

WS 202 Introduction to Contemporary Feminisms

(Fall 2018)

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Office Hours: Thursday 9:40-12:20 PM (268 Bessey Hall); Tuesday and Thursday 2:20-3 PM (A118 Wells Hall) and by appointment

Course Number: WS 202~002

Class Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday 3-4:20 PM (A118 Wells Hall)

Course Description

This is an introductory course to contemporary feminisms. In this course we will survey contemporary feminist theories and explore a variety of topics such as the oppression of women, the social construction of gender and of the self, the politics of gender in contemporary society, and feminism and globalization. We will approach these topics from a philosophical perspective. Our philosophical explorations will include questions that arise in contemporary debates around specific feminist issues, including personal autonomy, power relations, and cultural differences. We will also observe manifestations of feminist philosophy in everyday life.

Course Objectives

- Survey the scope and the development of feminist theory by focusing on discussions of difference.
- Analyze key tenets of influential philosophical discussions of gender
- Familiarize students with central feminist concepts, such as oppression, sexism, inequality, and the social construction of sexuality.
- Discuss several of the primary controversies that structure the contemporary study of gender and sex.
- Develop students' ability to write and think critically about the philosophical underpinnings of feminism. Develop knowledge of the complex relationship in which sexist oppression is intertwined with other forms of social and political oppression.

Feminist theories concern not only our understanding of gender relationships, but also the prescriptions for change that politically and intellectually engaged feminists have recommended for these relationships. Analyses of the construction of gender and its political meaning is intimately tied to our understanding of the meaning of other characteristics of people, such as race and social class, and our analysis of how authority relationships work generally (i.e. politics) in varying historical and social contexts. In this course we will look at contemporary feminist theories and their antecedents. Language and culture, as precursors to conceptions of the social and political, are also basic to our inquiries in this course. Rather than trying to find the One True Feminism, we will consider what is offered by the various approaches taken by feminist political theorists and activists.

Feminism is not simply concerned with the construction of theories. Praxis, actions proceeding from ideas, is also at the core of feminist theory. Any examination of ideas relating the statuses of women and men to conceptions gender, race, class, and ethnicity and, in turn, to social, economic, and political processes may also be considered (and evaluated) in terms of its logical prescriptions for action. In addition to assessing the internal logic of a theory and its prescriptions for “the world,” feminist theories may also be considered or evaluated in application to one’s own situation. How much analytical leverage do you gain in understanding your own life by taking a particular feminist perspective?

One way that we will approach this latter topic is through an analysis of the content of media representations of gender, sex, and sexuality, as an example of using feminist theory to critique a particular aspect of popular culture and its role in our lives. As you will see, many of our theorists draw on a genre of cultural representation to illustrate or give evidentiary “proof” of their conjectures and hypotheses. At a meta-level of theorizing, the use of cultural data as “facts” and illustrations raise a number of challenging philosophical and methodological questions, many of which will be at the core of your research and our discussions.

Required Texts

All the course materials, including the required readings, are posted on the course site.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Course requirements include the submission of two papers (a mid-term paper and a term paper), two presentations (a reading response presentation and a term paper proposal presentation), as well as class attendance and participation.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Mid-Term Paper (due F 10/12)	25%
Reading Response Presentation	25%
Term Paper Proposal Presentation	10%
Term Paper (due W12/12)	30%
Attendance and Class Participation	10%

Mid-Term Paper (25%)

The mid-term paper should be approximately 1200 words in length and it must be turned in by 5PM on the course site on the day it is due. The purpose of the mid-term paper is to demonstrate a critical engagement with the readings and with the issues and problems discussed in class. The mid-term paper should draw on readings in the first half of the semester.

Reading Response Presentation (25%)

You will be required to do an in-class presentation, most likely with other students. In this presentation, you will present your critical reflections, commentary, and questions about one of the chapters or articles that is scheduled on the syllabus. The schedule for these presentations will be devised in the first couple weeks of class.

Each presentation should be approximately 20-30 minutes, plus an additional 5 minutes for discussion and questions from the class. This is an opportunity for you to further analyze a topic that has interested you. The presentation should not simply summarize or recount the details of the readings, but be a demonstration of in-depth analysis of the topic. Reading directly from your presentation notes will not be allowed. Medias such as Power Point or Youtube can be utilized for technical support only and should not be the basis of your presentation. The grade of the presentation will be shared among the entire group.

Term Paper Proposal Presentation (10%)

In order to help you with the term paper, towards the end of the semester, you need to write a prospectus, including a preliminary list of references that you plan to use in your term paper. Then you are expected to present your prospectus and you will receive comments on your prospectus from me and your peers. In the middle of the semester, I will distribute a sign-up sheet for the presentation.

Term Paper (30%)

The topic of the term paper will be developed in consultation with my guidance. This paper's focus should primarily be based on the readings from the second half of the semester, though it can also involve research into readings assigned for the first half of the semester.

The term paper should be approximately 2500 words in length. It is due by 5PM on the final exam day, though you are welcome to turn it in earlier if you prefer.

Attendance and Class Participation (10%)

It is essential that you attend class regularly. You should plan to attend all class meetings. You are expected to bring the assigned texts to class and come prepared to engage in discussion.

Starting from Week 2, an attendance sheet will be passed around at the beginning of the class. Make sure you sign your full name on the sheet. Please do not sign the attendance sheet for others. You will be marked "late" if you are late for class.

Attendance and participation will be the determining factor in cases where the calculated grade is on the borderline between two grades on the 4-point scale. Regular attendance and active engagement in classroom work will support "rounding-up."

If you miss a session of class, then it is your responsibility to contact a classmate to find out what you have missed and if there are any changes in the subsequent class schedule.

Formatting and Submission

All written assignments must be typed in Times New Roman 12pt font. On all assignments:

- Make sure that the file you upload on the course site is either in Word format or in PDF format (preferably Word format). If you use Pages on Mac, please convert your files to PDF.
- Type the course number, the assignment name, and the date in the upper left corner of the

first page; this information should be single-spaced.

- Skip one line and type the title (centered, but not underlined or in quotation marks).
- Then, skip one line and begin to type your response (double-spaced).
- **Do not include your name or student number in the paper.**
- Do not include a cover page.
- Use one-inch margins on all sides.
- All assignments should be submitted electronically on the course site.

Please note:

- It is your responsibility to ensure all assignments are submitted properly and on time.
- Because we will submit and exchange all of our work electronically, be sure to save copies of your writing several locations.
- If you are concerned about your grade, you should talk with me throughout the semester—not at the very end of the semester. Talking with me at the end of the semester does not afford you the opportunity to improve your grade.

Other Important Information

Late Policy:

All written assignments must be turned in on the day that they are due. For any work that is turned in late, your grade will be reduced by 0.5 for each 24-hour period that it is turned in late (this period begins when the assignment is due). The only exceptions to this are in the case of unusual circumstances, which must be documented, and where the student makes arrangement with me in advance, whenever possible.

Class Cancellation

I will try my best to notify you if I have to cancel a class, but you can leave if I don't show up 15 minutes after the class start time in case of emergency.

Contact the Instructor

Email is the best way to reach me.

My email address is: daiyuanf@msu.edu

The subject line of your email should include:

- The course number
- Your FULL name
- A couple of key words regarding the content of your email

Office Hours

Office hours are subject to change. Please check the "Office Hours and Contact information" file in the "Introduction" folder on the course site for updates.

Use of Social Media

As members of a learning community, students are expected to respect the intellectual property of course instructors. All course materials presented to students are the copyrighted property of the course instructor and are subject to the following conditions of use:

1. Students may not record lectures or any other classroom activities and use the recordings only for their own course-related purposes.
2. Students may not share the recordings with other students enrolled in the class, provided that they also use the recordings only for their own course-related purposes.
3. Students may not post the recordings or other course materials online or distribute them to anyone not enrolled in the class without the advance written permission of the course instructor and, if applicable, any students whose voice or image is included in the recordings.
4. Any student violating the conditions described above may face academic disciplinary sanctions, including receiving a penalty grade in the course.

HONOR CODE, COPYRIGHT, AND PLAGIARISM

MSU Regulations, Ordinances and Policies Regarding Academic Honesty and Integrity

1. GENERAL STUDENT REGULATIONS

1.00 PROTECTION OF SCHOLARSHIP AND GRADES: The principles of truth and honesty are fundamental to the educational process and the academic integrity of the University; therefore, no student shall:

- 1.01 claim or submit the academic work of another as one's own.
- 1.02 procure, provide, accept or use any materials containing questions or answers to any examination or assignment without proper authorization.
- 1.03 complete or attempt to complete any assignment or examination for another individual without proper authorization.
- 1.04 allow any examination or assignment to be completed for oneself, in part or in total, by another without proper authorization.
- 1.05 alter, tamper with, appropriate, destroy or otherwise interfere with the research, resources, or other academic work of another person.
- 1.06 fabricate or falsify data or results.

According to the Office of the Ombudsman:

A student who recycles his or her course work from one class to another may face an allegation of academic dishonesty. An instructor who believes a student has committed an act of plagiarism should take appropriate action, which includes the issuing of a "penalty grade" for academic dishonesty. Article 8.1.15 of the Academic Freedom Report for Students at Michigan State University, or the "AFR," defines a penalty grade as "a grade assigned by an instructor who believes a student to have committed academic dishonesty. . . ." A penalty grade can include, but is not limited to, a failing grade on the assignment or in the course.

Academic Freedom Report for Students at Michigan State University (page 59)

8.1.15 Penalty Grade: A grade assigned by an instructor who believes a student to have committed academic dishonesty. If no disciplinary case is instituted against the student, the penalty grade may be appealed under Section 2.4.9 above. If a disciplinary case is instituted and the charge is held not to be supported by a preponderance of the evidence, the penalty grade may be appealed under Section 2.4.8 above. In either such appeal of a penalty grade, the proceedings are non-disciplinary.

MSU Regulations, Ordinances and Policies Regarding Academic Honesty and Integrity

4. ACADEMIC FREEDOM FOR STUDENTS AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY (AFR)

2.4.9 A student who receives a penalty grade based upon a charge of academic dishonesty, even if not referred for disciplinary action, may seek a hearing according to the procedures in this Article. In such a hearing, the burden of proof shall rest upon the instructor whose prior assignment of the penalty grade will constitute a charge of academic dishonesty. The hearing board shall proceed in compliance with applicable academic legislation on the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards, and the procedural and appeal provisions of this document shall apply.

Academic Honesty: The Spartan Code of Honor states, "As a Spartan, I will strive to uphold values of the **highest ethical standard**. I will practice honesty in my work, foster honesty in my peers, and take pride in knowing that **honor is worth more than grades**. I will carry these values beyond my time as a student at Michigan State University, continuing the endeavor to build personal integrity in all that I do." In addition, Article 2.III.B.2 of the Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR) states that "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." The Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide and/or the MSU Web site: www.msu.edu.)

Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in this course. Students who violate MSU academic integrity rules may receive a penalty grade, including a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact your instructor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also the Academic Integrity webpage.)

I fully endorse the University's policies on academic dishonesty as outlined above. You are responsible for understanding the university's rules regarding academic integrity. In brief, conduct prohibited by the university includes all forms of academic dishonesty, among them representing as one's own work the work of another, revising and resubmitting work for regrading (or double-submitting work) without the instructor's knowledge and consent, and plagiarism. If you have any questions about these matters, please see me during office hours.

I use the "originality check/Turnitin" feature on the course site to screen every assignment you submit. A plagiarized assignment will receive a 0.0. Students who commit an act of academic dishonesty may receive a 0.0 on the assignment or in the course and an Academic Dishonesty Report may be submitted as required by University Policy.

Consistent with MSU's efforts to enhance student learning, foster honesty, and maintain integrity in our academic processes, I have chosen to use a tool called Turnitin to compare your papers with multiple sources. The tool will compare each paper you submit to an extensive database of prior publications and papers, providing links to possible matches and a 'similarity score.' The tool does not determine whether plagiarism has occurred or not. Instead, I will make a complete assessment and judge the originality of your work. All submissions to this course may be checked using this tool.

You should submit papers to Turnitin Dropboxes **without identifying information included in the paper** (e.g., name or student number), the Desire 2 Learn system will automatically show this information to me when I view the submission, but the information will not be retained by Turnitin. If you forget and submit your paper with your identifying information on it, it will be retained in the Turnitin repository.

The retention option is "Your submissions will be retained in the Global Turnitin repository."

In choosing to use Turnitin in our class, I have agreed to follow five guidelines. They are:

1. I will use Turnitin as part of a balanced approach to encourage academic integrity and foster student success.
2. I will openly disclose use of Turnitin in this course on the syllabus and at the time assignments are announced.
3. For a given assignment, I will use Turnitin for all papers.
4. I will make the final determination of originality and integrity.
5. To ensure privacy, I will ask students to remove identification (e.g., names and student numbers) from submissions.

If you have any questions about the use of Turnitin in this course, please bring them to my attention.

If you are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, it is your responsibility to discuss your question with me before submitting your assignment. Remember that any sources you use must be cited, including any electronic sources. The following are some general examples of plagiarism:

- Using the exact language or expressions of a source and not indicating through quotation marks and citation that the language is borrowed.
- Using information or ideas that are not common knowledge from any source and failing to acknowledge that source.
- Using someone else's facts or ideas without citing your source(s)
- Handing in someone else's work—a paper from the Internet or one borrowed from a friend—and claiming that it's your own.
- Handing in the same paper for two different classes.
- Purchasing papers.

If you ever feel as though you are falling behind or cannot keep up, talk with me about your concerns. Together we will work out a solution.

"Michigan State University is committed to fostering a culture of caring and respect that is free of relationship violence and sexual misconduct, and to ensuring that all affected individuals have access to services. For information on reporting options, confidential advocacy and support resources, university policies and procedures, or how to make a difference on campus, visit the Title IX website at www.titleix.msu.edu."

Limits to Confidentiality

Essays, journals, and other materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University's student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees, including instructors, may not be able to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues based on external legal obligations or that relate to the health and safety of MSU community members and others. As the instructor, I must report the following information to other University offices if you share it with me:

- Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child,
- Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff, and
- Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center.

Disruptive Behavior

Article 2.III.B.4 of the [Student Rights and Responsibilities \(SRR\)](#) for students at Michigan State University states: "The student's behavior in the classroom shall be conducive to the teaching and learning process for all concerned." Article 2.III.B.10 of the [SRR](#) states that "The student and the faculty share the responsibility for maintaining professional relationships based on mutual trust and civility." [General Student Regulation 5.02](#) states: "No student shall . . . interfere with the functions and services of the University (for example, but not limited to, classes . . .) such that the function or service is obstructed or disrupted. Students whose conduct adversely affects the learning environment in this classroom may be subject to disciplinary action.

Attendance

Students whose names do not appear on the official class list for this course may not attend this class. Students who fail to attend the first four class sessions or class by the fifth day of the semester, whichever occurs first, may be dropped from the course.

Campus Emergencies

If an emergency arises in this classroom, building or vicinity, your instructor will inform you of actions to follow to enhance your safety. As a student in this class, you are responsible for knowing the location of the nearest emergency evacuation route or shelter. These directions appear on the maps posted on the walls throughout this building. If police or university officials order us to evacuate the classroom or building, follow the posted emergency route in an orderly manner and assist those who might need help in reaching a barrier-free exit or shelter. To receive emergency messages, set your cellular phones on silent mode when you enter this classroom. If you observe or receive an emergency alert, immediately and calmly inform your instructor. (See also www.alert.msu.edu.)

Course Evaluation

“Michigan State University takes seriously the opinion of students in the evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction, and has implemented the SIRS (Student Instructional Rating System) process to gather student feedback. This course utilizes the “online SIRS” system, and you will receive an e-mail sometime during the last two weeks of class asking you to fill out the SIRS at your convenience. As a reminder to be sure to fill out the SIRS evaluation form, the final grade for this course will not be accessible on STUINFO during the week following the submission of grades for this course unless the SIRS online form has been filled out. You have the option on the online SIRS form to decline to participate in the evaluation of the course – we hope, however, that you will be willing to give us your frank and constructive feedback so that we may instruct students even better in the future.”

USEFUL RESOURCES AND LINKS

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

(from the [Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities \(RCPD\)](http://www.rcpd.msu.edu)): Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a Verified Individual Services Accommodation ("VISA") form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc.). Requests received after this date may not be honored.

Other useful sources

- Writing Center: <http://writing.msu.edu>
- Learning Resource Center: <http://www.msu.edu/~lrc>
- Library: <http://www.lib.msu.edu/>
- Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab): <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>
- Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities: <http://www.rcpd.msu.edu>

- Counseling Services: <http://www.couns.msu.edu/>
- Office of the University Ombudsperson
<https://ombud.msu.edu/index.html>
- MSU recommended Title IX information
 - Mandatory Reporting:
<http://titleix.msu.edu/policy-info/mandatory-reporting.html>
If you are an employee and a student or colleague discloses that she or he was a victim of sexual assault or relationship violence, your response and support can make a big difference.

MSU recognizes the complexities associated with fulfilling your mandatory reporting obligations as an employee while offering support and maintaining the relationship you have built with the student or employee. To that end, MSU has created the Employee Mandatory Reporting Guide in order to provide employees with information about the mandatory reporting process, including what happens when a report is made, as well as tips for responding and supporting students and employees.

Unless identified as a confidential source, all university employees are obligated to promptly report incidents of sexual harassment, sexual violence, sexual misconduct, stalking, and relationship violence that:

- Are observed or learned about in their professional capacity
- Involve a member of the university community or
- Occurred at a university-sponsored event or on university property

Employees are only required to report relationship violence and sexual misconduct of which they become aware in their capacity as a university employee, not in a personal capacity.

- How to Make a Report:
<http://titleix.msu.edu/make-a-report/index.html>
- Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (RVSM) policy:
https://www.hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/university-wide/RVSM_policy.html
- MSU Title IX-related resources:
<http://titleix.msu.edu/find-resources/index.html>
- How students can “get involved” with Title IX programs:
<http://titleix.msu.edu/getting-involved/index.html>

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TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Note:

- The course schedule is tentative and subject to change
- All changes regarding the course schedule are posted on the course site.

Unit I Gender, Oppression, and Differences among Women

Week 1

T 8/30 Introduce Class; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Feminist Philosophy

Week 2

T 9/4 De Beauvoir, The second sex (Introduction)

Th 9/6 De Beauvoir, The second sex (Conclusion)

Week 3

T 9/11 Frye, Oppression

Th 9/13 Frye, the necessity of differences: Constructing a positive category of women

Week 4

T 9/18 Friedan, The problem that has no name

Th 9/20 Rubin, The traffic in women: Notes on the “political economy” of sex

Week 5

T 9/25 hooks, Feminist politics: Where we stand; Consciousness-Raising: A constant change of heart

Th 9/27 Okin, Feminism and multiculturalism: Some tensions

Unit 2 Intersectionality, Cultures, and Power

Week 6

T 10/2 Crenshaw, Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics

Th 10/4 Crenshaw, Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color

Week 7

T 10/9 Lugones and Spelman, Have we got a theory for you! Feminist theory, cultural imperialism and the demand for “the woman’s voice”

Th 10/11 Lugones, Playfulness, “World”-travelling, and loving perception

F 10/12 Mid-Term Paper Due by 5 PM on the course site

Week 8

T 10/16 Narayan, Undoing the “package picture” of cultures

Th 10/18 Narayan, Essence of culture and a sense of history: A feminist critique of cultural essentialism

Week 9

T 10/23 Allen, Rethinking power
Th 10/25 Brown, Wounded attachments

Week 10

T 10/30 Mohanty, Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses
Th 11/1 Mohanty, "Under Western eyes" revisited: Feminist solidarity through anticapitalist struggles

Unit 3 Identity Politics, Feminist Solidarity and Transnational Feminisms

Week 11

T 11/6 Bunch, Women's rights as human rights: Toward a re-vision of human rights
Th 11/8 hooks, Sisterhood: Political solidarity between women

Week 12

T 11/13 Dean, Feminist solidarity, reflective solidarity
Th 11/15 Allen, Solidarity after identity politics: Hannah Arendt and the power of feminist theory

Week 13

T 11/20 Chowdhury, Locating global feminisms elsewhere: Braiding US women of color and transnational Feminisms
Th 11/22 No Class; Thanksgiving

Week 14

T 11/27 Barlow, International feminism of the future
Th 11/29 Conferences (session I)

Week 15

T 12/4 Conferences (session II)
Th 12/6 Wrap Up & Course Evaluation

There will not be final exam for this class. Term paper is due by 5 PM on Wednesday December 12th on the course site. No late work will be accepted.