

WS001: AN INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN'S STUDIES
Course Syllabus

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Course Description:

Women's Studies employs an interdisciplinary set of tools for analyzing women's experiences and studies the ways that sex and gender manifest themselves in social, cultural and political contexts. As an introduction to Women's Studies, this course is designed to:

1. Acquaint you with some key issues, questions and debates in the field of Women's Studies
2. Introduce you to some of the frameworks and concepts feminist scholars have developed
3. Hone your ability to analyze arguments and "read" gender
4. Increase awareness of the history and experience of women as half the world's population.

This course will concentrate on the experiences of women in the United States but, on occasion, we will broaden our scope.

This course does not only consider differences between women and men, but also explores differences among women. The readings and discussion will be designed to examine ideas about race, class, sexuality and other aspects of identity in addition to gender. Together we will discuss the relationships among these categories, and will analyze when and how such categories operate.

There is no single way to understand the controversial issues touched on in this course. Disagreement and debate are not only present in society at large, but are an important part of the theory and practice of Women's Studies. It is important to keep in mind throughout the course that there is no such thing as "the" feminist understanding of issues we will be covering; feminists are a diverse and complicated group. The goal is to expose you to some feminist tools for understanding and analyzing social phenomena, and to help you develop a more critically informed perspective on the issues.

Required Texts:

Shaw, Susan and Janet Lee (2004) *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (2nd Edition) New York: McGraw Hill (noted as WVFV on your syllabus)

And

hooks, bell (2000) *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press. (noted as FIFE on your syllabus)

And

Bust Guide to the New Girl Order. (noted as BUST on your syllabus)

And

Electronic Readings (noted as ER on your syllabus)

In addition to the required texts, you need to have an active PSU account and internet access to our course website www.nataliejolly.com/ws001. You will need to check our website regularly, preferably prior to each class. During the course of the semester I will be in contact with the class via email to send course and individual announcements. You will also find yourself using e-mail and the course message board functions to communicate with me as well as with other students in the class.

Course Format:

In many ways this course will be both self directed and self propelling—you will get out of it what you put into it. Understanding the world from the point of view of women is something very new for most of us. It is a slow and gradual process that, much like learning to walk, can only be accomplished once you learn the steps. Each step is crucial and only you can take it for yourself. Further, each step is cumulative; each day builds on the previous day. As a result, I have designed this course to foster daily, active learning on your part—all assignments, including the written ones, will ask you to “do” women’s studies. You will find, therefore, that rather than having heavily weighted assignments due only once or twice during the term, the workload in this course will be smaller but continuous, with a wider variety of evaluative activities. Thus, this course will be run more seminar style than a traditional lecture format. In addition to individual reading, writing, and discussion, you will engage in a variety of other activities.

Attendance:

Regular attendance is expected and required. You may miss three (3) classes without incurring an attendance penalty. Students more than fifteen (15) minutes late to class will be considered absent. *I do not give excused absences so use your three wisely.* After three absences your final grade will be lowered for poor attendance, one grade per day, down to and including “F.” This is University policy. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get the notes from the website; I will not provide this material but am happy to answer any questions you may have during office hours. Students who have a record of perfect attendance will receive extra credit for their effort.

Required Assignments:

You will risk failing the course if you do not complete all of the following assignments.

Service Project Assignments & FORUM Presentation:	30%
Critical Reflection Papers:	20%
Weekly Quizzes and Discussion Questions:	15%
Online and In Class Participation:	20%
Synthesis Presentation:	10%
Summary Notes Posting:	5%

Service Project & FORUM Presentation:

(30% of your grade)

The discipline of Women's Studies is concerned with the intersection of scholarship and service and strives to find innovative ways to bridge the two. In an attempt to further this mission, you will have the opportunity to embark upon a **service learning project** informed by your growing knowledge of feminism and feminist thinking. Simply put, you will be using concepts and ideas presented in readings and discussion to examine your experiences of providing community service (20 hours total time over the semester) to a local agency, community group or campus organization. In this time your group will work on a much needed service project for the organization, which could range from preparing a new info pamphlet to creating new outreach programs. You will be required to submit your service project preferences online (a list of service agency options is available on the course website) and will be assigned into groups depending on your preference and project availability. Everyone will be required to share their final project with classmates and the Penn State community at the **Undergraduate FORUM on April 12 in the HUB-Robeson Alumni Hall**. See <http://womensstudies.la.psu.edu/UgradForum/forumapril13.htm> for photos of past FORUM projects. This group project will demonstrate individual as well as group research and critical thinking about women's studies and feminism and apply that thinking to real world issues. Throughout the semester you and your group will consult with each other as well as meet with me about this assignment. Additionally, course time throughout the semester has been set aside to work on this project, but do not expect that the entire project can be completed during class time. Finally, you will be required to submit a critical reflection essay (4-5 pages) that summarizes your experiences and incorporates other course material into your reflection.

Of Note: Because these service agencies have been generous enough to donate their valuable time and energy to working with this class, any student who's behavior compromises the reputation of the project will receive a grade of "F" for this class.

Critical Reflection Papers:

(20% of your grade)

This course aims to sharpen your critical reflection skills, and one of the many ways I will encourage this is through a variety of critical reflection papers. You will be required to critically reflect on one set of the course readings and on one of the out-of-class film. Critical reflection papers should not merely summarize the topic. Instead, you should aim to:

Introduce one or two topics that you found interesting and deserving of further attention

Analyze these ideas and discuss their relation to feminism

Synthesize your chosen subject matter with other class readings and course themes

Reflect on how this subject matter may relate to your life and the life of others as well as popular culture in general

1 themed reading reflection* (10%) This 4-5 page paper should aim to go beyond a mere summary of each of the daily readings. Instead you should work to analyze, evaluate and synthesize these works and explore the underlying concepts and core themes that run through each of the readings.

1 film reflection (10%) This 4-5 page paper should aim to go beyond a mere summary of the movie. Instead you should work to situate the basic premise of the film within the context of the course. Try to draw on concepts discussed in class or in course readings to help you locate this particular work in a larger framework. See the course website for a list of film screening dates and times.

Weekly Quizzes and Discussion Questions:
(15% of your grade)

Weekly Quiz:

Before class each week, you will be required to go onto our class website and take an open book and open note quiz. You need to take your quiz before class on Tuesday. The quiz will always be available after the previous Thursday's class, and you may take the quiz anytime after Thursday's class and before Tuesday's class. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped and I will average the remaining quiz grades to compute your final quiz grade.

These quizzes may contain multiple choice and/or true/false questions. This is a reading and discussion intensive course, so the best preparation for the quizzes will include close readings of the texts on your own and regular class attendance. If you know you will not be able to take a quiz you must consult with me **in person prior to the quiz period** to make alternative arrangements. **NO MAKE UP QUIZZES WILL BE OFFERED AFTER THE DESIGNATED QUIZ PERIOD.**

Weekly Discussion Questions:

When you take your weekly quiz, you will be required to submit one discussion question generated from the reading assignments for that week. You will need to generate this question from a close reading of the assigned texts or from a current event that you feel is relevant to material covered in our course that week. This discussion question should be an insightful observation or a critical reflection that is capable of generating thoughtful class discussion.

Course Participation:
(20% of your grade)

Participation in this course involves both in class and online contributions. You are required to come to class ready to participate. Your informed, articulate participation in class discussions on a weekly basis is the only way to ensure full participation credit. However, though this is a discussion based class it is important to note that I grade on the quality of comments more so than on the quantity of responses given. You are also expected to post a comment, response, or summary at least **once a week** (about 15 over the course of the semester) on the online Message Board. These posts should focus on the material covered in class that week and attempt to relate current course material with your service project. You may also use the message board to respond to a student's or to students' previous post(s) and/or relate course material with other current events. Each post should be about a paragraph long. For more details see the online Message Board page on our course website. Remember, spirited participation both in class and online may help borderline grades, as may visiting my office hours.

Synthesis Presentation:*
(10% of your grade)

At one point during the semester your service learning group will be required to present a synthesis of the assigned reading for that day and a summary of their service learning project. Each group should use this time to present the class with a brief overview of their planned service work and find ways to connect their project with the reading assigned for that day. Your group should touch on the overarching theme that runs through the readings and connect those themes to the service work. You are free to decide how this presentation will be made, but consider your audience and try to make the presentation as appealing as possible. Remember, creativity counts—try to think of innovative ways to engage us in your synthesis presentation.

Summary Notes Posting:*

(5% of your grade)

Each student will be responsible for signing up to take class notes and post them online at one point during the semester. There will be two students responsible for note-taking during each class, and these students should coordinate a synthesized, collaborative posting that includes a summary of announcements, a definition of new terms introduced and a general overview of class discussion. These notes should provide a map of the class conversation and can be used in the event of an absence or as a resource when writing your critical reflection assignments. Postings should be made (by emailing me a MSWord attachment) before the meeting of the next class.

* Your critical reading reflection, service synthesis presentation and note-taking posting cannot happen on the same day. Each assignment must be completed on a different day.

Plagiarism and any other cheating will result in a grade of F for this course and possible expulsion from the University. Refer to the class website for tips on how to cite sources appropriately and honestly.

Your continued presence in this classroom implies your acceptance of these policies.

Week 1 Introducing Feminism- *Feminism is the radical notion that women are people*

Tuesday, January 11

Introduction to class materials and policies

Thursday, January 13

Homework Due:

Buy course textbooks *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions* (WVWV) and *Feminism is for Everybody* (FIFE) and *Bust Guide to the New Girl Order* (BUST)

Logon to the course website www.ws001.nataliejolly.com and read about service projects.

Submit your 3 choices for service projects & reading reflection & note-taking assignments.

Reading Due:

FIFE Introduction (p. vii-x)

WVWV A Day Without Feminism (p. 30-33)

BUST Our Womanly Ways (p. 1-7)

Week 2 Learning the Language- *Feminism spoken here*

Tuesday, January 18

Homework Due:

Surf around the course website and become familiar with the message board

Reading Due:

FIFE Feminist Education for Critical Consciousness (p. 19-24)

WVWV Claiming An Education (p. 28-30)

ER Service Learning and Women's Studies

Thursday, January 20

Homework Due:

Use the message board to contact your group members, appoint/elect a group liaison and select times for your first meeting.

Reading Due:

FIFE Sisterhood is Powerful (p. 13-18)
WVWV Constitutional Argument (p. 479-480)
BUST Girl on Girls (p. 303-310)

Week 3 Feminism & the Media- *what are you looking at?*

Tuesday, January 25

Homework Due:

Your group liaison should contact your service agency representative with 3 possible group meeting times.

Schedule meeting with your service agency representative

Reading Due:

FIFE Feminist Politics (p. 1-6)
BUST A Vindication of the Rights of Cunt (p. 298-301)
ER The Next Feminist Generation
www.bitchmagazine.com (be sure to check out the *about bitch* section)
www.thirdwavefoundation.org (read about their *I Spy Sexism* campaign)

Thursday, January 27

Homework Due:

Your group needs to meet with your service agency representative by the end of the week

Reading Due:

BUST Media Whores (p. 265-272) & Bitch on Heels (p. 283-285)
www.about-face.org
www.mediareporttowomen.com/statistics.htm

Week 4 Learning Gender- *sugar and spice and everything nice...*

Tuesday, February 1

Homework Due:

Begin thinking about your Service Project Outline

Reading Due:

WVWV Learning Gender (p. 113-126) & Social Construction of Gender (p. 129-132)

Thursday, February 3

Homework Due:

Continue to work on your Service Project

Finalize your Service Project Outline

Reading Due:

WVWV X: A Fabulous Child's Story (p. 127-129)
BUST (p. 183-188) & (p. 189-192) & (p. 202-208)

In Class: Second Mile Synthesis Presentation

Week 5 Men and Masculinity- *The tough guise*

Tuesday, February 8

Homework Due:

Submit your Service Outline; see the website for more details

Reading Due:

FIFE Feminist Masculinity (p. 67-71)
WVWV Shame Guilt and Responsibility (p. 52-55)
BUST Men are from Uranus (p. 125-131)

Thursday, February 10

Homework Due:

Prepare your Service Project

Reading Due:

No assigned reading

In Class: Service Project Work Day (Attendance Required)

Week 6 Sex and Sexuality- Come out, come out wherever you are

Tuesday, February 15

Homework Due:

Continue to work on your Service Project

Reading Due:

FIFE A Feminist Sexual Politic (p. 85-92)

WVWV Politics of Sexuality (p. 158-161)

BUST Betty & Celina Part II (p. 93-96)

In Class: Planned Parenthood Synthesis Presentation

Thursday, February 17

Homework Due:

Continue to work on your Service Project

Reading Due:

FIFE Total Bliss (p. 93-99)

WVWV Social Construction of Sexuality (p. 153-158) & La Guera (p. 186- 190)

<http://www.siecus.org/pubs/fact/fact0013.html>

In Class: LGBTQA Synthesis Presentation

Week 7 Reproductive Rights- If you cut off my reproductive choice, can I cut off yours?

Tuesday, February 22

Homework Due:

Submit your Service Project Rough Draft; see the website for more details

Reading Due:

FIFE Our Bodies, Ourselves (p. 25-30)

WVWV Reproductive Choice (p. 246-259)

BUST Abortion Story (p. 242-247)

www.naral.org/generation/index.cfm (surf 'Walk in her shoes' & FAQ about Choice)

In Class: Voices4Choice Synthesis Presentation

Thursday, February 24

Homework Due:

Prepare your Service Project

Reading Due:

No assigned reading

In Class: Service Project Work Day (Attendance Required)

Week 8 Violence Against Women- *Men of quality respect women's equality*

Tuesday, March 1

Homework Due:

Schedule an update meeting with your service agency representative

Continue to work on your Service Project

Reading Due:

WVFW Fraternities and Collegiate Rape Culture (p. 444-449) & Rape (p. 430-432)
& Supremacy Crimes (p. 441-444)

www.rainn.org/statistics.html

www.mencanstoprape.org

In Class: Center for Women Students Synthesis Presentation

Thursday, March 3

Homework Due:

Update meeting with your service agency representative

Continue to work on your Service Project

Reading Due:

ER Katie's Story

Week 9 Spring Break- Enjoy!

Week 10 Violence Against Women- *Men of quality respect women's equality*

Tuesday, March 15

Homework Due:

Submit your Service Formal Report; see website for more details

Reading Due:

FIFE Ending Violence (p.61-66)

WVFW Battering & Physical Abuse (p. 443-446) & Letter from a Battered Wife (p. 449-451) & Lisa's Ritual (p. 452)

BUST The World Moves (p. 208-209)

ER The One You Hoped I'd Write (poem)

www.ndvh.org

In Class: Women's Resource Center Synthesis Presentation

Thursday, March 17

Homework Due:

Prepare your Service Project

Reading Due:

No assigned reading

In Class: Service Project Work Day (Attendance Required)

Week 11 Women in the Public Sphere- *A women's place is in the House and Senate*

Tuesday, March 22

Homework Due:

Continue to work on your service project and begin your FORUM design

Reading Due:

FIFE Women and Work (p. 48-54)

WVFW Paid Labor (p.328-338) & Living in McJobdom (p. 352-358)

Thursday, March 24

Homework Due:

Continue to work on your service project and FORUM design

Reading Due:

WVFW What Is Sexual Harassment? (p. 331) & Hey, Why Don't You Wear A Shorter Skirt? (p. 359-370)

Week 12 Women and Poverty- *Oh, so that explains the difference in our salaries*

Tuesday, March 29

Homework Due:

Submit your Service Design Schematic; see website for more details

Reading Due:

WVFW Public Policy (p. 473-474) & The Rhetoric and Reality of Welfare Reform (p. 493-505)
ER Women and Poverty

In Class: Housing Transitions & Food Bank Synthesis Presentation

Thursday, March 31

Homework Due:

Prepare your Service Project

Reading Due:

No assigned reading

In Class: Service Project Work Day (Attendance Required)

Week 13 Feminist Activism- *You say I'm a bitch like it's a bad thing*

Tuesday, April 5

Homework Due:

Continue to work on your Service Project & FORUM Presentation

Reading Due:

FIFE Global Feminism (p. 44-47)
WVFW The Promise of Feminist Education (p. 552-564)

In Class: AIDS Project Synthesis Presentation

Thursday, April 7

Homework Due:

Continue to work on your Service Project & FORUM Presentation

Reading Due:

WVFW Literature and the Arts (p. 395-399) & Poetry is not a Luxury (p. 402-404)
ER Activism Handout

Week 14 FORUM Week

Tuesday, April 12 **FORUM PROJECT PRESENTATION (12-3 HUB-Robeson Alumni Hall)**

Homework Due:

Finalize your FORUM Presentation

Reading Due:

No assigned reading

In Class: No Class today- enjoy the FORUM!

Thursday, April 14

Homework Due:

Decompress after your FORUM Presentation

Work on your FORUM Reflection Essay

Reading Due:

No assigned reading

In Class: Discussion and Reflection on the FORUM

Week 15 Special Topics in Feminism

Tuesday, April 19

Homework Due:

Submit your FORUM Reflection Essay

Reading Due:

WVFFV Prostitution (p. 376-379) & Confessions of a Feminist Porno Star (p. 421-422) & Pornography and Freedom (p. 452-456) & The Internet and Global Prostitution (p. 456-460)

BUST Lesson Number One (p. 104-109)

Thursday, April 21

Homework Due:

Work on your Film Reflection

Reading Due:

ER Midwifery in the US and Europe

www.midwiferytoday.com/articles/homebirthissues.asp?a=1&q=homebirth

www.midwiferytoday.com/articles/qg50.asp?a=1&q=homebirth

Week 16 The Future of Feminism- *does the F-word make you nervous?*

Tuesday, April 26

Homework Due:

Work on your Film Reflection

Reading Due:

FIFE To Love Again (p. 100-104) & Visionary Feminism (p. 110-118)

WVFFV Real Men Join the Movement (p. 568-572) & A Day With Feminism (p. 589-592)

Thursday, April 28

Homework Due:

Submit Film Reflection

Submit Forum Group Grades

Reading Due:

No Assigned Reading

In Class: semester reflection and discussion