

University of Pittsburgh
Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences

Intro to Feminist Theory

GSWS 0500-1135

Fall 2017

R 6:00-8:30 PM

Cathedral of Learning 402

Instructor

Matt Lovett

Office Hours: WR 5:00-6:00

Office: CL 402C

E-mail: mtlovet@pitt.edu

Course Description

“Are there women, really?” This question, posed by Simone de Beauvoir, remains a central concern for the politics of feminism: namely, who constitutes its subject? Who is it for, and what does it seek? In this course, we will attempt to identify and interrogate some of the theoretical and methodological perspectives of feminism and its many iterations. We will examine canonical and critical texts alike, covering topics like sex assignment and gender identification; race, class, and intersectionality; trans*, gender nonconforming, and otherwise queer experiences; modalities of femininity and masculinity; sex and sex work in feminism; and the representation of women in popular culture and the media more broadly. Our aim in this course will be to understand and critically evaluate these texts, always keeping an eye on how (and whether) these theoretical constructs reveal, appeal to, draw from, and help us interrogate our lived experiences. The tools learned in this class should allow us to think about the role of (gendered) power in our lives, how that power works and shapes us, and how we might use these critical perspectives to attempt to bring about a more nuanced understanding of the world we inhabit. As such, this will be a course in epistemology: that is, a course that is concerned with the way we know this world and how we think through it. This course fulfills both the “writing-intensive” and philosophy general education requirements.

Course Objectives

Students that successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Historicize theoretical discourses on “feminist theory.”
2. Be able to critically read and synthesize, compare, and identify varying perspectives on feminism.
3. Be able to cultivate your own voice and critically analyze different theories of feminism.
4. Be able to understand how feminist theoretical perspectives are practically situated and made manifest in the world in which we live.
5. Apply feminist theory to your own research interests and home discipline(s).

Required Texts

Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives, McCann, Carole R. and Seung-kyung Kim (eds). 2013. Third Edition. Routledge. (“FTR” listed on the Class Schedule designates chapters from this reader; also, I’ve only given the first page in the reader for the text; unless otherwise indicated, you are to read the entire article).

*All other required readings will be provided as PDFs available on CourseWeb or as hyperlinks within the syllabus. All PDFs will be named with both author and essay title. Not all PDFs I’ve uploaded will be required; you are only required to read what is on the syllabus. However, everything I’ve uploaded is available for you to read as supplementary material, should you so desire.

*You are required to bring all assigned readings to class.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Blogs:

Blog Posts: You will be required to make *two* blog posts of the following sort: 1) briefly explain the reading and summarize its main argument; 2) evaluate the position of the argument (for example: do you agree or disagree? what are the strengths or weaknesses of the argument? does the argument bear on your life? is the author building off of, critical of, or elaborating on a position studied earlier in the semester?); 3) come up with three questions you would like to pose about the reading for discussion. Your posts should be at least 500-700 words long, and they should be submitted *by noon the day of the assigned reading*. Please choose your dates by the second class on the Google Document posted on CourseWeb. A third blog post should be one of the following: 1) a description of the following experience: at one point over the semester, perhaps over a weekend, you need to take on the mannerisms of a gender identity *other than your own*. Enact it in public for about an hour, and consider how it feels for you and how you are perceived. In your post, describe what you take that gender identity and presentation to be, what you chose to enact, how you felt, and how others responded to you; 2) a response to our discussion on reproductive rights.

Blog Comments: You will also be required to post a comment on *three* of your classmates’ posts. These should add something substantial to the discussion. You may pose a response to a question they’ve raised; finesse, object, or modify their claims; draw out further connections between the ideas they’ve suggested and other readings we have done; or, relate the content of their blog post to a separate cultural phenomenon or an issue in another discipline of interest to you. While you may draw from personal experience, please do not simply relate an anecdote. You should post these *by midnight on the day of the reading discussed*.

Papers:

Short Papers: You will write *two* two-to-five page, double spaced papers. These will be exegetical in nature. That is to say, in these papers you should try to articulate the main argument of the article, and explain the reasoning that the author gives in support of this argument. These papers should stick closely to the original text and not consider any outside sources. Your goal will be to clearly and succinctly explain the argument the text gives and to do so with correct usage of essential quotations that support the point that is being made. Papers should be in 12 point Times New Roman font with one inch margins. You may choose any article you like that we have studied in class for these assignments.

Note on exegesis: An exegesis is a critical exposition of a text. It is easy to get exegesis confused with “summary,” which simply repeats the major points of an argument. An exegesis, on the other

hand, engages with the main points of the argument but does so in and through *explaining* the argument of the text. If it's useful, you could consider it along the lines of history: anyone can give a timeline of events that happened in any given time, but to actually explain how event A led to event B is a different sort of endeavor; an exegesis must understand the main points, but its goal is to show the argument that allows the points to work together to present a coherent position.

Revised and Extended Short Paper: This paper will be an expansion on one of your earlier papers. In this paper, responding to my comments, you will rewrite your exegesis. Then, you will extend the paper in one of the following ways: 1) you may criticize the argument and point out what you consider its shortcomings and offer a solution to this; 2) you may put the argument into dialogue with another article we have covered, either comparing/contrasting the two positions, explaining how one builds on, departs from, or corrects an earlier argument; or, 3) you may relate the exegesis to a particular social or cultural issue or event that you find relevant – this would involve explaining why the argument bears on the issue at hand, and what it might offer us in trying to investigate this problem. These papers should be 5-7 pages, double spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman font with one inch margins.

Final Paper: This 10 page paper should be a substantive argument that engages multiple sources from the semester. You are free to choose a topic we have covered in class that interests you, or use the readings we have read to tackle another problem of concern for you. In this paper, you should first identify what the issue is (e.g., the harm or benefit of pornography, queer critique of gay marriage, media representation of women, treatment of women in politics, non-western critiques of feminism, body-shaming, reproductive rights, etc.) You should use the readings from class (and, if you like, outside sources) to give a nuanced analysis of the issue you've chosen. In so doing, your paper should include at least the following elements: 1) clear statement of the main concern of your paper; 2) exegesis of the articles you'll be using in the paper (or at least the points salient to your argument); 3) critical evaluation of the articles (e.g., how do they relate to each other, complement or critique each other); 4) a clear understanding of the relationship between the articles chosen and their roles in your paper overall; 5) coherence in applying these articles to your topic, culminating in a reasoned, argument in support of a clear conclusion.

Final Paper Meeting: Each of you will need to schedule a meeting with me to discuss your final paper topic with me. You should have something written prepared for this (at minimum an outline and at least 3 sources). This means that you should begin thinking about this topic early in the semester and developing ideas, links, comments, and criticisms throughout. We will meet during my office hours; if your schedule conflicts, we will make alternate arrangements if possible. Please sign up on the Google Document found on CourseWeb.

Note on Paper Submissions: Please submit your papers to me in .docx format, not PDF, so that I can give you comments in the margins of your paper. Please make sure that the file name includes your last name (for example, LovettPaper1.docx). In the subject line of your email, please include your name as well as the class you are in (e.g., Lovett Feminist Theory Paper 1, Wednesday class). This will help me keep your papers sorted easily.

PAPER I	Friday, 9/22, by noon
PAPER II	Friday, 10/6, by noon
PAPER III	Friday, 11/3, by noon
FINAL PAPER	TBA

Participation:

Participation: Considering the nature of this class, participation will be considered a mandatory portion of your grade. This requires active engagements with the readings, in the blog posts, and in class discussion. Your participation grade will be adversely affected by the use of cell phones in class, looking at non-class-related materials, “spacing out,” and, of course, by not participating in discussion. Your participation grade may also take into account your engagement with me outside of the classroom, for instance in meeting during office hours, sending emails relevant to the material, and so on. Frequent absences will also negatively impact your participation grade. Considering the length of our classes, everyone will be expected to participate in every class, and I will also be monitoring each person’s contribution to group work.

Grade Breakdown:

Blog Posts: 5% each (x3 = 15%)

Blog Comments: 3.3% each (x3 = 15%)

Short Papers: 12.5% each (x2 = 25%)

Revised Short Paper: 15%

Final Paper: 25%

Participation: 10%

Note on Grades: Your grades will be entered into the grade center on CourseWeb. The grades are already weighted appropriately; so, to determine what your grade is at any given time, look in the “Final Grade” column, as it’s already been programmed to weigh each assignment appropriately. Do not calculate your own grade by looking at total points, as that won’t give you the correct grade.

Grading Rubric: I will grade your papers based on the following considerations: 1) Grammar – you will be expected to have a strong grasp of Standard English grammar. Papers with multiple grammatical errors, typos, misspellings, comma splices, run-on sentences, etc. will not be eligible to receive an A. 2) Accuracy – you are to correctly and accurately explain the argument of the author about whom you are writing. While it may be true that there aren’t necessarily “right answers” to long-standing debates in philosophy, there *are* right and wrong explanations of a person’s position. 3) Strength, validity, and/or compelling reasoning for whatever position you have in your third and fourth papers – you are expected to be able to come up with, defend, and argue for a particular position (be it critical or affirmative). An A, from me, is a grade that must be *earned*. Thus, a decent paper with a few grammatical errors and a general understanding of the argument will likely get somewhere in the B range. A paper that has multiple errors and that misunderstands the argument will be in the C or below range. An A paper is a truly superlative paper that, through proper grammar and articulate prose, captures and explains the nuances of an argument and thoughtfully presents her/his/their own position, as well, when appropriate.

Bonus Opportunities:

GSWS Events: On the GSWS website, as well as on our CourseWeb site, you can find a calendar of events (talks, workshops, etc.) that will be put on throughout the semester. For bonus points, you can attend an event of your choice and write a 500-700 word response to it. In the response, you should summarize what you took to be the main idea and argument of the talk, and then say how you found it relevant to the course, your life, and the world (if at all). You should also evaluate whether or not you found the argument convincing or compelling, and why. Please type these and turn them into me within a week of the event.

Extra Blog Posts: Should you so choose, you can post an extra blog post on a reading for class. It should follow the format of all other blog posts. Please indicate in the title that it is an extra post.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity: All work you submit in this class must be your own. Any writing you present as your own that comes, directly or indirectly, from the work of another without reference or citation constitutes plagiarism. This is a breach of academic integrity and performs a disservice to yourself, to the instructor, to your classmates, and to the person responsible for publishing the work plagiarized. Any idea of which you are not the originator must be referenced as such. For more information on this, you can find the University of Pittsburgh's guidelines for Academic Integrity here:

<http://www.as.pitt.edu/fac/policies/academic-Integrity>

Any and all plagiarism will result in immediate failure of the assignment in question, with no make-ups. Students are responsible for proofreading their work so as to avoid any possible cases of plagiarism. **No excuses will be considered.** Students suspected of plagiarism will also be reported to the University.

Attendance, Participation, and Preparedness: You should aim to attend all classes, and, as mentioned above, any unexcused absence will negatively impact your grade. **If you have more than 1 unexcused absence, not only will your participation grade be lowered, your final grade will drop one full point for every class missed. If you miss more than 3 classes, you will fail the course.** You should have completed all assigned readings before the class in which they are assigned, and be prepared to discuss them. Many of the readings may be difficult or opaque for you, so you should feel no pressure to have fully understood them or to "have all the answers." You should, however, demonstrate honest and earnest effort to understand the text. Clarifying and critical questions are equally, if not more, important than answers to questions, so feel free to contribute in this way. "A" level participation will come from the student who is prepared and engaged, who participates in a meaningful and thoughtful way, who does not scroll through her/his phone, and who respectfully engages with the text, her/his classmates, and the instructor. Participation will be evaluated in the form of questions asked, responses given, or attempts to clarify during class discussion. Beyond this, any interaction with me, including emails or office hour visits (which can include clarifying questions), will count positively towards your grade.

Accessibility: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, 412-228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Cell Phones, Computers, Tablets, & Other Technology: Technology gives us access to an astonishing amount of information; it also gives us Facebook, Snapchat, Candy Crush, Tinder, and a number of other distractions. The temptation to use technology in class is obvious: it may distract us when we would rather not be in class, but it may also allow us to access information relevant to the course (including PDFs, websites, and so on). That being the case, should you choose to use technology in my class, you are *de facto* consenting to my looking at your device to see what you are viewing, and I reserve the right to question you on this without warning. Use of any technology for any reason other than coursework will negatively impact your participation grade. If you are expecting an emergency call, or if you have any other reasonable reason for needing to have access to your phone during our scheduled meetings, please let me know before class. Repeated violation of this will result in your being excused from class and your grade docked more seriously.

Class Etiquette, Speech, and Language: This course will be primarily discussion based, and everyone should feel comfortable speaking, and should feel encouraged to do so. Some topics we discuss may have personal resonance with different members. I urge each of you to be aware of the tone in which you speak and the way in which you address your classmates. The discussion of ideas should be open, and in order for this to be facilitated, we should treat each other with respect. To be condescending, snarky, bored and disaffected, or hostile will serve only to make the person behaving in such a manner seem impolite. We should aim to approach the subject matter and each other with maturity and sophistication. Remember: not everyone has a shared history or shared set of experiences (and, indeed, in this course we will discuss some of the most vulnerable members of society), and so we ought to be aware of this. At the same time, as adults dealing with serious and controversial subject matter, we are all also obligated to be willing to discuss those ideas that cause strong feelings in us, be they anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, etc. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree), use each others' preferred pronouns, and be conscious of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom. You will know the content of the class in advance, as you'll have seen the syllabus and done the readings. This being so, there will be no "trigger warnings" provided, and class discussion should happen organically and respectfully. Please look over the syllabus in advance and feel free to talk to me should you have any concerns. Also, if a subject discussed in class *does* seem "triggering" to you, you are free to step out of the room.

Gender-Inclusive Language Guidelines: Aspiring to create an academic environment in which people of all identities are encouraged to contribute their perspectives to academic discourse, The University of Pittsburgh Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program provides guidelines regarding gender-inclusive/non-sexist language. Following these guidelines fosters an inclusive and welcoming environment that will strengthen and enrich academic discussion and writing.

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Just as sexist language excludes women's experiences, non-gender-inclusive language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Identities including trans, intersex, and genderqueer reflect personal descriptions, expressions, and experiences. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (for example, first year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, etc.). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students, faculty, and staff may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

Title IX and Required Reporting: The University is committed to combatting sexual misconduct. As a result, you should know that University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence, to the University's Title IX office so that the victim may be provided appropriate resources and support options. What this means is that as your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me, or of which I am somehow made aware.

There are two important exceptions to this requirement about which you should be aware:

A list of the **designated University employees, who work as counselors and medical professionals, and do not have this reporting responsibility**, and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here:

<http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report/confidentiality>

An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as part of an academic project, classroom discussion, or course assignment, are not required to be disclosed to the University's Title IX office.

If you are the victim of sexual misconduct, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:

Title IX 412-648-7860

SHARE @ the University Counseling Center 412-648-7930 (8:30 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F)
412-648-7856 (AFTER BUSINESS HOURS)

If you have a safety concern, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Police, 412-624-2121.

Other reporting information is available here: <http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report-0>

E-mail Policy: Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address. Please give me time to respond to emails. I will do my best to reply to emails within 24 hours (M-F). I will respond to weekend emails when time permits; I will reply to urgent weekend emails as soon as possible, but otherwise please wait until Monday for a response. Email is ideally used for quick questions/clarifications. All other concerns—questions about your progress, written work, your grade, class in general—should be addressed during office hours. Please feel free to send a reminder/follow up if I have missed an important email.

Late Papers: Papers will be due on the date and time specified. Paper grades will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade per day late (including weekends and holidays).

Grading Scale: The relation of each assignment to the student's final grade is documented above. Here is the breakdown of the correlation between number and letter grades:

A+ 97-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F 0-59
A 93-96	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
A- 90-92	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

*Schedule subject to change if necessary

Week 1: Introduction: Feminist Theory as Critical Practice

08.31. Introduction to the Course

Uma Narayan "The Project of Feminist Epistemology" (*FTR* 370)

Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges" (FTR 412)

Week 2: Are There Women, Really?

09.07. Elizabeth Grosz, "Essentialism and Its Cognates" in "Sexual Difference and the Problem of Essentialism (<http://ccs.ihr.ucsc.edu/inscriptions/volume-5/elizabeth-grosz/>)

Simone de Beauvoir, "Introduction to *The Second Sex*" (FTR 40)

Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" (PDF)

Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement" (FTR 116)

Week 3: Lesbianism and the Category of "Woman"

09.08. Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (PDF)

Monique Wittig, "One is Not Born a Woman" (FTR 246)

Charlotte Bunch, "Lesbians in Revolt" (FTR 129)

Week 4: Gender and Exchange

09.21. Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of 'Sex'" (PDF)

Fast Food Women (short film)

Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism" (FTR 191)

***PAPER I DUE ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, VIA EMAIL, BY NOON.**

Week 5: Postmodern Bodies

09.28. Sexual Difference Theory & Gender Theory

Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One" (FTR 426)

Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" (FTR 462)

Week 6: The Male Gaze

10.05. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (PDF)

Shulamith Firestone, "The Culture of Romance" (FTR 462)

***PAPER II DUE ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6, VIA EMAIL, BY NOON.**

Week 7: Feminism and/in Pop Culture

10.12. Beyoncé, *Lemonade*

bell hooks, “Moving Beyond Pain”

<http://www.bellhooksinstitute.com/blog/2016/5/9/moving-beyond-pain>

“A Black Feminist Roundtable on bell hooks, Beyoncé, and ‘Moving Beyond Pain’”

<http://feministing.com/2016/05/11/a-feminist-roundtable-on-bell-hooks-beyonce-and-moving-beyond-pain/>

On “Famewhoring”: The Uses (and Abuses?) of Sex Appeal

<http://nypost.com/2016/04/08/kim-kardashians-naked-selfies-only-sap-feminisms-goals/>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/angelina-chapin/why-feminists-should-argue_b_9458672.html

https://www.buzzfeed.com/sylviaobell/karma-kardashian?utm_term=.db1QnRnD1Q

https://broadly.vice.com/en_us/article/paris-hilton-profile-2015-19-fragrances-and-counting-heiress

Week 8: Sexuality in and out of Feminism

10.19. Amber Hollibaugh & Cherrie Moraga, “What We’re Rolling around in Bed With: Sexual Silences in Feminism” (PDF)

Joan Nestle, “My Mother Liked to Fuck” (PDF)

Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex” (PDF)

Week 9: Visiting Speaker Jack Halberstam

10.26. Jack Halberstam, “Wild Things: Notes on Queer Anarchy.”

Class will meet at 6:00 pm in the Frick Fine Arts Auditorium

Week 10: Reproductive Rights

11.02. Sonia Correa & Rosalind Petchesky, “Reproductive and Sexual Rights: A Feminist Perspective” (FTR 134)

“Women of Color and the Struggle for Reproductive Justice” (PDF)

“A Botched Operation” (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/02/03/a-botched-operation>)

After Tiller (Film)

***PAPER III DUE ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3, VIA EMAIL, BY NOON.**

Week 11: Bodies, Science, and Knowledge

11.09. Nancy Tuana, “Coming to Understand: Orgasm and the Epistemology of Ignorance” (PDF)

Anne Fausto-Sterling, “The Five Sexes” & “The Five Sexes Revisited” (PDFs)

“On the Word Hermaphrodite” (<http://www.isna.org/node/16>),

Week 12: Feminism and Trans* Theory

11.16. Sandy Stone, “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto” (PDF)

Raewynn Connell, “Transsexual Women and Feminist Thought: Toward New Understanding and New Politics” (PDF)

C. Jacob Hale, “Tracing a Ghostly Memory in My Throat” (PDF, pp. 47-54 & 57-61 required)

Week 13: Thanksgiving Break

11.23. *No Class

Week 14: Rethinking Masculinity and Femininity

11.30. J. Halberstam, “Transgender Butch: Butch/FTM Border Wars and the Masculine Continuum” (PDF)

Patrick Hopkins, “Gender Treachery: Homophobia, Masculinity, and Threatened Identities” (PDF)

Julia Serano, “Putting the Feminine Back into Feminism” (PDF)

Week 15: Western Imperial Feminism?

12.07. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “‘Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles” (*FTR* 536)

Mrinalini Sinha, “Gender and Nation” (*FTR* 227)

Gloria Anzaldúa, “The New Mestiza Nation: A Multicultural Movement” (*FTR* 277)

Andrea Smith, "Native American Feminism, Sovereignty, and Social Change (*FTR* 321)

***FINAL PAPER DUE DATE TBA**