

## WOS385: FEMINIST THEORY!

FALL 2019 || T/R 2-3:15 || MAIN HALL 413

LIAM OLIVER LAIR || [LLAIR@WCUPA.EDU](mailto:LLAIR@WCUPA.EDU) || WAYNE HALL RM. 734

OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAY 12:30-1, WEDNESDAY 12-3, THURSDAY 12:30-1 & BY APPOINTMENT

### IN THIS CLASS YOU WILL:

Learn about Feminist Theory, why it's important for your life, and how to connect it to everything around you.

### WHAT WE ARE GOING TO READ:

- \* *Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed
- \* *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, McCann & Kim
- \* A few things on D2L

### WHAT KIND OF THINKING YOU'LL DO:

This class asks you to apply what we discuss in class to your everyday life. Because of that, we will not only be reading and responding to experts in the field, YOU become the experts as well. You can share your expertise and also reflect on how what we are talking about in class makes clear the way that gender, race, class, disability, and other systems shape how we theorize everything around us.

### HOW YOU WILL EARN YOUR GRADE:

You have the opportunity to earn 1000 points.

### LATE WORK:

As adults, getting your work done on time should be a priority. I understand that things happen. Late work must be submitted no later than 2 days after the original due date. You will be marked down 1 letter grade, and then 1 more for every day it is late after that.

### WHEN IS STUFF DUE?

Weekly Responses: Every day we meet! (x10)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Author Introduction: Sign up!

\_\_\_\_\_  
In Class Item: Sign up!

\_\_\_\_\_  
Exams: Week 7, Finals week

### NEED HELP?

Awesome! Come visit in me in my office hours! I want you all to do well. Also, please see me about any accommodations you might need.

### WHAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO DO BY THE END OF THE SEMESTER:

You will be able to talk to discuss and engage with feminist theories, understand how they account for (or fail to account for) intersectionality, and understand how these theories play out in everyday life

### ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF:

E-mail me any time and I will usually respond in less than a day (or sooner). If things come up in your life, keep me informed and we can work together to make sure you succeed in this class. I would encourage you to do this with other profs, too.

**OVERVIEW**

This course will ask you to engage with major trends in feminist theory and philosophy, and will also introduce you to key feminist thinkers. We have 15 weeks together. As such, we cannot even begin to cover the depth and nuance of all feminist theories or theorists. We will instead look at some of the main theoretical controversies and topics that feminists continue to engage in today. The course invites us to think about how feminist theories continually shape, inform, and influence the ways we engage in contemporary feminist modes of inquiry. While the underlying purpose of feminist thought is to understand the nature of women's oppression, and how to eliminate it, each theory and theorist offers a different set of ideas. It is designed to help you develop a critical theoretical framework for thinking about questions relating to sex, gender, sexuality, race, disability, feminism, and economy, among other things. It is also designed to help you engage with and understand theories that explain how power moves, functions, and how it is constructed and institutionalized – in our relationships, in our families (broadly defined), in our schools and workplaces, and in our culture. Many students report that Feminist Theory is one of the most challenging—and most rewarding—courses that they have taken. Keeping this in mind, please remember that your experience in the course is largely dependent on your level of preparedness in each class. If you have any problems related to the course, please notify me immediately so we can work toward a resolution together.

**KEEP IN MIND:** Engaging in diatribes against a theoretical framework or an author does not appreciate the diversity of feminist thought or take into account the context in which a particular writer theorized feminism. Rather, our critical assessment of a piece of writing should allow us to see how feminist thinking has grown, shifted, and changed overtime. This is particularly important when evaluating the strengths and limitations of a feminist theory through intersectionality. *As such, it's not enough to point out social or ideological or political flaws in texts, and it's certainly not an option to walk away from the texts, any more than it would be an option to ignore racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.* You must intellectualize your recognition of those flaws and decide what we need to do with them in the present. We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the folks that we are going to read this semester – so critique, but don't criticize; challenge, don't dismiss.

**INCLUSIVITY & DIFFERENCE**

I am committed to making this space a welcoming place for anyone, regardless and because of race, sexuality, dis/ability, religion, gender, gender expression, class, as well as many other factors that shape who we are in the world. We will work collectively to make this classroom a safe space. This means that we, collectively, will work on valuing and empathizing with a diversity of backgrounds and experiences and on recognizing that experiences that differ radically from our own are just as valuable as those that are similar. Creating a safe space does not mean it will always be comfortable – feeling discomfort can often be the most productive place of learning. We will support each other in this work, we will assume good intentions, and we will hold each other accountable as we move through the semester as we listen and attend to the voices of every person in this class.

**GOALS:**

- Know similarities and differences among the different feminist approaches to theory
- Apply feminist theories, including theories of intersectionality, to personal, local, and global contexts.
- Understand the ways feminist theories explain oppression, exploitation, and systems of power relations
- Understand the links among systems of gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and ethnicity using critical theories and methods of inquiry.
- Explain the major debates/controversies that have occurred within feminist movements, and thinkers
- Evaluate strengths and limitations of feminist theories
- Apply feminist theories to contemporary problems—personal, communal, national, and international
- Analyze the ways feminist theories attend to the intersection of multiple oppression

**COMMUNITY CHECK-IN**

Once a month, we will do a 'community check-in' in order to gauge where the class is with readings, class concepts, assignments, and WCU more generally. This is meant to be a safe space where we can work through any issues that are creating barriers for you. Here are the guidelines for community check-ins:

- Respect each other's privacy, what is said during the community check-in should stay in the classroom
- Be concise during the check-in. Be intentional about what you say and make sure you leave space for others
- If you don't feel comfortable sharing during the check-in time, but want me to know about any concerns or questions you are having, email me or come to my office hours
- ALSO - use these emails to ask each other questions, study together, etc.

**NAMES AND E-MAILS OF THREE CLASSMATES**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**RESEARCH/EARNING YOUR GRADE!!**

1. Weekly Responses x15, 15pts each	= 400pts
2. Author Introduction x1	= 50pts
3. Classroom Item x1	= 150pts
4. Online, Take-Home Exams x2, 200pts each	= 400pts
<hr/>	
	= 1000 points possible

**1) WEEKLY RESPONSES:**

Each week you will prepare a response to the topic at hand and bring it to class. These responses will include answers to some of the following questions about each reading.

1. What question(s) do the authors address?
2. What are their arguments in response to this question?
3. What evidence supports the author's arguments?
4. What important underlying assumptions are made in the readings?
5. Is the argument convincing or not? Why?
6. How does this argument support, challenge, or otherwise connect to other arguments raised in the course?
7. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach relative to other approaches we have studied in the course?
8. What are some of the political implications of this argument?

We are reading multiple essays and speeches each week. I ask you to comment on every one assigned for that day, but if one inspires more than the others, using more space for one is perfectly acceptable. The question or reflection should demonstrate you read the material carefully, and that you thought beyond the material in some intellectually engaged way. **Cite the place in the reading where the ideas arise** (a "works cited" page is not necessary - just a page number so we can find the passages you reference). 2-4 typed double-spaced pages should suffice.

**2) AUTHOR INTRODUCTION:**

For those of you who took Roots with Dr. Woolfrey, this assignment will be familiar. I have tweaked it a bit, *so take note of the different questions I want you to answer in your introduction.*

Each student will be responsible for introducing the class, in a presentation of **no more than 5 minutes**, to one of the authors of our assigned readings. Be prepared to summarize the author's life and activities, especially those that demonstrate their engagement with and contribution to feminist theory. Powerpoint or Prezi presentations are encouraged. Do not quote from your sources, but be sure to document and give full citations for all sources as the last slide in your presentation. Please use at least **two different sources**.

The presentation itself should grab your audience's attention! Your report should begin with what YOU find to be most interesting about this author. If you're engaged, your audience will be as well. Build your report from there following the steps below:

- a. What was the most interesting thing you learned about this person?
- b. What made this author an important figure in the evolution of feminist theory?
- c. What kind of theoretical conversations was this person engaging in?
- d. What about your author's positionality - how did this shape their theoretical approach?

Also keep the following in mind:

- Make your listeners want to know more.
- Present information clearly and concisely.
- Have references available for all borrowed material.

- Use note cards or typed script, and speak loudly and clearly.
- Exhibit enthusiasm and interest in the topic.

**3) IN-CLASS ITEM:**

Each of you will be placed in a small group (2-3) and will create a short “classroom aid” based on the theme of a given day. This does *not* take the form of a flashy presentation, but comes in the form of a class activity or some analysis of a global/local event that is relevant to the theme of the day.

Essentially, you are taking the theme of one day and translating the theoretical frameworks explored into a contemporary case study. The major function of this assignment is for your group to distill all of the elements of a particular theoretical framework and consider its application in spaces that may or may not have been explored using the given theoretical lens. This can explore a specific cultural or political moment (ex. the presidential election), a public figure (ex. Beyoncé), a global/local social movement (ex. Black Lives Matter), some online/digital phenomena (ex. social media memes), etc. You may have accompanying visual aids or slides with discussion questions. Feel free to bring short articles or pictures to aid your case study, but these should be supplemental to your group’s activity. There is no particular time limit, as this isn’t a presentation but a classroom aid to the lecture.

**4) EXAMS [mid-term & final]:**

The exams will consist mostly of short essay answers. These will give us a chance to stop, reflect, and touch base to make sure we are all on the same page and have a grasp of the basic concepts we are working with over the semester.

**EXTRA CREDIT:**

Read one of the essays from the Feminist Theory Reader that is not assigned during the semester. Write a weekly response. Due by the last day of class by midnight. 15 points possible, you can do this twice, for a possible 30 pts.

---

**ALL ASSIGNMENTS ADD UP TO A TOTAL OF 1000 POINTS:**

YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO **EARN** UP TO 1000 POINTS OVER THE COURSE OF THE SEMESTER.

I DO NOT GIVE GRADES. YOU EARN THEM

**Course Outline/Tentative Schedule:**

**Week 1 | Naming the Problem**

**Tues 8.26**

Ahmed, "Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects)"

**Thurs 8.28:**

*Feminist Theory Reader:*

Introduction and Section I Introduction: pp1-30

**Week 2 | Theorizing Feminist Times & Spaces**

**Tues 9.3:**

4: Thompson, "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism" [12]

5: Basu, "Globalization of the Local/Localization of the Global: Mapping Transnational Women's Movements" [9]

**Thurs 9.5:**

11: Martinez, "La Chicana" [3]

12: The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement" [7]

14: Clarke, "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance" [9]

**Week 3 | Theorizing Intersecting Identities**

**Tues 9.10:**

*Feminist Theory Reader:*

Intro: Theorizing Intersecting Identities: 161-180

16: Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto" [10]

**Thurs 9.12:**

17: "Thornton Dill & Zambrana, "Critical Thinking about Inequality: An Emerging Lens" [12]

18: Nash, "Re-Thinking Intersectionality" [10]

19: Patil, "From Patriarch to Intersectionality: A Transnational Feminist Assessment of How Far We've Really Come" [9]

**Week 4 | Social Processes/ Configuring Differences**

**Tues 9.17:**

20: Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism & Feminism" [15]

21: Parreñas, "Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, & Domestic Work" [16]

22: Abu-Lughod, "Orientalism and Middle East Feminist Studies" [9]

**Thurs 9.19:**

23: Sinha, "Gender & Nation" [19]

24: Smith, "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing" [9]

**Week 5 | Boundaries & Belonging**

**Tues 9.24**

*Feminist Theory Reader:*

Intro: Theorizing Feminist Knowledge & Agency, 351-367

34: Harstock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Toward a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism"

**Thurs 9.26:**

- 35: Collins, "Defining Black Feminist Thought"  
36: Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes' Revisited"  
38: Moraga, "The Welder"

**Week 6 | Living a Feminist Life**

**Tues 10.1:**

*Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed  
Introduction & Chapter 1

**Thurs 10.3:**

*Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed  
Chapters 2 & 3

**Week 7 |**

**Tues 10.8:**

MID TERM & **GRADE CHECK-IN**

**Thurs 10.10**

- 39: Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of the Partial Perspective"  
40: Mani, "Multiple Meditations: Feminist Scholarship in the Age of Multinational Reception"

**Week 8 | Subject Formation & Performativity**

**Tues 10.15:**

- 41: Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power"  
42: Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory"

**Thurs 10.17:**

*Feminist Theory Reader*:  
Intro: Imagine Otherwise/Solidarity Reconsidered, 493-508  
43: Jagger, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology" [15]

**Week 9 | Bodies & Affects**

**Tues 10.22:**

- 44: Davis, "Reclaiming Women's Bodies: Colonialist Trope or Critical Epistemology" [14]  
45: Ahmed, "Multiculturalism and the Promise of Happiness" [16]

**Thurs 10.24:**

Alison Kafer, Introduction to *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 1-24 [The pdf also includes chapter 1, not required reading]

**Week 10 |**

**Tues 10.29:**

*Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed  
Section II, Chapter 4

**Thurs 10.31:**

*Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed  
Section II, Chapters 5-6

**Week 11 | Solidary Reconsidered**

**Tues 11.5:**

*Feminist Theory Reader:*

47: Moya, "Chicana Feminism and Postmodernist Theory" [18]

50: Puar, "I would Rather Be a Cyborg than a Goddess': Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory" [14]

**Thurs 11.7:**

51: Namaste, "Undoing Theory: The 'Transgender Question' and the Epistemic Violence of Anglo-American Feminist Theory" [14]

52: McRobbie, "Beyond Post-Feminism" [5]

**Week 12 |**

**Tues 11.12:**

*Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed

Section III, Chapter 7

**Thurs 11.14:**

No Class

- Baril, "Needing to Acquire a Physical Impairment/Disability: (Re)Thinking the Connections between Trans and Disability Studies through Transability," *Hypatia* 30(1): 2015. 30-48.

**Week 13 |**

**Tues: 11.19**

*Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed

Section III, Chapters 8-9

**Thurs 11.21:**

- Cressida Heyes, "Changing Race, Changing Sex," in Shrage, "You've Changed" 135-154.
- Grillo, Trina and Stephanie Wildman. "Sexism, Racism, and the Analogy Problem in Feminist Thought," in Jeanne Adleman and Gloria M. Enguidanos, (eds.) *Racism in the Lives of Women: Testimony, Theory, and Guides to Antiracist Practice*

**Week 14 |**

**THANKS GIVING BREAK - No Classes**

**Week 15 |**

**Tues: 12.3:**

*Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed

Conclusions 1 & 2 [235-268]

**Thurs 12.5:**

D2L:

Millbank, "Smiling"

**FINAL:** TBA



**REQUIREMENTS THIS COURSE FULFILLS****1. Women's and Gender Studies Requirement**

This course is taught as part of the Women's and Gender Studies program, and is a required course for both the major and minor in Women's & Gender Studies. As such, the course is intended to help you:

- *Analyze how gender operates historically and in the present.* Achieved through Exams, Lectures/Participation.
- *Apply feminist theories, including theories of intersectionality, to personal, local, and global contexts.* Achieved through Reading Summaries, Lectures/Participation.

**2. Philosophy Department Requirement**

This course is taught as part of the Philosophy Department and fulfills an elective for the major and minor. As such, this course is intended to help you:

- Identify key figures, concepts, theoretical perspectives and historical eras in philosophy (1a)
- Describe philosophical concepts related to diversity and diverse perspectives, including ethical, social, political, or intercultural concepts (1b)
- Analyze and evaluate arguments from selected texts (4a)

**POLICY ON CHILDREN IN CLASS**

It is my belief that if we want women and parents of all genders in academia, that we should also expect children to be present in some form. Currently, the university does not have a formal policy on children in the classroom. The policy described here is thus, a reflection of my own beliefs and commitments to student, staff and faculty parents.

**1)** All exclusively breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as is necessary to support the breastfeeding relationship. Because not all parents can pump sufficient milk, and not all babies will take a bottle reliably, I never want students to feel like they have to choose between feeding their baby and continuing their education. You and your nursing baby are welcome in class anytime.

**2)** For older children and babies, I understand that minor illnesses and unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to choose between missing class to stay home with a child and leaving them with someone you or the child does not feel comfortable with. While this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable.

**3)** I ask that all students work with me to create a welcoming environment that is respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status.

**4)** In all cases where babies and children come to class, I ask that you sit close to the door so that if your little one needs special attention and is disrupting learning for other students, you may step outside until their need has been met. Non-parents in the class, please reserve seats near the door for your parenting classmates.

**5)** Finally, I understand that often the largest barrier to completing your coursework once you become a parent is the tiredness many parents feel in the evening once children have *finally* gone to sleep. The struggles of balancing school, childcare, and often another job are exhausting! I hope that you will feel comfortable disclosing your student-parent status to me. This is the first step in my being able to accommodate any special needs that arise. While I maintain the same high expectations for all student in my classes regardless of parenting status, I am happy to problem solve with you in a way that makes you feel supported as you strive for school-parenting balance. Thank you for the diversity you bring to our classroom!

*- adapted from a statement written by Dr. Melissa Cheney*

**CLASSROOM CIVILITY**

While the nature of the material covered in this course means we will discuss controversial materials, you do not have license to be insensitive. No bigotry will be tolerated in this class. That said, at some point in time, any one of us might offend someone else in the classroom. I would ask that you assume good intentions, but that does not mean we should not be held responsible for your words, regardless of intention. If you offend someone in a genuine effort to learn and grow, we have no problem. If, however, you are simply trying to offend or being blatantly insensitive, I will have to speak to you about your behavior. If that type of insensitive behavior continues, I will invoke the Student Code of Conduct on Classroom Behavior.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & MISCONDUCT**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. The plagiarism policy for this course is that anyone who deliberately commits plagiarism will get an F for the course and will be reported. This includes submitting anything but ORIGINAL work. You also cannot submit your own work that you had submitted for another class. Further, you are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the University policies and procedures that pertain to Academic Honesty. Instances of unintentional plagiarism will be handled on a case-by-case basis and can result in a reduced or failing grade for that assignment. For more information on the WCU plagiarism policy, please see their website. I recognize as cheating anything that is covered in the university policy on academic honesty.

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

Work will be considered a day late after I leave the classroom on the due date. Late assignments will be penalized 2 points per day, including weekends. This is necessary to be fair to your classmates. However, should you happen to encounter any extenuating circumstances during the semester that may require extension on any course assignment, please discuss the matter with me as soon as possible. If you fail to inform me in a timely fashion, you may not be granted an extension. Further, I will not be responsible for returning any late work to you with the rest of the class' work.

**ACCOMMODATIONS, RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES, ETC.**

WCU makes accommodations for students with disabilities (physical, learning, or otherwise). The Office of Service for Students with Disabilities arranges accommodations for students who are eligible. It is your responsibility to contact the office or other appropriate WCU office in a timely manner. If you have ANY concerns about accommodation, please see me. If you have recognized religious observances or recognized university obligations or if unforeseen circumstances arise that conflict with course events or requirements you must let me know immediately, so that we can discuss and arrange a reasonable accommodation before the course is underway.

**EXCUSED ABSENCES POLICY FOR UNIVERSITY-SANCTIONED EVENTS**

Students are advised to carefully read and comply with the excused absences policy for university-sanctioned events contained in the WCU Undergraduate Catalog. In particular, please note that the "responsibility for meeting academic requirements rests with the student," that this policy does not excuse students from completing required academic work, and that professors

can require a “fair alternative” to attendance on those days that students must be absent from class in order to participate in a University-Sanctioned Event.

### **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

All students are encouraged to sign up for the University’s free WCU ALERT service, which delivers official WCU emergency text messages directly to your cell phone. For more information and to sign up, visit [www.wcupa.edu/wcualert](http://www.wcupa.edu/wcualert). To report an emergency, call the Department of Public Safety at 610-436-3311.

### **EMAIL POLICY**

It is expected that faculty, staff, and students activate and maintain regular access to University provided e-mail accounts. Official university communications, including those from your instructor, will be sent through your university e-mail account. You are responsible for accessing that mail to be sure to obtain official University communications. Failure to access will not exempt individuals from the responsibilities associated with this course.

### **A NOTE ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE**

WCU Faculty, Staff, and Students believe in creating a community free from interpersonal violence, including sexual assault, partner violence, and stalking, in which all members feel safe and respected. I believe each student deserves a safe environment to pursue an education and I understand the devastating impact forms of power-based personal violence (i.e. sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, and stalking) may have. I am dedicated to make our campus safe. If you’d like to know more about Green Dot, WCU’s bystander intervention program, please ask! Please know that all faculty on campus are mandatory reporters. This means that if you disclose an experience of sexual misconduct to me outside of a classroom discussion, a writing assignment, or as part of a University-approved research project, I must report the experience to WCU’s Title IX Coordinator, Lynn Klingensmith ([lklingensmith@wcupa.edu](mailto:lklingensmith@wcupa.edu)). If you disclose sexual violence or any other abuse that occurred to you while you were a minor, or to someone else while they were a minor, I must report that, too. If you would like to co-report your experience in a way that feels comfortable for you, we can discuss that process.

Filing a sexual misconduct report *does not mean* you will have to get involved with an investigation or go to court. Survivors under the influence of drugs or alcohol will not face disciplinary charges from WCU. Learn more at: [wcupa.edu/sexual misconduct](http://wcupa.edu/sexual-misconduct)  
Information regarding the reporting of sexual violence and the resources that are available to victims of sexual violence is set forth at the webpage for the Office of Social Equity at <http://www.wcupa.edu/admin/social.equity/>.

If you or someone you know has experienced stalking, partner violence or sexual assault, please know, you are not alone. You can find confidential resources at the following:

- **Sexual Misconduct Advocate:** Housed in the Office of Wellness Promotion, the Advocate is a resource for those who have experienced sexual violence, harassment, intimate partner violence and stalking. *Jayne Trogus: 610-436-0732 | [jtrogus@wcupa.edu](mailto:jtrogus@wcupa.edu) Commonwealth Hall Room 12. Hours: Mon-Fri 8a.m.-3:30p.m.*
- **Counseling Center:** The Counseling Center offers free confidential individual and group counseling and support. *610-436-2301 | Commonwealth Hall–Lower Level to schedule an appointment. Hours: Monday through Friday 8a.m.-4:30 p.m.*

- **Student Health Services:** The Health Centers offers non-emergency medical care for injuries and follow-up appointments. (610) 436-2509 | *Commonwealth Hall–Lower Level. Hours: Monday-Friday, 8a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday 10a.m.-6p.m.*
- **Crime and Victim’s Center of Chester County:** 24-hour hotline for sexual assault and rape in Chester County: 610-692-RAPE (7273).

**MORE INFO**

For questions regarding Academic Integrity, the No-Grade Policy, Sexual Harassment, or the Student Code of Conduct, students are encouraged to refer to the Undergraduate Catalogue, the Ram’s Eye View, and the University website at [www.wcupa.edu](http://www.wcupa.edu).