

WMNST 590 Feminist Thought

FALL 2021

WOMEN'S STUDIES

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Dr. Jess Whatcott

Email: jwhatcott@sdsu.edu (best way to reach me, I respond M-F between 9 am – 5 pm)

Voicemail: 619-594-2861 (you may leave a message, I respond M-F between 9 am – 5 pm, but less consistently than email)

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11 am – 12 pm, other appointments available on Wednesdays and Fridays.

[Please click here to sign up for an appointment time.](#)

Office Location: Arts and Letters 334. We can also meet virtually. When you sign up for your appointment slot, please indicate whether you will be coming in person or online.

COURSE INFORMATION

Scheduled Class Days/Time: Wednesdays, 7-9:40 pm

Modality: Face to face seminar

Class Location: Storm Hall 101

WHAT IS THIS CLASS ABOUT?

This class will introduce you to the deliciously rich world of feminist thought by surveying key themes and concepts. What unites the field is the desire to respond to oppression based on gender, and all the forms of subjugation that intersect with patriarchy, including those based on race, indigeneity, class, disability, sexuality, religion, citizenship status, age, body size, skin color, and more. Each of the texts that we will read have played an important role in how feminists have come to understand the organization of systems of oppression and the possible strategies for creating change. In addition to some of the “classic” feminist texts, we will examine the ways that other theoretical frameworks have contributed to and complicated feminist thought, including those grounded in Marxism, critical race theory, Black feminisms, Native feminisms, “Third World feminisms,” post-modernism, trans studies, queer studies, and critical disability studies. Given the wide range of theory that could be considered feminist, we will only be able to scratch the surface in this semester together.

Catalog description: Readings of feminist theory in historical perspective, with attention to contemporary debates in feminist scholarship. Required for WMNST majors. Elective for WMNST minors. Required for advanced certificate students. Elective for WMNST graduate students. Required for WMNST graduate students without a WGS background.

WHAT WILL YOU LEARN?

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

- Discuss key concepts in a range of feminist theories
- Apply feminist theories to social, cultural, economic, and political issues
- Identify and analyze main arguments, and evaluate the evidence and the line of reasoning in a text
- Synthesize a range of feminist theories and integrate new concepts into an understanding of feminist theory
- Formulate a written argument and use evidence from feminist scholarship and real world examples to develop it

WHAT WILL YOU READ?

REQUIRED READINGS:

There are no required books for this class. All the readings will be made available as pdfs, and links will be provided to texts in the library. You are however required to either: print the readings and take notes on them; use a tablet or kindle to take notes on the reading; or, if you use a screen reader, to use an audio note-taking system.

We will be reading a significant portion of several books. If you have an interest in some of these topics, or in finishing the book, there are many used copies available in the world. I highly encourage the use of local bookstores or non-Amazon online book sites, and I am happy to share a recommendation if you ask.

Sins Invalid's book *Skin, Tooth and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People, A Disability Justice Primer*, is only available for purchase at <https://www.sinsinvalid.org/merch>.

WHAT ABOUT COVID-19?

Even though this was entirely preventable, we are unfortunately still in the midst of a global pandemic, with no real end date in sight. Below I describe all the current university policies, but given the continued uncertainty with new variants, and the fact that some people live with children or immunocompromised people, or are care-givers for others, I will be as generous and as understanding as possible with you. I hope you can be as generous with me and each other. I also promise to be flexible in the face of change, and I ask you to do the same. I want to work with you to make it possible for you to finish this course.

Please contact me as soon as you can to discuss any situations that come up, especially any emergencies such as isolation, quarantine, care-giving for someone who is ill, or if you need to travel to take care of a family member.

The rules created by the university to enable face-to-face instruction may change at any moment. Currently, the university's policy is that you are required to come to class, and to wear a mask in class, UNLESS you are experiencing any symptoms of illness, have tested positive for COVID-19, or are waiting for test results from an exposure to someone who tested positive. In these cases, your instructors are supposed to be as flexible as possible in order to allow you to stay home. If you are sick you are advised to stay home EXCEPT to come to campus wearing a mask ONLY to get tested at the Student Health Center. You should then return home and wait for your test results.

If you refuse to wear a mask in the classroom, you will be asked to leave and may be referred to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities.

If you have a medical illness that puts you at high risk of serious illness from COVID-19, you are supposed to contact the Student Ability Success Center to make official arrangements. Your instructors are not required to create a new modality (such as online or hybrid) to accommodate you. The official policy for students who need to stay home for any other reason, is that you should enroll only in online courses. If at any point in the semester you have any kind of emergency situation, whether it is Covid-19 related or not, please know that you don't have to figure it out on your own and that there are resources to support you.

WHAT DOES THE PROFESSOR EXPECT OF YOU?

- 1. Read the assigned material prior to class.** There is a lot of reading in this class and class time will revolve around collectively working to understand and evaluate the readings. I expect you to devote several hours each week to reading and completing the assignments. A few of the articles are dense on purpose, in order to try and convey complicated ideas. If you get stuck with something, give it your best try, and bring your questions to class. Chances are, if you got stuck, someone else did too. I hope that rather than be frustrated with something that is hard, we can learn to find some pleasure in unpicking the meaning out of a dense text.
- 2. Check your e-mail regularly.** Any changes to reading assignments, instructions for completing assignments, and any other announcements will be sent via the e-mail address that is linked to your Canvas account. If you don't check your university account, you must go into Canvas and update your email settings.
- 3. Regularly attend and participate in class.** Class discussion will be spent comprehending the arguments made in assigned material, analyzing and evaluating the material, and synthesizing and integrating ideas across assigned readings. It will be difficult to complete this class without attending regularly. However, if you need a week off for some reason, please take it without fear of consequence. *If you have an emergency or serious situation that requires you to miss more than 1 class period, especially if it is more than 1 week in a row, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss how to keep you on track. Please quarantine or isolate for the necessary 10 days due to COVID-19 exposure or positive test.*

4. **Participate respectfully during class time.** We join the classroom from a variety of situations and from different life experiences. Because most of class instruction will be completed on your own time, I ask that you make every attempt to join our Wednesday session each week, and that you minimize as many distractions as can during the session. During these discussions, you will be asked to abide by some community agreements that we will create together during the first session.
5. **Complete all assignments to the best of your ability and on time.** You are responsible for keeping track of when assignments are due. **Late policy:** I am somewhat flexible about accepting your weekly bibliographies 1-2 days late. Beyond this, you are better served focusing on the next week's assignment, or you will continue to fall behind. Midterms will be accepted up to one week late, reduced by 15% so that the maximum grade is a B. No late work will be accepted beyond December 20, including the final project, due to the turnaround in grading time. *If you have an extreme and unavoidable reason preventing you from turning in your assignments on time, please contact me. This includes COVID-19 related reasons.*

HOW WILL YOU DEMONSTRATE WHAT YOU ARE LEARNING?

PARTICIPATION

This is an upper division course designed for majors, minors, and graduate students. There will be very little lecture by the instructor, and instead will rely on various forms of discussion to build our collective understanding of feminist thought. The success of this class relies on your preparation, attendance, and participation. Participation does not mean coming to class with full comprehension of a text, ready to critique. Rather, you are highly encouraged to bring questions. The purpose of taking this class together is that will work collectively to understand a text or an idea. If something doesn't make sense to you, or you aren't quite grasping a concept, chances are that someone else isn't either.

DIGITAL ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY – 30 POINTS (10 WEEKS X 3 POINTS EACH)

Over the course of the semester, you will create an annotated bibliography in a digital format with entries for each of the week's assigned readings from class. **Undergrads** will choose one of the week's readings to annotate, **graduate** students are expected to annotate all of the readings for that week. This starts with a bibliographic entry of the complete citation information for the reading. Generally, an annotated bibliography gives a brief summary of the argument the author is making, and identifies the evidence the author uses to support their point. You may then take it in whatever direction is interesting: make connections between readings; apply the theory to a problem you are thinking through; critically engage with theory by identifying areas that they have overlooked or miscalculated. Each entry should be at least one short paragraph, and no more than one page.

Please create a running document where you add each entry. You can either use Google Docs and share the link with me, or use a word program that you upload to Canvas. You will turn in your annotated bib for each week on Wednesday by 5 pm. This means you must plan to read the assigned reading and summarize it well in advance of class. There are 14 possible weeks, and you are expected to annotate at least 10 weeks of readings (each week you submit is worth 3 points toward your final grade). Rather than

length, you will be scored based on demonstrating that you read the material, understand it (or attempt to understand it), and synthesizing, applying, or otherwise critically engaging with the material. If you have misconstrued something, I will return it to you and ask you to resubmit without penalty. Exceptional entries may receive a point of extra credit.

MIDTERMS – 50 POINTS (2 X 25 POINTS EACH)

There are two midterms that ask you to synthesize information across texts, to apply the theories we have studied to the world around you, and to critically evaluate the theories. There are two options for each midterm:

1. **Conventional essay questions:** I will distribute a list of 3-4 essay prompts. Undergraduates will choose 2 to answer, each in a 3-4 page essay, for a total of 6-8 pages. Graduate students will choose 3 to answer in the same length. In each essay, you must engage in depth with at least three authors/theories, for a total of six authors in the midterm.
2. **Critical application essay:** You will choose a “problem” in the world and apply the theories of at least five authors that give insight into how we might think about or respond to the problem. The intent is for you to select an area of interest to you and to consider how the author’s you’ve chosen might respond. For example, although Karl Marx lived well before the twenty-first century, he offers any concepts that might be useful to thinking about the climate chaos or mass migrations of displaced people. In another example, what would Native feminists including Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck and Angie Morrill have to say about the masculinity of the Aztec “spirit leader” at SDSU? The problems you address can be social, cultural, economic, political, or personal, and you can choose any of the readings from the weeks leading up to the midterm to apply. Undergraduate essays should be 6-8 pages in length, graduate essays should be 8-10 pages in length.

KEYWORDS ENTRY – 20 POINTS

The final project for this class is a collaborative keywords glossary and a website displaying our collective knowledge these terms. Undergraduates will sign up in groups of 2 or 3 to compose an entry for one of the keywords that are significant in feminist theory. Graduate students may choose to work alone or in pairs. A keywords glossary catalogues the meanings of an important concept, as that concept is theorized and discussed by multiple authors. Glossaries usually reflect on popular usage and may give examples from the world to illustrate. You may also include your personal reflection on what this keyword means to you. Your entry should be at least 800-1000 words.

You will then create a page for your entry on the class Google Site. The minimum requirements for the page are that your essay is posted in its entirety. You may also want to consider how information is conveyed digitally in ways that exceed the text. You may want to include hyperlinks, non-copyrighted images, videos, or implement some of the other features of Google Sites to make it a visually appealing. We will have a workshop on how to use Google Sites toward the end of the semester.

You will submit a short (1-1/2 page) reflection essay about your experience in composing the entry, and you will specifically describe how your group made decisions and what you personally contributed to the group effort.

OVERALL GRADES WILL BE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING POINTS EARNED:

I grade on a point system. There are 100 points possible in the class (see above). At any point in the course, you can estimate your grade by adding up the points you have earned and compare that to the remaining points available. (Please ignore any percentages that are displayed on Canvas – they are not an accurate reflection of your grade.)

A = (94-100); A- = (90-93)

B+ = (87-89); B = (83-86); B- = (80-82)

C+ = (77-79); C = (73-76); C- = (70-72)

D+ = (67-69); D = (60-66); F= (≤ 59)

OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

Students are responsible for being familiar with the university wide policies found at:

https://arweb.sdsu.edu/es/catalog/GC1617/143_UniPolicies.pdf.

CONTENT WARNING

A course on feminist thought, especially one centering women and queer people of color, necessarily requires us to encounter texts discussing sexual violence and state-sponsored violence. Although I will do my best to warn you of specific content, it isn't always possible to know in advance the things that trigger a trauma response. If you find yourself experiencing distress due to the content of the class, or for any other reason, please reach out for free support:

- Campus-based Counseling and Psychological Services, M-F 8 am – 4 pm: 619-594-5220
- San Diego Access & Crisis Phone Line available 24/7: 1-888- 724-7240
- San Diego Access & Crisis Chat Line available M-F 4-10 pm: <https://svcrplv.uhc.com/sdchat/>

DISABILITY AND ACCESS INFORMATION

I invite all students to communicate their other access needs with me. If you have a campus accommodation letter, it would be helpful to get a copy as soon as possible.

If you think that you could benefit from an accommodation, even if you do not yet have a learning disability or psychiatric diagnosis, or if you are experiencing a new or temporary disability caused by injury, please contact the Student Ability Success Center and they will go through the process with you.

The benefit of getting an official accommodation is that you have one letter that is sent to all of your instructors. Visit: http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/sds/services-overview.aspx. Voice: (619) 594-6473.

STUDENT PRIVACY

The instructor will ensure that student grades and feedback on individual assignments will be kept private. Your materials will be stored in Canvas, and not on paper copy. You are therefore encouraged to retain a personal copy for your records.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

I encourage students to study together and to talk about their ideas for the exams together. However, any work that you turn in **must be in your own words**. In order to be give credit to the ideas of others, any phrase, sentence or paragraph that is an exact copy of what somebody else wrote (or said) should be attributed to the author (or speaker) by name and include a page number. In addition, any idea from an author or theorist that you use in your work, even if it is not a direct quote, should also be attributed to that author by name. To present someone else's words as your own is considered plagiarism, whether you intended to steal their work or not.

Students who are found to be plagiarizing, whether intentionally or not, will be subject to penalty. This can include: receiving a zero on the assignment or exam, receiving a failing grade in the course overall, or being referred to student conduct.

SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

All employees are required to report incidences of sexual assault and sexual harassment to the campus Dean of Students office. That means that professors and other employees who become aware of sexual assault or harassment must contact the Title IX office. HOWEVER, it would be YOUR choice to pursue any action beyond the initial report. You do not have to talk to the university at any point, even if a report is made about you. Anyone who would prefer to talk to someone confidentially about sexual assault or harassment can contact:

- Counseling & Psychological Services (see above)
- Campus-based Sexual Violence Advocate & Educator, [Calpulli Center](#), 2nd Floor, [\(619\) 594-0210](#)
- Center for Community Solutions (CCS), 24-Hour Hotline: [\(888\) 385-4657](#) (Bilingual)

SDSU ECONOMIC CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

If you or a friend are experiencing food or housing insecurity, technology concerns, or any unforeseen financial crisis, it is easy to get help. Visit sdsu.edu/ecrt for more information or to submit a request for assistance.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Subject to change by the instructor with fair notice.

Wk	DATE	TOPICS AND READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES
1	August 25	<i>INTRODUCTIONS, OVERVIEW, AND WHY THEORY?</i> bell hooks - "Theory as Liberatory Practice" adrienne maree brown - "returning from away – wow"	
2	Sept 1	EQUALITY Mary Wollstonecraft - Introduction to <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> , and chapter 4 recommended Angela Y. Davis - chapters 4 & 7 in <i>Women, Race, and Class</i>	Annotated Bib due Weds, September 1, 5 pm
3	Sept 8	DIFFERENCE "The Combahee River Collective Statement" Kimberlé Crenshaw - "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women" Jennifer Nash- "Rethinking Intersectionality"	Annotated Bib due Weds, September 8, 5 pm
4	Sept 15	STRUCTURES OF POWER--CAPITALISM Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels – parts I and II of <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> Selma James – "Sex, Race, and Class" Jodi Melamed - "Racial Capitalism"	Annotated Bib due Weds, September 15, 5 pm

Wk	DATE	TOPICS AND READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES
5	Sept 22	<p>STRUCTURES OF POWER--LAW</p> <p>Ida B. Wells - "Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases"</p> <p>Cheryl I. Harris – "Whiteness as Property"</p> <p>Sins Invalid - "Disability Justice – A Working Draft" and "Sins Invalid Statement on Police Violence" from <i>Skin, Tooth and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People, A Disability Justice Primer</i></p>	<p>Annotated Bib due Weds, September 22, 5 pm</p>
6	Sept 29	<p>IDEOLOGY, HEGEMONY, AND DISCOURSE</p> <p>Stuart Hall – "The Problem of Ideology—Marxism Without Guarantees"</p> <p>Adrienne Rich - "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"</p> <p>Moya Bailey - "Misogynoir in Medical Media"</p>	<p>Annotated Bib due Weds, September 29, 5 pm</p>
7	October 6	<p>SUBJECTIVITY</p> <p>Simone de Beauvoir - Introduction to <i>The Second Sex</i></p> <p>Joan Scott - "Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference"</p>	<p>Annotated Bib due Weds, October 6, 5 pm</p>
8	October 13	<p>BLACK FEMINISM, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND AFFECT THEORY</p> <p>Hortense Spillers - "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book"</p> <p>Nirmala Erevelles - "Disability as Becoming: Notes on the Political Economy of the Flesh"</p>	<p>Midterm 1 Due Monday, October 11 by 11:59 pm</p> <p>Annotated Bib due Weds, October 13, 5 pm</p>

Wk	DATE	TOPICS AND READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES
9	October 20	<p>REPRESENTING THE THIRD WORLD WOMAN</p> <p>Edward Said - Introduction from <i>Orientalism</i></p> <p>Chandra Mohanty – “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonialist Discourses”</p> <p>Saba Mahmood - “Feminist Theory, Agency, and the Liberatory Subject”</p>	Annotated Bib due Weds, October 20, 5 pm
10	October 27	<p>“DECOLONIZATION IS NOT A METAPHOR”</p> <p>Zitkála-Šá - <i>American Indian Stories</i></p> <p>Haunani-Kay Trask - “From a Native Daughter” from <i>From a Native Daughter</i></p> <p>Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill - “Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy”</p>	Annotated Bib due Weds, October 27, 5 pm
11	Nov 3	<p>BIOPOWER AND QUEER THEORY</p> <p>Michel Foucault – “We Other Victorians,” “Scientia Sexualis,” “Objective,” “Method” and “Right of Death and Power Over Life” from <i>History of Sexuality, Vol 1</i></p> <p>Judith Butler - Introduction to <i>Bodies That Matter</i> (pages 1-16)</p>	Annotated Bib due Weds, November 3, 5 pm
12	Nov 10	<p>QUEER OF COLOR CRITIQUE</p> <p>Cathy Cohen - “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?”</p> <p>María Lugones – “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System”</p>	Annotated Bib due Weds, November 10, 5 pm

Wk	DATE	TOPICS AND READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES
13	Nov 17	<p>OPPOSITIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS</p> <p>Sandy Stone - "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto"</p> <p>Gloria E. Anzaldúa - "La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness" from <i>Borderlands/La Frontera</i></p> <p>Chela Sandoval - "US Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World"</p>	<p>Annotated Bib due Weds, November 17, 5 pm</p>
	Nov 24	Break – No class	
14	Dec 1	<p>FEMINIST SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY STUDIES; CRITICAL DISABILITY STUDIES</p> <p>Donna Haraway - "A Cyborg Manifesto"</p> <p>Alison Kafer - "The Cyborg and the Crip" from <i>Feminist, Queer, Crip</i></p>	<p>Midterm 2 Due Monday, November 29, by 11:59 pm</p> <p>Annotated Bib due Weds, December 1 5 pm</p>
15	Dec 8	<p>CRITICAL HOPE</p> <p>Jose Esteban Muñoz – Introduction to <i>Cruising Utopia</i></p> <p>Leah Lakshmi Piepzna Samarasinha- "Crippling the Apocalypse: Some of My Wild Disability Justice Dreams" from <i>Care Work</i></p>	<p>Annotated Bib due Weds, December 8, 5 pm</p>
	Dec 15, 7 pm	Class Website Showcase	<p>Keyword Entry Due Wednesday, December 15 by 7 pm</p>