

WMST 100: Introduction to Women's Studies

Spring 2009 W 2:45-5:15

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Office Hours: Mondays@4:30-6:00, Tuesdays@1:30-3:10, Wednesdays@1:30-2:45 & by appointment

Course Description: This course introduces students to feminist scholarship through essays, films and textbook readings. It is a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the experiences, historical conditions, and concerns of women both in the present and in the past. The course offers a range of perspectives but focuses, most generally, on understanding the sources of women's oppression in order to eliminate it. It will quickly become evident that issues pertaining to women are never limited to the analysis of gender considerations but are always connected to many factors including race, class and sexual orientation. Additionally, students will learn how their own lives connect with the lives around them.

Required Texts

Women's Lives: Multicultural Perspectives – 4th Edition, edited by Gwyn Kirk & Margo Okazawa-Rey

Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation edited by Barbara Findlen

Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture by Ariel Levy

Requirements

- Response papers will be due each week when there is no other writing assignment due. These papers should be typed and single-spaced (about 500 words, more or less). They will be a vehicle for grappling with issues, a place to identify your uncertainties and give voice to your convictions. Please focus on the readings, using other readings, class discussions, and your own experience to put the readings into perspective. Some questions you might address in your response papers: What connections did you make between the readings? How does this piece contradict or confirm other assigned readings? How has this reading extended or challenged your understanding of the issues raised? Papers are due in the beginning of class. No late response papers will be accepted.

I will evaluate the response papers as follows:

B/C: Demonstrates engagement with the reading. Shows you're thinking.

A: Shows extraordinarily thoughtful, sustained engagement with the reading and the issues under discussion.

D/F: Too short to develop ideas, or way off the point, or technically sloppy as to interfere with my attending to what you have to say.

- For your midterm paper (5-7 pages), you will write an essay based on an interview with an older woman in your family. The purpose of this assignment is to have you learn more about an older woman whose experience and understanding are available to you as an inheritance. Some questions to consider: How was your subject's life shaped by being female? How does your subject's life reflect historical and economic circumstances that shaped the lives of women of her generation, class, locale? You might ask about childhood roles, rules, and expectations for girls, within her family, at school, and in her community. What kind of work did she go on to do, paid or unpaid? If she married and had children, did she raise them differently than how

she was raised? How does she see young women's lives today as different from her own in young adulthood? What were her dreams for her life? What became of them?

The paper should consist of:

- a brief introduction to the person and your relationship to her
- an account of the interview (I encourage you both to quote your subject and to describe her)
- a concluding section in which you reflect on what you have learned. Do you see this women's life as she does? What questions are you left with, about her life and women's lives?

Tips for writing a paper based on an interview:

- Listen well. Take advantage to ask follow-up questions
- Plot out your basic questions in advance.
- Tape the interview if you can.
- Consider carefully when it's best to quote, when it will be more effective to narrate your own voice what the subject did and said. If your subject is incisive, do quote her at length. If she's meandering or vague, you may want to rely more on paraphrasing.

Final Project: A research/activism 'ZINE, inspired by at least 1-2 of the texts from the course that made you think differently about the subject. Include/incorporate current information and personal reflections on the material. How did your thoughts and assumptions regarding your topic--your theory, your practice--change throughout the term? Before starting your final paper, you must write up a proposal and have it approved by me. I want to make sure everyone has a distinctive topic.

- Please note that while you need to have good attendance to get a high participation grade, you could have perfect attendance and still receive a very low participation grade. This course requires that you do more than show up; you must be an active participant in each day's discussion/activities. This is why you have **one allotted absence**. It is important to note that there is no such thing as an excused absence. Do not use your allotted absence frivolously. Each absence after the first will result in a full letter grade reduction in your final grade (from a B, for instance, to a C). It is your responsibility to have assignments/copies ready in the beginning of class. Also, it's your responsibility to arrive to class **ON TIME**; arriving late is not only disruptive, it's rude. If you can't make it to class on time throughout the semester, please drop the class! If you know you'll be late or absent, please inform me beforehand. Note: two late days = one absence.
- You need to take an active role in preparing to discuss the day's readings. Give yourself enough time before class to reflect upon the questions you are having about the readings. Come to class with notes, questions and comments about the reading. **Students who neglect do the daily reading(s) & written assignments will be marked as absent for the day.**
- Every student will be required to present a critique and discussion of an assigned reading (lasting about 10 minutes). This presentation is not a book report; it is not intended to provide an overview of the reading. Rather, tell us what interested you. Pick out places in the text that were provoking (inspiring, annoying, disturbing, confusing, etc.). □□ Tell us why. Does the author make any assumptions? Are there gaps in the author's logic? **Come up with at least 6-8 critical/analytical questions for the class.**
- I must inform you that plagiarism is not tolerated and students who plagiarize will fail the class and will be subject to other serious academic penalties.
- Please turn off cell phones before class starts.
- As a service-learning component to this class, every student will be required to take part in the organizing and/or production of the F-Word Film Festival.

SPECIAL NEEDS: If any student has specific, diagnosed, individual learning needs that will require special arrangements such as more time to complete assignments or tests, using someone else's notes, taping class sessions or lectures, please discuss those needs with me during the first week of the semester.

Grading

Response Papers: 40%

In-class Presentation: 5%

Essay #1: 15%

Essay #2 & Presentation of Essay 2: 20%

Class Participation: 20%

Class Schedule. Because this schedule is subject to change, make sure to get the homework assignment from a classmate if you've been absent. An absence from class never excuses you from work we did in class or work due for the following class.

W 1/14: Overview of Class, Introductions

W 1/21: *Women's Lives* (1-37) & "Imagine My Surprise" (*Listen Up* 182-187) & "Selling Out" & "Some Things You Keep With You" (*Listen Up* 247-257)

W 1/28: *Women's Lives* (43-45, 56-59, 61-72, 81-88) + "Ruminations of a Feminist Fitness Instructor" (*Listen Up* 25-32) + "Bringing Feminism a la Casa" (*Listen Up* 209-211)

W 2/4: *Women's Lives* (88-103, 113-119) + "It's a Big Fat Revolution" (*Listen Up* 133-141) + "Chicks Goin' At It" (*Listen Up* 11-18) + *Female Chauvenist Pigs* (1-88).

W 2/11: *Women's Lives* (121-144, 149-155) + "One Bad Hair Day..." + "Weaving an Identity" + "The Immaculate Conception" + "Abortion...." (*Listen Up* 84-88, 51-58, 229-238, 112-117)

W 2/18: *Women's Lives* (165-174, 178-191) + "Don't Call Me a Survivor" + "Lusting for Freedom" + "This Place Called" (*Listen Up* 33-39, 19-24, 281-287)

W 2/25: *Women's Lives* (203-246) + "Reality Check" (*Listen Up* 118-125)

W 3/4: *Women's Lives* (249-273) + *Female Chauvenist Pigs* (89-117) + "Class Feminist..." (*Listen Up* 165-172)

W 3/18: *Women's Lives* (291-308, 313-319) + **ESSAY #1 DUE**

W 3/25: *Women's Lives* (324-333, 339-375)

W 4/1: *Women's Lives* (383-416) + *Female Chauvenist Pigs* (139-196)

W 4/1: F-WORD Film Festival in HLH, 7 PM

Th 4/2: F-WORD Film Festival in HLH, 7 PM

W 4/8: *Women's Lives* (425-456) + *Female Chauvenist Pigs* (197-212)

W 4/15: *Women's Lives* (464-479, 483-502, 519-524, 533-551)

W 4/22: *Women's Lives* (561-602) + Bring in a magazine/newspaper article about a current event/issue regarding women's rights – advances or detractions.

W 4/29: **FINAL PAPERS DUE** / Presentations Begin

FINALS WEEK – WE WILL MEET & Continue Presentations