Course Outline

Course: LAWS 5302 F - Feminism, Law and Social Transformation

Term: Fall 2008/09

Class: Day & Time: Wednesday – 11:35-14:25
Room: B454 LA (Loeb)

Instructor: Professor Doris Buss

Contact: Office: C573 LA (Loeb)
Office Hrs: Thursdays - 11:30-1:00 pm
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“Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Registered PMC students are required to contact the centre, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that I receive your letter of accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you require accommodation for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodation to PMC by November 7, 2008, for December examinations, and March 6, 2009, for April examinations.” With regard to accommodations for religious obligations and pregnancy, please see http://www.carleton.ca/pmc/students/accom_policy.html

Assignments

1. Oral Book Review OR 4-6 page critical commentary 15%
2. Paper Proposal + Bibliography 15%
3. Research Paper: 70%

1 A & B Oral Book Review OR Critical Commentary

1a. Book Review

Students select EITHER a book review OR a critical comment. For those opting for the book review: select a book from the list below to read and present in class (on the dates specified). The book review should be about 15-20 minutes long, followed by 10 minutes for discussion, and should provide an overview of the book, the main approach/theoretical orientation of the author, the book’s main themes/arguments, and finally a discussion on the book in relation to the readings in the course, and for that week in particular. For example, how do the arguments/analysis in the book relate to the rest of the readings for that week? Do they confirm or complicate the analyses? What particular questions does the book help illuminate or, conversely, leave unaddressed? Do you think the authors of the articles you read for the class would agree/disagree with the arguments in the book? Why or why not?

Book choices:

- bell hooks. From Margin to Center. (Southend).
- Patricia Williams. The Alchemy of Race and Rights
- Sherene Razack. Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms, 1998;
- C. Manfredi, Feminist Activism and the Supreme Court (UBC Press 2004)
• Didi Herman. Rights of Passage: Struggles for Lesbian and Gay Legal Equality.

1b. Critical comment

Students can selected EITHER an oral book review OR write a 4-6 page commentary on ONE of the readings in a given week (sign up list to be distributed in class). An article commentary sets out the author’s argument and then considers how the author’s argument pertains to, challenges, reinforces, questions, complicates the course themes and particularly the RELATED themes emerging from that week’s material. In some cases, the article under review may more directly engage with readings from an earlier week. In that case, a good critical commentary will reflect on those readings. A critical commentary should NOT be a descriptive summary of one of the readings.

2. Paper proposal and bibliography [required]

This is a 3 page paper proposal that sets out the topic of your research, your main research questions, and the avenues and directions you hope to pursue. A proposal should contain a brief discussion of the background to your topic: what are the events or developments with which your paper is concerned, what developments/directions has the theoretical literature taken, where does your research fit into this background?

You are also required, in addition to the 3 page proposal, to annotate 3 sources (ie books or academic journal articles) that you have used in preparing your proposal or that you might use in your research paper. Each annotation should be about 2 paragraphs long, and set out the author’s main focus, argument and approach, and why you think this will be useful to your research.

3. Research paper

This should be about 15-20 pages long (and no more than 25) on a topic to be agreed with me. It must be typed and double-spaced.

MATERIALS

Materials, unless otherwise noted, have been compiled into a reading pack and are for sale at Octopus Books, 116 3rd Avenue, Ottawa, ph: 233 2589.
SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Sept 10  Introduction to Course

Sept 17  Feminist Methods

Sept 24  Feminist Methods, II
This week we will look at a Supreme Court of Canada decision and its rethinking by the Women's Court of Canada (see Majury, below). The type face for the extracts of the original SCC decision in Gosselin is very small and I apologise. If you have difficulties, you can find the decision on-line at the SCC website under 2002, vol 4. As you are reading the two different decisions in Gosselin, consider whether or not you think the WCC decision is a 'feminist' rewriting? What makes it feminist (if anything)? How radical (or not) is the idea of the WCC?
- Vanessa Munro, Law and Politics at the Perimeter: Re-Evaluating Key Debates in Feminist Theory, Chapter 1: “The Development and Dilemmas of Feminist Theory, pp. 11-39
- Gosselin v. Quebec (A.G.), Gwen Brodsky, Rachel Cox, Shelagh Day, and Kate Stephenson, CJWL 18: 189-221; 224-229;

Oct 01  Race and Difference in Feminist Thought
Book Review: bell hooks. From Margin to Center. (Southend)
- Sherene Razack Looking White People in the Eye
- Constance Backhouse, Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950, chapter 1 “Introduction”;
Oct 8  Race, Culture and Difference


Oct 15  Religion and Polygamy

- Reading TBA

Oct 22  Human Rights, Equality and The Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Didi Herman: Rights of Passage: Struggles for Lesbian and Gay Legal Equality.

- Vanessa Munro, Law and Politics at the Perimeter: Re-Evaluating Key Debates in Feminist Theory, Chapter 3, "On Reform and Reforming Rights";

Oct 29  Sexual Violence and Legal Knowledge


- Karen Busby, "'Not a Victim until a Conviction is Entered': Sexual Violence Prosecutions and Legal ‘Truth’", in Elizabeth Comack, ed. Locating Law.
Nov 5  Prostitution
Book Review: Dany Lacombe, Blue Politics: Pornography and the Law in the Age of Feminism. University of Toronto Press.

- Nussbaum, Martha. 2006. “‘Whether from Reason or Prejudice’: Taking Money for Bodily Services”, in J. Spector, ed. Prostitution and Pornography: Philosophical Debate about the Sex Industry.
- Terri Jean Bedford, Amy Lebovitch, Valerie Scott v. Canada.

Nov 12  Migration and Trafficking

- Daiva Stasiulis and Abigail B. Bakan. Negotiating Citizenship: Migrant Womenin Canada and the Global System (Toronto: University of Toronto); Chapters 2 and 3.

Nov 19  Gender, Sexuality and the International


Nov 26  Student Presentations