

Carleton University
Fall 2020
Pauline Jewett Institute of Women's and Gender Studies

WGST 3809: *Feminist Theory*

Wednesdays / 2:35-5:25pm

Location: *Courses will be delivered ONLINE for the Fall 2020 term*

This course will be blended

Professor Contact:

Dr. Dan Irving

Email: dan.irving@carleton.ca

Virtual Office Hours: by appointment via Zoom

Course Description:

We will do a thorough and meaningful reading of four key texts to engage in scholarly inquiry into questions such as 'what is feminist theory?', 'who is a feminist?', 'how is gender inseparable from settler-colonialism, whiteness, sexuality and ability?', 'what are some tangible ways to engage in feminist praxis in times of global pandemic, ecological and economic crises?'

Course Objectives:

- de-mystify 'theory' through engaging collectively with texts written by feminists located within and beyond the academy.
- continue to teach how to read and analyze scholastic materials.
- recognize our own embodied experiences and social locations as integral to the making of theory through written reflections on pieces that move us.
- to trouble the distinction between 'high' and 'low' theory through engaging with pop cultural and everyday means of communicating ideas.

Virtual format:

A global pandemic, COVID-19 has forced us to confront a reality that has turned our lives upside down and inside out. We are destabilized by experiencing life under threat of a virus to which we are all susceptible. We struggle to figure out how to move forward with our work lives and education whilst coping with heightened anxiety, depression, and grief (as many have lost loved ones). We also grieve the loss of "our old lives" and the physical and social distance we must practice which is anathema to us as social beings.

The virtual format that your courses have to take this Fall 2020 semester represent part of such distancing measures in the midst of crisis. This is not the best platform to engage in discussions about theory and this is my first time teaching online. I am confident

that we can meet each other in this virtual space and respect each other’s challenges while opening ourselves to the creative possibilities that can emerge in these times.

Structure of the Course:

Given that we must meet via a virtual platform, there will be class held via Zoom at the scheduled class time. We will not be meeting for the full 3 hours online. The class format will be as follows:

- ⇒ I will deliver a 10-minute introduction to the assigned readings for that week to situate the readings within broader conversations, identify key concepts, and highlight themes interwoven throughout readings as the weeks progress. This introduction will be taped as an audio file and uploaded to CUlearn as part of the course materials for that week.
- ⇒ Space will be made available for you to post specific questions about readings via the discussion board feature on CUlearn prior to class. Space will also be available during class for you to ask questions to clarify pieces of the texts that you do not understand.
- ⇒ 30 minutes will be dedicated to discussing the assigned readings as a class.
- ⇒ 30 minutes may be allotted to watch and analyze media clips in possible break out rooms and then together as a class. I will take notes and post them as a powerpoint slide with media link embedded.
- ⇒ 1 hour of virtual office hours [how can students meet with me privately on line?]

Texts:

- *Anzaldúa, Gloria., and Cherríe. Moraga. This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color 2d ed. New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1984.*
- Ahmed, Sara. *Living a Feminist Life.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.
- *Journal of Lesbian Studies.* Special issue: Loving Transgressions: Queer of Color Bodies, Affective Ties, transformative communities. Volume 21(3) 2017.
- Piepzna-Samarasinha, Leah Lakshmi. *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018.

Course texts are available through the library. For those of you who would like to purchase these texts, I have ordered a few copies to be purchased through Octopus Books on 3rd and Bank Street.

Assignments:

Assignment	Grade Distribution	Due Date	Instructions
Online quiz – CuLearn & syllabus	5%	September 16th	
Attendance	25%		Based on 10 weeks (you are allowed to

			miss 3 classes without accommodation)
Review of <i>This Bridge Called My Back...</i>	20%	October 7th	
Democratizing academic theory	25%	November 4th	
Dinner Party	25%	December 21 [exam policy still in effect?]	

Assignment Instructions

Review of *This Bridge Called My Back*

Length: 1000 words (min/max)

Details: double spaced, 12 pt font, black ink NO title page, proper works cited.

This assignment requires you to engage critically with this ground breaking feminist text that laid the foundation for much intersectional feminist theory “bridging” diverse racial, sexual, and gender-based communities with other considerations of geographical/geopolitical location, class, the politics of nation and ways to survive when multiple differences comprise one’s embodied and lived experiences of everyday life. This assignment requires you to engage with this text in order to think through the meaning of feminist theory and the way feminist theory functions to deepen the understanding of gender and sexual oppression, as well as ways of cultivating community and ally ship to mobilize resistance

- Identify three key themes raised by both co-editors and contributing authors and discuss how these themes contribute to your understanding of the making of feminist theory *from the ground up* (i.e. beginning with the embodied experiences of individuals who are marginalized or Othered within broader society).
- How does this collection do the work of centering the racialized, gendered, sexualized *body* as key to theory-making?
- How does this collection inform, support and/or challenge your understanding of the politics of feminist resistance?
- How did you respond to the book? In other words, what feelings emerged for you as you read various contributions to this text? Which chapters did you find most compelling and why?
- What further questions do you have after reading this text regarding feminist theory and its disruptive potential?

Democratizing Academic Theory:

Length: 1000wrds minimum-1250 maximum

Details: double spaced, 12 pt font, black ink NO title page, proper works cited.

All four required texts with which we engage this semester are edited or authored by scholars who are committed to feminist social justice praxis. All editors and authors (presently or at one time) straddle their location within marginalized communities and academia as a professionalized and elitist institution grounded in settler logic, systemic racism, heteronormativity and neoliberalism. Regardless of one's politico-ethical commitments, academic success demands the production of theory and other scholarship that is inaccessible to most communities beyond the university gates. Similar to the authors and contributors to course texts, the purpose of this assignment is to have you engage in 'knowledge mobilization' by rendering a key concept or theme that is interwoven throughout ONE course text of your choosing accessible to non-academic audiences. You are required to:

- Choose one key concept or specific theme that runs through the text.
- Choose a particular non-profit organization, grass-roots activist group, federal or provincial ministry (for those interested in policy making). You are not actually going to contact the organization, etc, rather, pretend that you have been asked as a student of feminist theory to consult on the particular concept or themes.
- Define the concept or theme accessibly.
- Depending on which organization, movement, etc. you chose discuss why this concept or theme is relevant to policy makers (whether non-profit organization or government) OR to building and/or sustaining grassroots movements. For this, you will have to research the organization, movement or department to determine the issues that are most relevant to them.
- Offer suggestions concerning how key concept or theme can be integrated into policy, existing positions on issues, the work they do.

Dinner Party Assignment:

Length: 2500 words

Details: double spaced, 12 pt font, black ink NO title page, proper works cited

This assignment functions as a take home exam designed to measure the depth of your understanding of all four texts, as well as your ability to represent multiple positions concerning key themes, issues and questions that have arisen over the semester. To do so, you are required to:

- choose **three** key themes/questions/issues/debates and, as host (i.e. moderator of discussion) you will pose these questions to the co-editors and authors of all four required texts. Note: *This Bridge Called my Back* and the special issue of the *Journal of Lesbian Studies* are co-edited. Co-editors often write the preface, the introduction and conclusion of their volumes. It is here that they outline their scholarly and political concerns. They are to be part of the conversation AND you are expected to draw on four authors featured in their book, as well as Ahmed and Piepzn-Samarasinha (for a **total of 9 guests**).
- Place your guests in conversation with each other based on the arguments and perspectives they advance in their work. I am testing you on your understanding of, and engagement with, these texts; therefore, it is important that the dialogue you write for them is representative of their work.

- Regarding above point, you are expected to ***provide textual evidence*** for their reactions and responses to other guests contributions to discussion. This means citing their work directly either via brief quotes or paraphrasing their work with page number provided.
- Feel free to get creative with this assignment. I will relax the expectation that you use formal scholarly language (to a degree – use your judgement) to enable a freer discussion to occur.

READING AND LECTURE SCHEDULE

Week 1/September 9th

Course Introductions

Week 2/September 16

This Bridge Called My Back Sections I (Children Passing in the Streets: Roots of Our Activism) & II (Entering the Lives of Others: Theory in the Flesh)

Week 3/ September 23

This Bridge Called My Back Sections III (And When You Leave, Take Your Pictures With You: Racism in the Women’s Movement) Sections IV (Between the Lines: On Culture, Class and Homophobia)

Week 4/September 30

This Bridge Called My Back Sections V (Speaking in Tongues: The Third World Woman Writer) and Sections VI (El Mundo Zurdo: The Vision)

Week 5/October 7

Journal of Lesbian Studies Garcia-Rojas “(un)Disciplined futures: Women of Color Feminism as a disruptive to white affect studies”; Torres “Building a Translengua in Latina Lesbian Organizing”

Week 6/October 14

Journal of Lesbian Studies Royster “Black Edens, country Eves: Listening, performance, and black queer longing in country music”; De Berry “little sister: An Afro-Temporal Solo-Play”; Anthony & Rowe “Adelina Anthony Interview with Aimee Carrillo Rowe”

Week 7/October 21

Living A Feminist Life Introduction and Part I

***** READING WEEK *****

Week 8/November 4

Living A Feminist Life Part III Living the Consequences

Week 9/November 11

Living A Feminist Life Conclusion 1 & Conclusion 2

Week 10/November 18

Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice Preface and Part I

Week 11/November 25

Last day for assignments over 15%

Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice Part II

Week 12/ December 2

Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice Part III

Week 13/ December 9

Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice Part IV

Course Policies

Online Course as Crisis Management: As we are all painfully aware – the fall semester is being conducted entirely online. This presents shared and unique challenges for all of us as we have to navigate studying and/or work at home while trying to manage the significant impact that COVID-19 has on our mental health. Some of us have children, ill family members, and other obligations that present incredible stress in this uncertain time that is injurious to us all albeit in different ways. As faculty/students in WGST 3809, this is a space we create together so let's work to make it a habitable space that is survivable. As your professor, I do expect you to engage with course materials to the best of your ability (i.e. do the readings, engage with the lecture slides, show up for course introductions during class time, do assignments). Nevertheless, I aim to work with you and meet you where you are given no one is about to operate at full capacity and 'our best' during these times is often 'good enough'. Please keep the lines of communication open and email me with any and all course related concerns. In return, please recognize my humanity and the significant work and family obligations that I must fulfill. I am not trained in online pedagogy and this is the first course I have taught online. I will make mistakes, we will have technological issues, my response time and turnaround of marked assignments will be slower than usual. We are humans and humans cannot live easily in the way we have been forced to endure since mid-March. Let's extend kindness because if we cannot do that in our everyday interactions, we have no hope of building a better world.

CU Learn: The course site on CULearn is the hub of the online course. ALL course materials will be on the course site and it is your responsibility to go on the site regularly to ensure you receive all announcements, engage in discussions, access readings (via Ares) and course materials, as well as submit assignments (via email) and meet with me virtually for office hours.

Email: Please allow *72hrs* for me to respond to your emails (excluding weekends). Consult your syllabus for information before emailing me. If the answer to your question can be found in the syllabus, I will *not* respond to your email.

Office Hours: I am offering office hours by appointment only for the Fall semester given that my schedule is unpredictable given childcare obligations and uncertainty concerning schools in the Fall. If we were physically on campus, I encourage each of you to introduce yourselves to me during office hours at the beginning of the semester. I find that it is important for students attending larger classes to make themselves known to faculty members. It personalizes your learning experiences and my teaching experience. It also helps should you have questions and/or concerns during the semester to have made that initial contact. Please make use of office hours for all course related concerns including questions about “introductory remarks”, PowerPoint lecture slides, media clips, course related issues that may arise, or checking in concerning assignments. Note that you do not have to disclose any private information about your personal circumstances (and I am not qualified to counsel students regarding personal issues). I will work with you to ensure that you are accommodated (when the situation warrants) and complete WGST 3809 to the best of your ability.

Assignment completion: Incomplete assignments will be assigned a “0” grade and your final grade will be calculated accordingly (e.g. you miss an assignment worth 20 marks, you lose these grades and the maximum grade you could achieve if you completed everything else perfectly is 80/100 – that’s an A-).

Late Penalties: Given we are operating in the midst of crisis, a grace period of one week past the deadline is extended to all of you. If you do not have your assignment in one week after the deadline then *2 raw marks per day* including weekends will be deducted. The only exceptions made are for students who have proper medical documentation or (in the case of the final assignment) obtain an official deferral from the Registrar’s office.

University Policies

Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#)

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#)

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/> for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;

- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence, which cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

Read more about academic integrity here:

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>