

January 30, 2002

## **FEMINIST THEORY: GENDER JUSTICE**

Women's Studies 307

Spring 2002

Knapp 301, 3:00-4:20, Tu/Thur

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**Course Content:** This course examines various ways of understanding gender by looking at a variety of theories and philosophical perspectives within feminist thought, especially as it is formed by political philosophy. The course is divided into three sections. The first section introduces students to feminist theorizing by studying the connection between theory and political action in terms of the formation of public policies and practices. This section focuses on major theories in feminism and the intersection of theories of race, class, and gender. The second part of the course examines the application of theories to social analysis and political action. This is done by focusing on four basic issues: (1) justice and feminist legal discussions, (2) truth and feminist scientific discussions, (3) ethics and everyday practices, and (4) narrative and cultural analyses. The third part of the course is an examination and application of the major theories employed by feminists in American public life and international politics. Throughout the course students are invited to become increasingly reflective about how the theories they employ articulate a political ethic. In this regard the fourth section is also a component that is present throughout the course although it will receive greater emphasis in the closing parts of the course.

The focus on the United States emphasizes the ways in which analyses lead to actions, change, and new policies as well as new practices. This type of analysis recognizes that readers embody active citizenship. It is a premise of the course that theories reflect social practices and offer ways of understanding problems and that problems and social practices enable us to develop new theories. Hence, there is a two-way street between theory and action.

The emphasis on justice stresses developing concrete proposals to move closer to social practices that create justice for men and women in both the private realm--the family--and the public realm--the world of politics including work, culture, and governance. Students will be encouraged to develop their own positions on the issues discussed and to develop solutions to the basic problems presently facing the American polity in terms of its realization of gender justice.

Five basic questions that will be asked about each theory and the way in which it constructs a political understanding are:

(1) What is the definition of human nature articulated in the theory? Especially, how are male and female differences, ethnicities, classes, and sexualities understood?

(2) Community, Family, and Self: How does the theory proposed envision community, family, and the self in a cosmological relationship? What roles do language and reason play in forming everyday practices?

(3) Justice and Politics: What model of ethics and just action does the theory advocate?

(4) Social Change: How does the theory explain social change?

(5) Truth: How does the model understand truth and knowledge production?

Other questions will be developed within the context of class discussions.

**Course Goals:** The course has three goals. The first is for students to understand the variety of theories which compose feminist theory in order to analyze gender issues in both American society and in international contexts. Second, students will be encouraged to develop skills in analysis so that they can analyze gender issues from a variety of theoretical perspectives. Third, students will develop skills in reflection so that they can develop their own positions on the important gender issues confronting citizens today and so that they can take part in social changes that make societies better.

**Prerequisite:** Students will need to have taken one course in Women's Studies before signing up for this course. This one course can be a cross-listed course with women's studies and could have been taken either as a Women's Studies course or as a course under a department listings. The course serves as a core course in women's studies for both minors and majors.

**Pedagogy:** This course has a commitment to collaborative learning and begins with the assumption that the classroom is a learning community. As a part of this learning process, there will be lectures as well as classroom discussions. The instructor will upon occasion make available to the students her own research for critical reflection and discussion. A variety of positions will be discussed to encourage respectful discussions of different understandings of social life. The class will include guest professors who teach in the Denison Women's Studies Program so that students will see the variety of theories that these scholars use in their work.

**Course Requirements:** Students will be expected to be involved in shaping class discussions. Students are encouraged both to follow the arguments in the texts and to be critical of them. There will be two in-class essay exams and a final exam. There will be one take home exam/paper and one reflective paper. Daily assignments may well include brief written reflections, quizzes, and other activities that students find helpful in producing an active learning environment. Each student will be asked to take special responsibility in the introduction of terms to the class and tables that describe the international situation of women. Students often find that making brief notes on the readings makes it possible for them to comprehend the material more fully as well as to participate in class discussions. Class discussions and lectures will assume that the material has been covered before class. These activities will be shaped by the class.

**Evaluation:** Students will be expected to be prepared for each class by completing the reading assignment for that class. Students are expected to arrive on time prepared to discuss the readings for each class. The final grade will be calculated on the following basis:

1. 20 % Short Essay Exam on Theorizing and Political Ideologies
2. 20% Short Essay Exam on the Application of Theories to Policies and Practices
2. 25 % Final Exam-Comprehensive
3. 15 % Daily Class-work: Participation and Readings
4. 5% on presentation of terms and tables
5. 5% Take Home Exam: Applies Feminism Theory to bell hooks
6. 10% Paper that Applies an Issue: Responding at the Personal Reflective Level and at the Level of Public Political Ethics.

**Texts:**

Baer, Judith, *Our Lives Before the Law: Constructing a Feminist Jurisprudence*, Princeton: New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Boles, Janet K. & Diane Long Hoeveler, *From the Goddess to the Glass Ceiling*. Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books, 1996.

Buker, Eloise, *Talking Feminist Politics*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

bell hooks, *Where We Stand*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Meyers, Diana Tietjens, ed. *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*, New York: Routledge, 1997.

Seager, Joni, ed. *The State of Women in the World Atlas*. London: Penguin Books, 1997.

## I. Feminist Political Theories and Practice in Theorizing

Tuesday, Jan. 15 - What is feminist theory? What theories have “we” encountered and what do we do with them politically? What is the connection between theory and political action? What types of citizens are “we”?

Charts: Seager, Joni - *The State of Women in the World Atlas*, Charts 1 & 2.

Thursday, Jan. 17 - **What theories have you encountered at Denison? How do you use theory?**

Readings: Meyers, Diana Tietjens - *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*

Hartsock, Nancy C. M. - “The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism,” pp. 461-483.

bell hooks - *Where We Stand* - “Class Matters,” pp. 1-9, “Making the Personal Political - Class in the Family,” pp. 10-23.

### Convocation, Thursday, January 17 - 7:30pm, Slayter Auditorium

Professor Nancy C.M. Hartsock - “Feminist Epistemologies: Power, Knowledge, and Objectivity”

Associate Professor Christina F. Brinkley, Simmons College - “Womanist/Feminist Social Science”

**Monday, January 21** - No Classes - *Martin Luther King Day*

Tuesday, Jan. 22 - **How do race, class and gender intersect?**

Readings: bell hooks - “Coming To Class Consciousness,” pp. 24-37, “Class and the Politics of Living Simply,” pp. 38-49, “Money Hungry,” pp. 50-62, “The Politics of Greed,” pp. 63-69, “Being Rich,” pp. 70-79.

Boles, Janet K., *From the Goddess to the Glass Ceiling*, pp. 39-52, Lindsey

Charts: Seager, Joni - *The State of Women in the World Atlas*, Charts 28 & 26, 30 & 31, Emily and Noelle

Thursday, January 24 - **What does material feminism tell us about our life?**

Readings: bell hooks - “The Me-Me Class - The Young and the Ruthless,” pp. 80-88, “Class and Race - The New Black Elite,” pp. 89-100, “Feminism and Class Power,” pp. 101-110.

Boles, pp. 53-66.

Charts: Seager - *The State of Women in the World Atlas*, Chart 27.

Tuesday, January 29 - **How does class shape gender ?**

Readings: bell hooks - "Class Claims - Real Estate Racism," pp. 131-141, "Crossing Class Boundaries," pp. 142-155, "Living with Class Hierarchy," pp. 156-164.  
Boles, pp. 67-80.

Draft of Paper due in Class on Tuesday: Consultations on Paper 4:30-5:30, Tuesday, Jan. 29

**Paper Due Friday - February 1 - by 3:00**

Tuesday, Feb. 5 - **What is Marxist Feminism?**

Readings: Meyers, Diana Tietjens - *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*  
Young, Iris Marion - "Is Male Gender Identity the Cause of Male Domination?,"  
pp. 21-37.  
MacKinnon, Catharine - "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory," pp. 64-91.  
Boles, pp. 81-94.

Thursday, February 7 - **What is Psychoanalytic Feminism?**

Readings: Meyers - *Feminist Social Thought*  
Chodorow, Nancy - "Gender, Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective,"  
pp. 7-20.  
Abel, Elizabeth - "Race, Class, and Psychoanalysis? Opening Questions," pp. 180-198.  
Irigaray, Luce - "And the One Doesn't Stir Without the Other," pp. 320-327.  
Boles, pp. 108-121.

Tuesday, February 12 - **What is Radical Feminism?**

Readings: Meyers, Diana Tietjens - *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*  
Frye, Marilyn - "Some Reflections on Separatism and Power," pp. 406-414.  
Card, Claudia - "Gender and Moral Luck," pp. 646-663.  
Jaggar, Alison M. - "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology,"  
pp. 384-405.  
Boles, pp. 122-135.  
Charts: Seager - *The State of Women in the World Atlas*, Charts 13, 14, 16.

Thursday, February 14 - **What is Postmodern Feminism?**

Readings: Meyers, Diana Tietjens - *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*  
 Haraway, Donna - "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist  
 Feminism in the 1980s," pp. 501-531.  
 Butler, Judith - "Excerpt from *Gender Trouble*," pp. 112-128.  
 Boles, pp. 136-149.  
 Charts: Seager, Joni - *The State of Women in the World Atlas*, Charts 32, 33, 34.

Tuesday, February 19 - **What are the politics of Liberal Feminism?**

Readings: Meyers, Diana Tietjens - *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*  
 Baier, Annette - "Trust and Antitrust," pp. 604-629.  
 Held, Virginia - "Feminism and Moral Theory," pp. 630-645.  
 Williams, Wendy W. - "The Equality Crisis: Some Reflections on Culture, Courts and  
 Feminism," pp. 695-713.  
 Boles, pp. 95-107, 150-163  
 Charts: Seager, Joni - *The State of Women in the World Atlas*, Charts 19, 20, 23, 24.

Thursday, February 21 - **Review**

**Tuesday, February 26 - Exam**

**II. Applying Theories to Political Action, Policy, and Personal Life**

Thursday, February 28 - **How does the law shape society?**

Readings: Baer, Judith A. - *Our Lives Before the Law*  
 Introduction, pp. 3-15.  
 "Is Law Male? The Foundations of Feminist Jurisprudence," pp. 16-38.  
 Boles, pp. 164-180.

Tuesday, March 5 - **How does the law gender society?**

Readings: Baer - "What Makes Law Male? Gendered Jurisprudence and Feminist Critique,"  
 pp. 39-70.  
 "How is Law Male? Gendered Method and Feminist Response," pp. 71-94.  
 Boles, pp. 181-200.

Thursday, March 7 - **How do feminists use the law for politics?**

Readings: Baer - "Reconstructing Equality: Feminist Constitutional Doctrine," pp. 97-123.  
Boles, pp. 201-219.

## -----**Spring Break**-----

**March 9 to March 17**

Tuesday, March 19 - **What is responsible citizenship?**

Readings: Baer - "Reconstructing Rights: Feminist Reproductive Freedom," pp. 124-150.  
"Reconstructing Responsibility: Feminist Fetal Protection," pp.151-175.  
Boles, pp. 220-239.

Thursday, March 21 - **Open**

Tuesday, March 26 - **Are we in a postliberal society?**

Reading: Baer - "Toward a Feminist Postliberalism," pp. 176-201.  
Boles, pp. 240-256.

Thursday, March 28 - Exam

Tuesday, April 2 - **How is legal talk connected to just action?**

Readings: Buker, Eloise - *Talking Feminist Politics*  
"Listening to Three Feminist Conversations: Law, Science, and the Postmodern,"  
pp.1-15.  
"Feminist Legal Discourse: Embodied Laws and Contested Authorities," pp. 23-46.  
"Reconstructing Legal Discourse: Feminist Possibilities," pp. 47-62.  
Boles, pp. 257-270.

Thursday, April 4 - **How does science shape understandings of the truth?**

Readings: Buker, Eloise - *Talking Feminist Politics*  
"Judgments and Politics: Citizens and Justice in Everyday Life," pp. 63-74.  
"Feminist Scientific Discourse: Knowing Metaphors and Images," pp. 85-100.  
"Rhetorical Moves: Science as Storytelling," pp. 101-116.  
"A Reflective Feminist Science: Scientist-Citizens and Public Policies," pp. 117-135.  
Boles, pp. 271-290

Tuesday, April 9 - **How can a playful postmodern politics liberate citizens?**

Readings: Buker, Eloise - *Talking Feminist Politics*  
 "Critical Feminism: Putting-Off and Putting-On the Postmodern," pp. 143-164.  
 "Gender-Sex Plays: A Metaphorical Reformation of Public Policies," pp. 165-187.  
 Boles, pp. 291-301.

Thursday, April 11 - **How can storytelling create just practices?**

Readings: Buker, Eloise - *Talking Feminist Politics*  
 "Talking Our Way Along: Ethics and Politics," pp. 189-206.  
 Boles, pp. 301-307.

Tuesday, April 16 - **How do stories limit "us"?**

Readings: Buker - "Feminist Stories and a New Politics: Justice, Truth, and Ethics,"  
 pp. 207-225.

Thursday, April 18 - **How do Sex and Race work in Philosophy and Law?**

Readings: Meyers - *Feminist Social Thought*  
 Lugones, Maria - "Playfulness, "world"-Traveling, and Loving Perception,"  
 pp. 147-159.  
 Crenshaw, Kimberle Williams - "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism  
 and 2 Live Crew," pp. 245-263.

Tuesday, April 23 - **What is a democratic responsible citizenship? - Review and Evaluation**

Reflective Paper due: "My Feminist Theory"

Thursday, April 25 - Open

**Tuesday, May 7 - Final Exam (2:00 - 4:00pm) Knapp 301**