

McGill University
Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies
WMST 200: Introduction to Women's Studies
Lectures: Fridays 1:35-3:35 PM, ARTS W-120
Fall 2013

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Teaching Assistants:

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Course Description

This course introduces students to theoretical positions and topical issues in the broad, interdisciplinary field of Women's Studies, primarily within a Canadian context. This course aims to demonstrate how "women" is applied as a social and political category imbued with certain, yet contested meanings depending on place and time, and cannot usefully be considered a self-evident effect of biology. Students are introduced to a variety of analytical tools and topical intersections that will encourage them to challenge seemingly natural and obvious truth claims regarding the meanings of gender, sex, sexuality, and feminism in contemporary societies. Course themes include: activism; violence; the body; and sexuality. Students will have opportunities to engage with course themes through academic, activist, and creative approaches.

Lectures

In lectures, you are expected to listen actively. This involves taking notes (either on paper or on your laptop) and thinking about how the topic under discussion relates to the assigned readings and key concepts introduced in class. You are encouraged to find connections between what we learn about in class and materials discussed in prior weeks or in other classes that you might be taking. Active listening is not possible if you are, for example, texting, checking Facebook or your email, or talking to the person beside you. Please do not do these things during lecture because they will distract you, and these activities also disrespect the people around you who are in class to learn actively. We will also use some of our lecture time to view films and videos; engage in small and large group discussion; hear guest speakers; discuss current events; and—maybe—rant. Powerpoint slides used during the lecture will be posted to the course website (on MyCourses) following the class.

Conferences

In addition to attending lectures, you will also sign up to attend one conference session. Conferences will begin the week of September 16. *Only attend the conference session that you signed up for.* Conferences are critical discussion seminars led by your fantastic Teaching Assistants (TAs). To prepare for conferences, have the weekly readings completed before the beginning of class and come prepared for critical discussion. Conference times are for more in-depth discussion of the readings and how they relate to contemporary society and perhaps, even, your life. This is also time to practice active listening. (For more details on what's expected of you in conferences, see the description of the participation grade on the course outline and the participation rubric posted online.)

Required Texts

Crow, Barbara A., and Lise Gotell, eds. *Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women's Studies Reader*. 3rd ed. Toronto, ON: Pearson Education Canada, 2009.
Additional Readings, available through MyCourses

Marks Breakdown

Conference Participation	10%
First Assignment	25%
Final Assignment	30%
Take-Home Exam	35%

Assignments

All written assignments must:

- be typed and double-spaced using 12 pt. Times New Roman font
- have one-inch margins
- use MLA formatting
- have the student's name and ID number, the instructor's name, course code, date, and word count printed in the top left-hand corner of the first page; do not include a title page
- have numbered pages
- be submitted as a hard copy; email submissions will not be accepted

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

Participation

Value: 10%

Description: This course relies on seminar participation because part of learning involves being in the world with others. Learning is social, and one of the goals of a Women's Studies education is to foster a social and intellectual community of feminist learners and to develop your critical voice. Your participation grade will be based on the quality of your contributions to the class. Classroom contributions included engaging in discussions; asking critical questions; giving feedback to your peers; listening actively and respectfully; showing up on time; and helping to build accountable space. (See participation rubric for further details.)

First Assignment

Value: 25%

Select one of the following options for your first assignment:

Option One:

Community Engagement Day + Critical Reflection

Value: 25% (10% for participation in CED + 15% Written Critical Reflection)

Critical Reflection Length: 500-750 words (+/- 10%)

Due Date: Participate in CED on Friday, October 4. Submit Critical Reflection on Friday, October 11, at the beginning of lecture.

Description: Community Engagement Day is an annual project organized by McGill's Social Equity and Diversity Education Office (SEDE) that's designed to encourage volunteer and learning opportunities at McGill and in the broader Montreal community. To begin this assignment, go to the Community Engagement Day website at <http://ced.conference.mcgill.ca> and register for an activity. Registration is on a "first come, first serve" basis. *It is mandatory that you fully attend and participate in CED to complete this option.* Following CED, write a critical reflection on the activity in which you participated. Briefly describe the activity. Make a case for why the activity in which

you participated is feminist (or wasn't) or create an argument regarding how the activity relates to feminism. Reference specific aspects of the event and draw on ONE article from *Open Boundaries* to help support your claims. Refer to the grading rubric for further details. Print the grading rubric and attach it to your assignment.

OR

Option Two:

Comparative Critical Analysis

Length: 1000-1200 words (+/- 10%)

Due Date: Friday, October 11, at the beginning of lecture

Description: Based on the readings we have completed up to and including Week 6, write a comparative critical analysis that links **three** of our readings together. You will compare and contrast how the three articles address a central theme or topic. It is up to you to identify this central theme or topic and to make the connections across the articles. You might also examine how a set of readings addresses a particular topic or issue from different angles. You should have a thesis statement and an argument in this essay that makes a larger claim about, for example: the significance of the theme, the limitations of the articles; how the articles provide new ways of thinking about gender, etc. Do not just summarize what you believe the readings to be about; you must demonstrate that you understand why key ideas within the readings are important and worth engaging with. Refer to the grading rubric for further details. Print the grading rubric and attach it to your assignment.

Final Assignment

Due Date: Friday 8 November, at the beginning of lecture

Select one of the following options below for your final assignment:

Option 1:

Final Essay

Value: 30%

Length: 1200-1500 words (+/- 10%)

Description: Write an academic essay on one of the following topics:

1. According to Jennifer Plyler, young women "are leading new and militant struggles against the forces of imperialism, colonialism, racism, sexism, and poverty" (150). Write a short essay analyzing the role of young feminists within a contemporary social movement. Does feminism play a role? In what ways?
2. In her analysis of the Reena Virk murder, Yasmin Jiwani argues that "the media play a critical role in communicating notions of 'race' and racism" (183). Selecting one contemporary media text (e.g. an advertisement or an article from a newspaper, magazine, or blog) as a case study, conduct a critical analysis of the gender and race dynamics at play within the text. What notions about gender and race are communicated through this text?
3. Susan Wendell argues that the "disciplines of normality are preconditions of participation in every aspect of social life, yet they are unnoticed by most adults who can conform to them without conscious effort" (247). Conduct a critical analysis that focuses on one "disciplinary practice" of normality. What are the consequences or implications of this practice?

You must cite at least **ONE** reading on the course syllabus and at least **TWO** academic secondary sources not included on the course syllabus. The strongest essays will have the following qualities: a clear thesis statement; a strong argument that is sustained throughout the essay; smooth integration of

secondary sources; critical engagement with course readings; excellent grammar and clarity of expression; and consistent MLA formatting. Refer to the grading rubric for further details. Print the grading rubric and attach it to your assignment.

OR

Option 2:

Zine and Critical Reflection

Length: Zine (of any length) + Critical Reflection of 500-750 words (+/- 10%)

Value: 30% (Zine = 10%; Critical Reflection = 20%)

Description: Students will create a zine related to feminist and gender issues. In their critical reflection, students will relate their zine topic or their experience of making the zine to at least **ONE** of the assigned readings on the course. The critical reflection should consist of three parts:

1. Description of and Rationale for the Zine. (Explain why you constructed the zine in the way that you did. What principles informed your design?)
2. Analysis. (Discuss the topic of the zine, situating it within the course materials and in relation to feminism.)
3. Reflection. (Reflect on what you learned from the project and what you might do differently next time.)

The format of the zine itself is open. In accordance with the do-it-yourself ethos of zine culture, your zine can be any length, size, shape, or colour(s) you desire. If you are using borrowed material within the zine (e.g. images pulled from magazines or the Internet), you should cite these at the end of your paper. You are not required to place citations directly within the zine, although you may wish to discuss your decisions around these choices within your discussion paper. Refer to the grading rubric for further details. Print the grading rubric and attach it to your assignment.

Final Take-Home Examination

Date: TBA

Value: 35%

Description: The final exam will involve applying, comparing, and contrasting several aspects of the course. The exam will consist of 2-3 essay questions. (There will be no multiple choice or true/false questions.) You will submit the final exam via MyCourses.

Policies and Guidelines

How to Interpret Grades in this Course

Your TAs and professor are eager to help you do well on assignments before they are due. Please visit your TA or the professor during office hours to ask questions about material for the course and assignments on which you are working.

Grades are assigned based on the scale set out in the Arts and Sciences calendar. Grades in the "A" range are awarded only for superior work (and not merely sufficient performance). Grades in the "B" range are awarded for work that is above satisfactory. In the "C" range they are awarded for satisfactory/sufficient work. And in the "D" range, they are awarded for unsatisfactory work.

Final grades will be based on the McGill University scale, reproduced here:

85-100% = A

80-84% = A-

75-79% = B+

60-64% = C+

55-59% = C

50-54% = D (Conditional Pass)

70-74% = B
65-69% = B-

0-49% = F (Fail)

Grades are never given out over email or the telephone. Students can check their grades via the course website.

Disability Services

If you have a disability, please register with the Office for Students with Disabilities at 398-6009 (www.mcgill.ca/osd).

Unfortunately, the instructor's office is not accessible for visitors with mobility impairment, but meetings at alternate locations will be happily arranged.

Email Policy

If you have a question for the professor or TAs, please check the course syllabus first to see if the information you require is on it. If the question involves more than a yes/no answer, please ask during office hours instead. If you are unable to meet with the professor or TAs during office hours, please feel free to make an appointment.

Please do not email the professor or TAs on the weekends or after business hours.

Late Policy

All assignments will be penalized at 5% per day late. If you have a late assignment, please submit it to the IGSF (3487 Peel St.) during regular business hours (9am-5pm). You may wish to call the IGSF in advance at 514-398-3911 to confirm that the Institute is open, as we occasionally close during special events. Do not email your assignment to your professor or TAs.

If you have extenuating circumstances that can be documented (medical emergencies, etc.), simply attach a copy of your documentation to the assignment. If you do not have documentable and exceptional circumstances that prevent you from submitting your paper, you need to accept the fact that late marks will be applied.

Grade Appeals

Assignments are graded on performance, not effort. Grades are final, except where a mistake has been made in calculation. Here are the circumstances under which the professor would change a grade: (a) if an error has been made at the level of calculation, or (b) if you have not been held to the same standard as everyone else. If you seek clarification on a grade you have received, you should visit your professor during office hours, keeping in mind the criteria of evaluation on which your assignment was graded. The professor will neither defend nor contest the evaluation; she will instead discuss ways in which you can understand the evaluation and improve upon your performance.

In the event that you feel you received an undeserved grade and wish to dispute it, you must make your case **in writing** within one week (7 days) of receiving the grade. The case in writing must detail the grounds on which you are making an appeal, accompanied by the original assignment (make a photocopy for yourself). The letter must be typed, single-spaced and printed on paper; email submissions will not be accepted. Grade complaints will not be considered after the week deadline, or if they are not made in writing. If the professor agrees to review your assignment and re-evaluate its grade, keep in mind that your grade could remain the same, be elevated, or be reduced.

Guidelines for Productive Discussion

Our conference times are dedicated to in-depth discussion. Following a few basic discussion guidelines will help insure that this time is productive, enlightening and fun for all of us.

1. Experience and anecdote do not constitute evidence in a scholarly argument. While you each bring interesting experiences to the classroom, **ONLY** bring up your personal experience when it is relevant to class discussion; think carefully about this before you speak about your experience. If you bring up your own experience in class, recognize that it becomes a public topic for discussion. Others may interpret your experience differently than you do, and they are free to respectfully disagree with your interpretation. Furthermore, ask yourself what point you seek to make by talking about yourself. Is it really relevant? Do you want others to know this about you?
2. Work to create a shared climate of friendly and lively discussion. Avoid personal attacks, jabs, and grandstanding behaviors. Also avoid overly personalizing the topic under discussion. The point is to build knowledge together, not to look good or act smarter than everyone else or endlessly talk about yourself.
3. Disagreements are natural and welcome in scholarly discussion. So are arguments. But arguments are not contests. Grant your fellow course participants courtesy and respect, whether you agree with what they say or not.
4. As much as possible, avoid purely negative critique in your comments. Our goal in discussion is to understand the texts we read and how they might be useful to us – in addition to cultivating our skills in critique. Understand first; criticize second.
5. Wait your turn – do not interrupt others.
6. You do not have to express your own opinion on a subject. You are also free to change your mind on any topic at any time.

Weekly Schedule

CLASS ONE: INTRODUCTION TO WMST 200 (THURSDAY 5 SEPTEMBER)

[meet in RPHYS 112]

Course outline distributed
Introductions

CLASS TWO: INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN'S STUDIES (FRIDAY 6 SEPTEMBER)

[Meet in ARTS W-120]

Readings:

Lise Gotell and Barbara A. Crow. "Who is the Woman of Canadian Women's Studies? Theoretical Interventions." 11-17. *OB*

Cressida Heyes. "Philosophical Investigations (in a Feminist Voice)." 20-29. *OB*

Layli Maparyan. "Feminism." *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies*. Ed. Catherine M. Orr, Ann Braithwaite, and Diane Lichtenstein. New York: Routledge, 2012. 17-33. [Print from *MyCourses*]

CLASS THREE: INTERSECTIONALITY (THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER)

[Meet in RPHYS 112]

Readings:

Clare, Eli. "Reading Across the Grain." *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*. Cambridge, MA: South End P, 2009. 119-42. [MyCourses]

Collins, Patricia Hill. "Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection." *Privilege: A Reader*. 3rd ed. Ed. Michael S. Kimmel and Abby L. Ferber. Boulder, CO: Westview P, 2014. 240-57. [MyCourses]

*** Last Thursday Class ***

CLASS FOUR: ANTI-RACIST AND INDIGENOUS FEMINISMS (FRIDAY 13 SEPTEMBER)

[Meet in ARTS W-120; all future lectures are in this room]

Readings:

Himani Bannerji. "Introducing Racism: Notes Towards an Anti-Racist Feminism." 29-35. *OB*

Enkshi Dua. "Canadian Anti-Racist Feminist Thought: Scratching the Surface." 35-48. *OB*

Kim Anderson. "Affirmations of an Indigenous Feminist." *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*. Ed. Cheryl Suzack, Shari Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman. Vancouver: UBC P, 2010. 81-91. [MyCourses]

CLASS FIVE: FEMINIST HISTORIES (FRIDAY 20 SEPTEMBER)

***** Conferences Begin this Week. Register and Attend. *****

Readings:

Kim Sawchuk. "Feminism in Waves: Re-Imagining a Watery Metaphor." 58-64. *OB*

Natasha Pinterics. "Riding the Feminist Waves: In with the Thirds." 65-70. *OB*

Brandi Bell. "Riding the Third Wave: Women-Produced Zines and Feminisms." 156-63. *OB*

Guest Speaker(s) on Zines [tentative]

CLASS SIX: ACTIVISMS (FRIDAY 27 SEPTEMBER)

Screening:

Six Miles Deep. Dir. Sara Rogue. National Film Board of Canada, 2010.

Readings:

Lise Gotell and Barbara A. Crow. "The Changing Context of Activisms." 71-77. *OB*

Patricia A. Monture. "Confronting Power: Aboriginal Women and Justice Reform." 132-40. *OB*

Jennifer Plyler "Rooting Out Injustice: Discussions with Radical Young Women in Toronto, Canada." 149-56. *OB*

"Statement of Feminist Solidarity with the *Idle No More* Movement." Simone de Beauvoir Institute.

Concordia U. 28 January 2013. Access Online: <http://wsdb.concordia.ca/about-us/official-position-on-issues/documents/Idle_no_more.pdf>

CLASS SEVEN: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DAY (FRIDAY 4 OCTOBER)

***** No Classes or Conferences This Week. *****

***** Please attend Community Engagement Day or**

***** Use this time to work on your Comparative Critical Analysis. *****

CLASS EIGHT: FEMININITY AND THE BODY (FRIDAY 11 OCTOBER)

***** First Assignment Due *****

***** TAs Office Hours begin this week *****

Screening:

Shameless: The ART of Disability. Dir. Bonnie Scherr Klein. National Film Board of Canada, 2006.

Readings:

Carla Rice. "Between Body and Culture: Beauty, Ability, and Growing Up Female. 233-45. *OB*

Susan Wendell. "The Flight from the Rejected Body." 245-51. *OB*

Dr. Fabienne Darling-Wolf. "From Airbrushing to Liposuction: The Technological Reconstruction of the Female Body." 251-56. *OB*

CLASS NINE: MEDIA STUDIES (FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER)

Screening:

Miss Representation. Dir. Jennifer Siebel Newsom. Girls Club Entertainment, 2011.

Readings:

Leslie Regan Shade. "Feminizing the Mobile: Gender Scripting of Mobiles in North America." 257-62. *OB*

Hasinoff, Amy Adele. "Sexting as Media Production: Rethinking Social Media and Sexuality." *New Media and Society* 15.4 (2012): 449-65. Access online:
<<http://nms.sagepub.com/content/15/4/449.full.pdf+html>>

CLASS TEN: ENGENDERING VIOLENCE I (FRIDAY 25 OCTOBER)

Readings:

Joanne C. Minaker and Laureen Snider. "Husband Abuse: Equality with a Vengeance?" 170-79. *OB*
Yasmin Jiwani. "Erasing Race; The Story of Reena Virk." 180-90. *OB*
Sherene Razack. "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George." 190-201. *OB*

Guest Speaker: Alisha Mascarenhas from the Missing Justice Collective

CLASS ELEVEN: ENGENDERING VIOLENCE II (FRIDAY 1 NOVEMBER)

Screening:

The Line. Dir. Nancy Schwartzmann. Media Education Foundation, 2010.

Readings:

Jane Doe. "The Ultimate Rape Victim." 216-22. *OB*
Melanie Beres. "Moving Beyond 'No Means No': Understanding Heterosexual Casual Sex and Consent." 275-82. *OB*

CLASS TWELVE: SEXUALITIES AND REPRESENTATION (FRIDAY 8 NOVEMBER)

*** Final Assignment Due Today ***

Screening:

But I'm a Cheerleader. Dir. Jamie Babitt. Lions Gate Films, 1999.

Readings:

Amber Dean. "Does a Lesbian Need a Vagina Like a Fish Needs a Bicycle? Or, Would the 'Real' Lesbian Please Stand Up!" 314-24. *OB*
Cassandra Lord. "The Silencing of Sexuality." 311-14. *OB*

CLASS THIRTEEN: SEXUALITY, HEALTH, AND INSTITUTIONS (FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER)

*** No TA Office Hours This Week ***

Readings:

Erin Connell. "Desire as Interruption: Young Women and Sexuality Education in Ontario, Canada." 283-89. *OB*
CARAL. "A Special Report to Celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the Decriminalization of Abortion: Protecting Abortion Rights in Canada." 226-28. *OB*
Susan Wendell. "Abortion." 228-32. *OB*

CLASS FOURTEEN: THEORIZING IDENTITIES (FRIDAY 22 NOVEMBER)

*** No TA Office Hours This Week ***

Readings:

Mariana Valverde. "The Respectable Same-Sex Couple: A New Entity in the History of Sexuality." 295-99. *OB*
Claire Young and Susan B. Boyd. "Losing the Feminist Voice: Debates on the Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Partnerships in Canada." 299-311. *OB*
Jean Bobby Noble. "Sons of the Movement: Feminism, Female Masculinity and Female to Male (FTM) Transsexual Men." 325-34. *OB*

CLASS FIFTEEN: LAST LECTURE & EXAM REVIEW (FRIDAY 29 NOVEMBER)

*** No Conferences or Readings This Week ***

*** TAs and Prof will have Office Hours ***