations, and its role in shaping interactions with the environment.

Of particular interest in the assemblage of readings in this text is the question of the assumed unities of feminist theoretical and political positions, and the problems encountered in their expression. Traditions of feminist theory will thus come under question, including but not restricted to notions and discourses of progress, recognition, rights, harm, power, and marginalization.

Course Objectives & Methods:

Students will:

1. Engage complex theoretical forms of argumentation in a recursive structure (that is, one based on repetitions) in which methods such as feminist biopolitics reappear in different contexts, thereby giving students multiple engagements with central themes rather than a survey approach that seeks to cover wider ground.
2. Be able to draw out aspects of different arguments and put them to productive use in the analysis of everyday life; to be able to read and critique the methods used in scholarly writing; and to assess the strengths and limitations of various feminist strategies.

Evaluation Criteria and Grading:

Description	Weight	Due Date
Final Exam	20	Exam Period
Issues in Feminist Theory Essay (7-9 pages)	25	April 4 th
Reading Discussion Questions	5	Sign-up
Participation	15	
Reading Responses (7 @ 5 marks per response)	35	Beginning of class every Tuesday for readings assigned for that week

Late Submissions:

No extensions are allowed and there are deductions of 5% per day late. Accommodations are made for students registered with the Centre for Accessibility and those who have university recognized absences with supporting documentation.

Participation: Active engagement with course materials, peers, and the course director are essential to a successful seminar. To this end, the following factors will be taken into consideration when calculating your grade:

- *Attendance:* It is not possible to participate if not in attendance. Please contact the course director in advance if you are unable to attend class due to health or family issues. Note the penalty for missed classes increases exponentially and a zero for attendance will result in zeroes for the remaining categories.
- *Verbal Contributions:* Direct contributions that are related to course materials or engage peers and the course director.
- *Active Listening:* Allowing space for the contributions of other students and paying attention to/engaging with their comments. Domination of the class, refusal to allow others to speak, active disrespect shown to peers or the course director, or a pattern of refusal to stick to course materials will all negatively impact your grade.
- *Group participation:* Much of your participation will come from small group discussions and will be calculated from peer and self-evaluations. Groups will discuss readings and films, and submit summaries of their discussions. A copy of the form and expectations for group discussions is attached to the end of the syllabus.

Issues in Feminist Theory Essay: A close examination of an issue developed in the course readings (or of your own interest and approved by the instructor) that uses methods and concepts from the course. This can include questions concerning the function and formation of feminist politics, questions concerning the sex/gender regime and modes of dis/identification, and relevant topics taken from everyday life experiences/culture/politics. This is not a research paper: it asks you to mobilize course texts to analyse an issue. A detailed description will be provided by week 8.

Reading Discussion Questions: Questions are due on the sign up date (submit by email), with a completed hard copy to follow one week after the class discusses that reading. You will sign up to provide one set of discussion questions covering the readings assigned for one day of that week. Week 2 discussion questions are already posted to Canvas and can be used as examples to guide your work.

You must write 3 questions that can do any of the following:

- Ask for definition and clarification of a difficult concept or a difficult passage that you are struggling to understand.
 - For example, how does Haraway define “identity politics”, and what problem(s) does she pose for its use? Explain.
- A second type of question asks about the significance of a particular part of the discussion/analysis in the reading.
 - For example, “What problem does haraway identify with social constructionism? What does she hope to achieve by restoring a sense of the material world and biology?”
- A third type of question can ask a question that compares/contrasts two readings from your day or compares/contrasts your reading with another reading from a previous week.
 - For example, “How does TallBear’s engagement with DNA and genetics differ from or expand upon Haraway’s conception of materiality and embodiment?”

Your paper submission one week after the class should include a brief reflection on how your group approached the questions compared to what your thoughts were in advance. What directions did the group take and how did they help you to better understand the text? Be sure to take notes on their comments during the group discussion, and have some point form notes of what you think the answers are before you discuss it to base your comparison on. Your response should be no more than one, double spaced page that includes the questions and your reflection.

Reading Responses: 350-500 word responses for one assigned reading for the week for seven of the eleven weeks with readings. Responses *should not be summaries* of the reading. Rather, your responses should address at least one of the following:

- The significance of the text. What is the importance of the argument that the author presents? Cite and develop one key supporting element of this argument.
- Unpack a dense theoretical passage or conceptual conjuncture (a conjuncture is the connection between two elements including, but not restricted to: concepts, institutions/state practices, forms of experience/knowledge, [feminist] history).

- Or, describe the manner in which individuals or groups navigate or resist social structures outlined in the text and why this is significant.

Use the reading discussion questions posted to Canvas to orient your answers, where possible. Responses are due at the beginning of the first class for each week. Responses should be written in formal language, cite the text using consistent citation methods (do not include a works cited), and use double or 1.5 spacing. Include your name, student#, the date and a title on the upper left corner of the first page, and print on both sides if possible. Submissions can be made by email prior to the start of class if you unable to attend, but a hard copy must follow in order to be graded. Note: **You cannot submit a reading response for materials covered in the reading discussion questions assignment.**

Final Exam: a definition and essay-based exam with a selection of multiple-choice questions. Essay questions will be posted in week 12 and discussed in the final class of the semester.

At the end of the course, *STANDING DEFERRED* standing will be granted where necessary (such as serious illness or bereavement) – at which time documentation will be required.

Grading System:

This course will be graded as follows:

Percentage Grade	Letter Grade	Grade Point Score	Descriptive Term
A+	90 and above	4.33	Excellent
A	85-89	3.95-4.30	Excellent
A-	80-84	3.70-3.90	Very Good
B+	76-79	3.30-3.60	Very Good
B	72-75	2.95-3.20	Good
B-	68-71	2.65-2.90	Good
C+	64-67	2.40-2.60	Satisfactory
C	60-63	2.00-2.30	Satisfactory
C-	55-59	1.50-1.90	Satisfactory
D	50-54	1.00-1.40	Marginal
F(Fail)	49 and below		Unsatisfactory

Course Policies:

Computer (and Wireless Device) Usage

The objective of this section is to ensure that the course code of conduct, accessibility, and high standards of academic integrity and professionalism are maintained. This course does not require the use of internet or email while you are in class, and creating a non-distracting environment is of the utmost concern. As such, the following outlines the laptop policy for this class:

The **only** legitimate use of a laptop computer in SOCI 414 is note taking, unless otherwise noted by the instructor:

1. Computer use in this class is only permitted to students who have an expressed need.
2. Permission is granted through meeting with the professor.
3. Students who receive permission to use a laptop in class must sit in the designated area.

Note: You may use your phone to record lectures, so long as they are for personal use only.

Cell Phone Bonus Grade:

In order to facilitate an environment that is conducive to learning, students will earn a bonus of up to 5% on their final grade for turning in their cell phones at the front of the class *before the beginning of class*. Late arrival means no bonus. The bonus grade is calculated at a rate of 0.25% for each non-film class in which you turn in your phone. This is a voluntary program and the student assumes all risk associated with participation.

Required Materials:

Most readings are in the course pack available in the bookstore. Recommended and missing readings are posted to Canvas.

Course Schedule:

Note: The course director reserves the right to change the weekly schedule. Students will be advised in advance, and a new outline will be issued.

Note: The reading schedule is necessarily packed given the need to address a range of authors/positionalities and a depth of any given subject area. Though still subject to limitations based on the brevity of a 13 week course, the quantity of readings is likely more than most can undertake. The readings are thus a “choose your own adventure” model: you are responsible for undertaking a minimum of 40 pages of reading per week by completing one reading and reading a portion of the other. You can divide readings among your group members to spread proficiency and familiarity with weekly materials.

Week 1: Introduction

3 January

- Screening: Martha Rosler. *Semiotics of the Kitchen*. Martha Rosler, perf. 1975.

Week 2: Situated Knowledges

8 January

- Donna J. Haraway. 1991. “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Routledge. Pgs. 183-201.
- Kim TallBear. 2013. “An Indigenous, Feminist Approach to DNA Politics.” *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press. Pgs. 1-25.

10 January

- Adrienne Rich. 1980. “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence.”
- Screening: *Listening for Something...Adrienne Rich and Dionne Brand in Conversation*. 1996. Dionne Brand, dir. Canada, 56 mins.

Week 3: Black Feminisms

15 January

- June Jordan. 1985. “Report from the Bahamas.” In *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*. 3rd ed. Carole R. McCann & Seung-kyung Kim, eds. London: Routledge, 2013. Pgs. 268-276.
- The Combahee River Collective. 2017. “The Combahee River Collective: A Statement.” In *How We Got Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*. Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor, ed. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books. Pgs. 15-27.

17 January

- Screening: *A Place of Rage*. 1991. Pratibha Parmar, dir. Angela Davis, June Jordan, Alice Walker, perf. 52 mins.

Week 4: The Subject: Monstrous Feminism and the Limits of Positivist Interventions

22 January

- Barbara Creed. 1993. "Kristeva, Femininity, Abjection" & "The Femme Castatrice: *I Spit on Your Grave, Sisters*." *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge. Pgs. 8-15 & 122-139.
- Frederick Bilchert. 2018. "Jennifer's Body Would Kill if it Came Out Today." *Vice*. Oct. 23.
- Screening: *Jennifer's Body*. 2009. Karyn Kusama, dir. 102 mins.

24 January

- Sarah Banet-Weiser. 2018. "Shame: Love Yourself and Be Humiliated." *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Pgs. 65-91.

Recommended:

- Shoniqua Roach. 2017. "Black Pussy Power: Performing Acts of Black Eroticism in Pam Grier's Blaxploitation Films." *Feminist Theory*. Pgs. 1-16.

Week 5: Poststructuralism I: The Legacy of Judith Butler

29 January

- Kelly Oliver. 2001. "Identity as Subordination, Abjection, and Exclusion." *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. Pgs. 61-81.

31 January

- Kevin Floyd. 2007. "Performative Masculinity: Judith Butler and Hemingway's Labor without Capital." *The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. Pgs. 79-119.

Week 6: Poststructuralism II: The Feminist Subject and the Limits of Oppression, or, What Good is that Dead White Guy for Thinking about Questions of Sex and Sexuality?

5 February

- Wendy Brown. 1995. "Postmodern Exposures, Feminist Hesitations." *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Pgs. 30-51.

7 February

- Sarah Schulman. 2016. "Abandoning the Personal: The State and the Production of Abuse." *Conflict is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility and the Duty of Repair*. Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press. Pgs. Tbd.

Week 7: Poststructuralism III: Biopolitics & The Legacy of Michel Foucault

12 February

- Wendy Brown. 2015. "Revising Foucault: *Homo Politicus* and *Homo Oeconomicus*." *Undoing the Demos*. Pgs. 79-111.

14 February

- Ann Laura Stoler. 1995. "Placing Race in *The History of Sexuality*." *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Pgs. 19-54.

Week 8: Poststructuralism IV: Biopolitics, Race, & Regimes of Representation

26 February

- Celine Parreñas Shimizu. 2007. "The Sexual Bonds of Racial Stardom: Asian American Femme Fatales in Hollywood." *The Hypersexuality of Race: Performing Asian/American Women on Screen and Scene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Pgs. Tbd.

28 February

- Alexander Weheliye. 2014. "Deprivation: Pornotropes." *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Pgs. 89-112.

Week 9: Poststructuralism V: Disidentifications

5 March

- Jose Estaban Muñoz. 1999. "Performing Disidentity: Disidentification as a Practice of Freedom." Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. Pgs. Tbd.

7 March

- Lauren Berlant & Lee Edelman. 2013. "Sex without Optimism." *Sex, or the Unbearable*. 1-34.

Week 10: Feminist Philosophy & Anthropocene Feminism

12 March

- Luce Irigaray. 1999. "Chapter 1." *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*. Trans. Mary Beth Mader. University of Texas Press. Pgs. Tbd.

14 March

- Mishuana R. Goeman. 2017. "Ongoing Storms and Struggles: Gendered Violence and Resource Exploitation." In *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*. Joanne Barker, ed. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Pgs. 99-123.

Week 11: Slow Violence: Neoliberal Extractivism

19 March

- Lynne Huffer. 2017. "Foucault's Fossils: Life Itself and the Return to Nature in Feminist Philosophy." In *Anthropocene Feminism*. Richard Grusin, ed. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. Pgs. 65-88.

21 March

- Donna J. Haraway. 2016. "Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene." *Staying with the Trouble*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Pgs. 30-57.

Week 12: Abjection, Writing, and the Self

26/28 March

- Stacy Alaimo. 2010. "Material Memoirs: Science, Autobiography, and the Substantial Self." *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. Pgs. 85-112.

Week 13: Course Summary/Exam Pre

2 April

4 April

SOCI 414 Group Participation Evaluation Form

Name _____

Student Name	Attendance 10 marks	Contributions 10 marks	Active Listening 10 marks	Total 30 marks	Comments

Note: The average for the total column for all students combined cannot be higher than 25.
 Exceptions must be approved by the course instructor.

Evaluation Rubric

Attendance (Note: Poor attendance will affect other categories).

- Missed 0-1 discussions 10
- Attended all but two discussions 8
- Missed 3-4 discussions 6-7
- Missed 5 or more discussions 0

Contributions

- Excellent: Always contributes with references to text and course materials, stays on topic 9
- Very Good: Regular contributions with readings done most of the time, stays on topic 8
- Good: Contributes sometimes, makes occasional reference to readings, might stray 7
- Satisfactory: Occasional contributions, some reference to readings, might stray 6
- Poor: Rarely contributes, never references readings, strays from topic 0-5

Active Listening

- Excellent: Listens and responds to peers, integrates ideas, does not dominate group 8-9
- Good: Might get distracted on occasion, might dominate at times, but generally good 7
- Fair: Disregards ideas from others, might be distracted or uninterested, might dominate 5-6
- Poor: Does not allow space for others to talk or very uninterested, too cool for school 0-5