

POL 616: Modern Political Analysis (Feminist Theory)

Dr. Kelly Gordon
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Office Hours
Leacock 529
Fridays 1:30-3:30pm or by
appointment

Class – Leacock 541
Mondays 8:30-11:30

Thematic Description and Course Objectives

This seminar approaches feminist theory and practice as a series of political questions. What is a woman? What is gender? What is feminist theory, and who can theorize feminism? What is the relationship between feminism, gender, and the state? And what key issues and debate have shaped feminist thought and struggle over time?

This course will help you answer these and other questions through an examination of a variety of key feminist thinkers, the debates they spark, and the concepts they create. While some time will be devoted to outlining the historical evolution and context of ideas, the bulk of the course will focus on understanding and evaluating the concepts, conclusions, and assumptions of various feminist political thinkers.

Learning Objectives

The course aims to help you develop the ability to

- Understand key concepts and normative and theoretical commitments employed in feminist theories,
- Critically appreciate and constructively criticize texts, structures, processes, and ideas,
- Articulate and convey ideas clearly and effectively in oral discussion and writing for a variety of audiences.

Required Texts

All readings will be made available on mycourses or placed on reserve at the McGill library

Assignments and Grading (detailed discussion below)

- Attendance/Participation 20%
- Presentation 20%
- Critical summaries (X4) 25%
- Final paper 35%

Class Schedule

Date	Theme	Readings
September 3	Introduction	
September 10	What is feminist theory?	Rosalind Delmar. 1986. "What is Feminism?" Sarah Ahmed. 2000. "Whose counting?" bell hooks. 1991. "Theory as Liberatory Practice." Audre Lorde. 1979. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" Audre Lorde. 2006. "Uses of the erotic" Green, Joyce. 2017. "Taking More Account of Indigenous Feminism."
September 17	Being/becoming a woman	Mary Wollstonecraft. 1790. <i>A Vindication for the Rights of Man</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o dedicatory letter, introduction, o Chapters 1-4 Simone DeBeauvoir. 1949. <i>The Second Sex</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Introduction o Volume 1, Part I o Volume II, Chapter 1 (Childhood) and Chapter 14 (The Independent Woman)
September 24	The category of woman	Sandra Harding. 1986. "The Instability of the Analytical Categories of Feminist Theory" Judith Butler. 1986. "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex" <i>Yale French Studies</i> Lena Gunnarsson. 2011. "A defence of the category of 'women'" Sojourner Truth. 1851. Ain't I a Woman? Audre Lorde. 1984. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference"
October 1	Queer theory and performativity	Judith Butler. 1993. "Critically queer" Egg et al. 2005. "Introduction: What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?" Judith Butler. 1998. " Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" Cynthia Weber. 1998. "Performative States"
October 8	Ways of knowing	Nancy Hartsock. 2010. "The Feminist Standpoint: Toward a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism" Joan Scott. 1991. "The Evidence of Experience" Donna Haraway. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective"

		<p>Susan Hekman. 1997. "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited"</p> <p>Patricia Hill Collins. 1986. "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought"</p>
October 15	NO CLASS	Work on term paper topic
October 22	Intersectionality	<p>Kimberle Crenshaw. 2019. <i>On Intersectionality: Essential Writings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Selected chapters (TBD) <p>Jennifer Nash. 2008. "Re-thinking intersectionality"</p> <p>Rita Kaur Dhamoon. 2011. "Considerations on Mainstreaming Intersectionality"</p>
October 29	Men and masculinity	<p>R.W. Connell. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept"</p> <p>Mimi Schippers. 2007. "Recovering the feminine other: masculinity, femininity, and gender hegemony"</p> <p>Judith Halberstam. 2012. "Global female masculinities"</p> <p>bell hooks. 1992. "Reconstructing black masculinity"</p>
November 5	The body	<p>Ann Ferguson. 1997. "On Conceiving Motherhood and Sexuality"</p> <p>Susan Bordo. 1994. "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity"</p> <p>Kathy Davis. 2007. "Reclaiming Women's Bodies: Colonialist Trope or Critical Epistemology?"</p> <p>Carolyn Pedwell and Anne Whitehead. 2012. "Affecting feminism: Questions of feeling in feminist theory"</p>
November 12	The politics of rape	<p>Andrea Dworkin. 1983. "I want a 24 hour truce during which there is no rape"</p> <p>Sharon Marcus. 2002. "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention"</p> <p>Carine Marorossian. 2002. "Toward a New Feminist Theory of Rape"</p> <p>Sherene Razack. 2000. "Gendered racial violence and spatialized justice: the murder of Pamela George"</p>
November 19	Disability	<p>Alison Kafer. 2003. "Compulsory Bodies: Reflections on Heterosexuality and Able-Bodiedness"</p> <p>Nirmala Erevelles and Andrea Minear. 2013. "Unspeakable Offences: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality"</p> <p>Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. 2001. "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory"</p> <p>Alison Kafer. 2011. "Debating Feminist Futures: Slippery Slopes, Cultural Anxiety, and the Case of the Deaf Lesbians"</p>
November 26	Conservative feminisms	<p>Andrea Dworkin. 1983. <i>Right-Wing Women</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Chapter 1: "The Promise of the Ultra-Right" o Chapter 6: "Antifeminism" <p>Katie Gibson. 2013. "Depoliticizing feminism: Frontier Mythology and Sarah</p>

Palin's 'The Rise of the Mama Grizzlies'

Ronnee Schreiber. 2008. *Righting Feminism*.

- Introduction

Sara Ruddick. 1995. Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace Masculinities'

- Selected chapter (TBD)

Assignments and Grading

I - Regular Attendance and Participation (25%)

- Active participation is central in ensuring students understand and retain knowledge. Students will therefore be expected to regularly and thoughtfully participate in the class – identifying key themes and issues and asking and answering questions from colleagues
- Grades will be determined by the professor based on the following criteria:
 - ◊ Has the student consistently attended and voluntarily participated in class discussion
 - ◊ Has the student enhanced the learning environment by participating respectfully in ad hoc class room discussions with her/his colleagues
 - ◊ Has the student demonstrated significant preparation for the class (able to consistently answer directed questions about the readings in class)

II. Presentation (20%)

- Each student will start the class with a teaching presentation. Student presentations should be no more than 15 minutes (cut off at 20 minutes) and should center on one aspect of the day's readings that you develop. Your presentation should identify and highlight key themes, arguments, and tension within the readings. Do not try to be comprehensive, but rather present a coherent, focused analysis of what interests or compels you about the readings.
- Additionally, students should offer a few discussion questions (not more than 5) to spark discussions during the rest of the class period. Questions should be emailed to the professor Thursday evening before 6 pm.

III. Critical analysis paper (25%)

- Students will submit four 2-page (single spaced) critical analysis papers throughout the semester. This short paper will identify a key argument or point of contention among the readings for the week, and provide a critical evaluation of it. It should also end with a few key questions raised by the week's readings.

IV. Research Paper (35%)

- The term paper should be on a question related to the course themes and readings (maximum 7,000 words, references/footnotes included). Students should meet with me to formulate their own paper topics prior to **November 15th**.
- The final draft of the research paper is due on **December 6 by 5 pm**. Papers will lose 1/3 of a letter grade per day late.

Other Key Issues to Note

In a class context, we all depend on a climate of mutual respect and engagement to make this a productive and exciting intellectual environment. Please respect these basic guidelines:

- **Respect** – the basis of good, productive discussions in university is respect for yourself and others. This means a multitude of things – but at minimum it means that everyone works to create a climate in which everyone feels comfortable expressing their views for debate. This absolutely does NOT mean that we must all agree. But it does mean that we need to allow ideas to surface, and then critically, but not aggressively, debate them. It means, for example, that we should feel comfortable expressing our ideas – but also that others should also feel comfortable asking us for the reasons and evidence that support those ideas.
- **Deadlines:** Exceptions are only made for illness or other serious situations deemed as such by the professor. University regulations require all absences from exams and all late submissions due to illness be supported by a medical certificate. No assignments will be accepted via email.
- **Email policy:** Email will be answered during normal business hours of the University. While an effort will be made to respond in a timely manner, please allow 1-2 days for a reply. No extensions will be granted via email.
- **Electronic devices:** As per McGill's courtesy policy, cell phone use, texting, emailing, and surfing the Internet are prohibited during class time. If you need your cell phone on because you have children or need to remain in contact with someone because of a medical emergency, please inform the professor at the beginning of the class and please leave your cell phone on vibrate.
- **Class discussion:** Please respect your fellow students by listening attentively during classroom discussions and lectures. Students talking repeatedly during lectures will be asked to leave. Racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, or other discriminatory remarks will not be tolerated.
- **Class time:** Students who come late to class or leave early disrupt both the flow of discussions and the lectures. Please respect class time. If you have to leave early due to extraneous circumstances, please inform the professor prior to class.
- **Sexual Assault Survivor Support and Allyship:** Should you or someone you know need support as a survivor of sexual assault, harassment and/or discrimination on campus, please contact McGill's Sexual Violence Response Advisor, Émilie Marcotte, at 514-398-4486 or by email at: osvrse@mcgill.ca, situated in the new Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support and Education (located at 550 Sherbrooke, suite 585) for assistance. They also offer drop-in hours during the school year (the schedule is online). For more information on their office, sexual violence support and reporting options visit: www.mcgill.ca/saap. The Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Student's Society (SACOMSS) offers peer counseling and support to students who have experienced sexual violence and their allies, as well as outreach and education. You can find out more about them at <http://www.sacomss.org/wp/>. Their hotline number is: (514) 398-8500 and they offer drop-in hours as well (the schedule for which is online).
- **Accommodations:** If you require accommodations due to special circumstances, challenges or disabilities, please notify both the professor and the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) as soon as possible. The OSD provides a broad range of support and services to assist students, faculty, and staff with disabilities (3100 Brown Student Services Bldg., 398-6009 (voice), 398-8198 (TDD) (<http://www.mcgill.ca/osd/>). Every effort will be made to accommodate students with special needs arising from learning challenges and disabilities.
- Please note the above commitment to accommodate applies equally to survivors of sexual assault and/or harassment on or off campus. Survivors are encouraged to consult the resources provided by the Students' Society of McGill University (<https://ssmu.ca/resources/sexual-violence/>), the Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Students' Society (<http://www.sacomss.org/wp/>) and the McGill Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support and Education (<https://www.mcgill.ca/osvrse/>).

McGill Policy Statements

Language of Submission:

“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. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.”

« Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue). »

Academic Integrity:

“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

Text-matching Software:

Text-matching software is used in this course. Item 2 of the text-matching policy states, in part:

2. Students shall also be informed in writing before the end of the drop/add period that they are free, without penalty of grade, to choose an alternative way of attesting to the authenticity of their work. Instructors shall provide students with at least two possible alternatives that are not unduly onerous and that are appropriate for the type of written work.

If you prefer that an alternative way of attesting to your work’s authenticity be used, you may choose from these alternatives:

- a) submitting copies of multiple drafts;
- b) submitting an annotated bibliography;
- c) submitting photocopies of sources;
- d) taking an oral examination directed at issues of originality;
- e) responding in writing to a quiz or questions directed at issues of originality;
- f) providing a written report regarding the process of completing the work; other alternatives devised by the instructor, provided that they are not unduly onerous, that they are meant to attest for authenticity of the written work, and that they meet the approval of the Dean or Disciplinary Officer in the faculty in which the course is offered.