

McGill University
Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies
WMST 301: Feminist Theories of Identity
FERR 345; Tuesdays, 2:35-5:25 pm.
Fall 2013

Instructor: Dr. Elizabeth Groeneveld
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:30-4:30, or by appointment

Course Description

This course explores gendered, sexual, national, and raced identities, and their complex intersections, as key sites for feminist theory and political action. Students will compare and assess contemporary theories, approaches, and research that examine the meaning, usefulness, and impact of the concept of identity. Key questions we will address are: What role, if any, should identity politics play in feminist political activities? How do multiple factors of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality intersect in individual identities? Does identity divide us or provide us with the grounds for solidarity? What kind of claims and strategies can and ought “identity politics” make use of, and at what moments? How do these identities shape our subjectivity? How do might these theoretical concerns be brought to bear on Women’s Studies as a discipline? We will address these questions through the lenses of critical race, postcolonial, transnational, postmodern, and queer feminist theories. In the first part of the course we will explore key concepts for the study of intersectional identities and then examine how identities are mobilized in relation to institutions, such as the law and education, in the second part of the course. The final theme of the course asks students to think reflexively about the politics of identity.

Approach

This class will be run as a seminar course. Our classes will thus be focused on in-depth discussion, with mini-lectures to frame the materials at the beginning of class. Read the assigned materials in advance and be prepared for critical discussion. Bring hard copies of the readings to class. Students are encouraged to begin thinking about their final assignments early on in the semester, and to discuss with the class how their projects relate to course readings.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Critically analyze, compare, and contrast different feminist theorizations of identity
- Read and assess scholarly articles, in terms of their argument, assumptions, benefits, and limitations
- Make meaningful connections between feminist theorizations of identity and your own field of interest/discipline

Required Texts

Course Package

Marks Breakdown

Weekly Discussion Point	10% (1 X 10%)
Participation	10%
Critical Reflection	20%
Final Essay	30%
Take-Home Examination	30%

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, the instructor's name, course code, date, and word count printed in the top left-hand corner of the first page (no title page is necessary)
- have numbered pages
- be submitted as a hard copy; email submissions will not be accepted

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/integrity for more information)."

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.

Weekly Discussion Points

Value: 10% (10 x 1%)

Due Dates: Submit these weekly, by noon on Tuesdays, via MyCourses

Description: This assignment is designed to: motivate students to reflect on the readings in advance of class; prompt wider ranging discussion and/or to highlight shared points of interest or concern; engage quieter contributors in class discussions; and keep everyone on top of the readings. You earn credit for submitting a discussion point to MyCourses; therefore, you should see this assignment as a starting point for your thoughts on the readings that you can develop through discussion in class.

Ideas for how to do this assignment if you're feeling stuck: Select a short passage from one of our assigned readings that you would like to discuss further. Write a little bit about what made this passage jump out at you: is it representative of the author's argument? Do you particularly like this passage? Does it seem to point to a limitation of the author's argument? If we have a difficult reading, perhaps select a passage that seems particularly difficult, but important for the author's argument. Finally, can you make any connections across readings that we've already completed for the class?

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.

Critical Reflection

Value: 20%

Length: 1000 words (+/- 10%)

Due Date: 8 October, at the beginning of class

Description: This assignment is designed to develop your critical reading skills; to encourage you to explore connections between the readings; and to link these connections to broader cultural context.

Based on the readings we have completed up to and including Week 6, write a critical reflection that links 2-3 of our readings together. It is up to you to make an argument about how these readings are linked and to persuade the reader of your argument. You might also examine how a set of readings addresses a particular topic or issue from different angles. Finally, you must comment on the significance of your argument (why it matters). This final part could involve connecting the readings to your own interests; events (in popular culture or the news); or Women's Studies in general (i.e. make connections between the reading and a broader context).

This assignment will be assessed on the basis of comprehension, critical analysis, and critical reflection: do not just summarize what you believe the reading to be about; you must demonstrate that you understand why key ideas within the reading are important and worth engaging with.

Final Essay

Value: 30%

Due Date: Tuesday 5 November

Length: 2500-3000 words (+/- 10%)

Description: A final essay on a topic of the student's choice. The essay must relate to the literature discussed in class (at least three sources from the class syllabus), but incorporating further resources is encouraged. Students are encouraged to discuss their ideas and explore literature with the instructor well in advance.

This assignment should demonstrate your proficiency in conducting a feminist analysis of a given topic. It will also develop your ability to apply and incorporate critical perspectives in your work, while developing your own critical voice in conversation these perspectives. Your essay must have a thesis statement and an argument that is sustained throughout.

Two approaches for the final essay include:

Approach 1: Theory/commentary paper on a conceptual area of feminisms and identities. In this option, your task is to develop a line of critique and/or commentary on an area of feminist theorizations of identities we have discussed.

Approach 2: Application paper. In this option, your task is to choose an object of study (perhaps a set of media representations, educational practices, or other set of objects) and "apply" a set of concepts we have addressed in the class. In this option, you will be expected to: 1) do some relevant additional outside reading, 2) analyze your chosen object of study, and 3) reflect and comment upon the course readings you use as a result of your application and analysis of their concepts.

Take-Home Examination

Value: 30%

Due Date: TBA

Description: The take-home exam will ask students to synthesize some of the ideas and concepts covered over the course of the semester. Exam questions may involve comparing and contrasting, applying concepts, and critical reflection. The exam will be distributed at the last class.

Policies and Guidelines

How to Interpret Grades in this Course

I am eager to help you do well on assignments before they are due. Please visit your professor during office hours to ask questions about material for the course and assignments on which you are working. If you wish to show me a draft of an assignment, you may do so during that time. I will look over an outline and comment on the introductory paragraph of drafts.

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	60-64% = C+
80-84% = A-	55-59% = C
75-79% = B+	50-54% = D (Conditional Pass)
70-74% = B	0-49% = F (Fail)
65-69% = B-	

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 that involves more than a yes/no answer, please ask your question during office hours instead. If you are unable to meet with the professor during office hours, please feel free to make an appointment.

Please do not email the professor 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 me.

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 and quizzes 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 seminar time is 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

WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION (3 September)

Introduction to the Course and to Each Other
Go Over Course Syllabus

Theme One: Key Concepts in Identity Studies

WEEK TWO: INTERSECTIONALITY (10 SEPTEMBER)

Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence

Against Women of Colour." *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writers that Formed the Movement*. Ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw, et al. New York: The New P, 1995. 357-83. [MyCourses]
May, Vivian M. "Intersectionality." *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies*. Ed. Catherine Orr, Ann Braithwaite, and Diane Lichtenstein. New York: Routledge, 2012. 155-72. [MyCourses]
Nash, Jennifer C. "Re-Thinking Intersectionality." *Feminist Review* 89 (June 2008): 1-15. [Library]

WEEK THREE: PRIVILEGE (17 SEPTEMBER)

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]
McIntosh, Peggy. "White Privilege and Male Privilege." *Privilege: A Reader*. 3rd ed. Ed. Michael S. Kimmel and Abby L. Ferber. Boulder, CO: Westview P, 2014. 15-27. [MyCourses]
Kimmel, Michael S. "Toward a Sociology of the Superordinate." *Privilege: A Reader*. 3rd ed. Ed. Michael S. Kimmel and Abby L. Ferber. Boulder, CO: Westview P, 2014. 1-14. [MyCourses]

WEEK FOUR: AUTHENTICITY & ESSENTIALISM (24 SEPTEMBER)

Jorunn Eikjok. "Gender, Essentialism, and Feminism in Samiland." *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*. Ed. Joyce Green. Winnipeg: Fernwood P, 2007. 108-23. [MyCourses]
Razack, Sherene. "To Essentialize or Not To Essentialize: Is this the Question?" *Looking White People in the Eye*. Toronto, ON: U of Toronto P, 1998. 157-70. [Library]

WEEK FIVE: DISIDENTIFICATION (1 OCTOBER)

Moraga, Cherríe. "Preface." *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Colour*. Ed. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Watertown, MA: Persphone P, 1981. xiii-xx. [MyCourses]
Muñoz, José Estaban. "Introduction: Performing Disidentifications." *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1999. 1-34. [MyCourses]
Najmabadi, Afsanah. "Teaching and Writing in Unavailable Intersections." *Women's Studies on the Edge*. Ed. Joan Wallach Scott. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2008. 69-80. [MyCourses]

WEEK SIX: HYBRIDITY (8 OCTOBER)

Gloria Anzaldúa. "La Consciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness." *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1990. 377-89. [MyCourses]
Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs, Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991. 149-81. [MyCourses]

Critical Reflection Due

Theme 2: Identities in Systems

WEEK SEVEN: EDUCATION AND THE LAW (15 OCTOBER)

Smith, Malinda D. "Gender, Whiteness, and other Others." *States of Race: Critical Race Feminism for the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Sherene Razack, Malinda Smith, and Sunera Thobani. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2010. 37-58. [MyCourses]
Spade, Dean. "What's Wrong with Rights?" *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of the Law*. Brooklyn, NY: South End P, 2011. 79-99. [MyCourses]

WEEK EIGHT: IDENTITIES IN/UNDER CAPITALISM (22 OCTOBER)

hooks, bell. "Eating the Other." *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Toronto, ON: Between the Lines P, 1992. 21-39. [MyCourses]
Rhacel Salazar Parreñas. "The Care Crisis in the Philippines: Children and Transnational Families in the New Global Economy." *Global Woman*. Ed. Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Hochschild. New York: Metropolis, 2007. 39-54. Access online:
<<http://educ.jmu.edu/~brysonbp/337/GlobalWomanPhilippines.pdf>>

Puar, Jasbir K. "Introduction: Homonationalism and Biopolitics." *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2007. 1-36. [MyCourses]

WEEK NINE: THE NATION (29 OCTOBER)

Bannerji, Himani. "Geography Lessons: On Being an Insider/Outsider to the Canadian Nation." *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism, and Gender*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' P, 2000. 63-86. [MyCourses]

Berlant, Lauren, and Michael Warner. "Sex In Public." *Critical Inquiry* 24.2 (Winter 1998): 547-66. Access online: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/~psychgeo/berlant_-_sex_in_public.pdf>.

Mackey, Eva. "Introduction. Unsettling Differences: Origins, Methods, Frameworks." *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada*. New York: Routledge, 1998. 1-22. [Access online through McGill Library.]

Theme 3: Re: Thinking Identities

WEEK TEN: DISLOCATION, HOME AND AWAY (5 NOVEMBER)

Ahmed, Sara. "Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement" *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2.3 (1999): 329-49. [Access online through McGill Library]

Brand, Dionne. *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*. Toronto, ON: Vintage Canada, 2001. 1-29. [MyCourses]

Clare, Eli. "Losing Home." *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*. Cambridge, MA: South End P Classics, 2009. 31-49. [MyCourses]

Mohanty, Chandra, and Bidy Martin. "What's Home Got to Do With It?" *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003. 85-105. [Access through McGill Library]

*****Final Assignment Due*****

WEEK ELEVEN: COALITIONAL POLITICS (12 NOVEMBER)

Cathy J. Cohen. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2005. 21-51.

Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. "Theorizing Disability." *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. 19-54.

WEEK TWELVE: FEMINIST IDENTITIES (19 NOVEMBER)

Ahmed, Sara. "Feminist Killjoys." *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010. 50-88. [MyCourses]

Thobani, Sunera. "White Innocence, Western Supremacy: The Role of Western Feminism in the 'War on Terror.'" *States of Race: Critical Race Feminism for the 21st Century*. Ed. Sherene Razack, Malinda Smith, and Sunera Thobani. Toronto, ON: Between the Lines, 2010. 127-46. [MyCourses]

WEEK THIRTEEN: CONCLUSION OF THE COURSE (26 NOVEMBER)

Final Thoughts and Wrap-Up

*****Take-Home Exam Distributed*****