

FEMST 181: FEMINIST THEORIES FOR PRECARIOUS TIMES

Winter 2017

“I saw in theory a location for healing” // bell hooks

Instructor: Rachel Rys
Email: rachelrys@umail.ucsb.edu
Class Time: Tues/Thurs 2-3:15

Class Location: HSSB 1228
Office Hours: Tues 3:30-5:30 & by appt
Office: South Hall 4707

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will “think with” feminist, queer and critical race theories in order to interrogate the complex relationship between power, knowledge, identity, and resistance. “Thinking with” theories encourages us to examine how scholars develop and use theory in order to solve intellectual and political problems.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of feminist analyses, this course will utilize a wide range of informational sources and presentation modalities (i.e. lecture, discussion, student presentations, interactive group exercises, writing activities, films). In order to build a community of learners, each class member is expected to participate in both learning and teaching throughout the session.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By participating in this course, we will:

- Contextualize and deconstruct dominant narratives about feminist, queer, and critical race theories
- Analyze the role and value of feminist theory as a mechanism for community and change
- Utilize select feminist theories as tools for analyzing current events and cultural production
- Produce critical discussion and application of theory for multiple audiences within and beyond the academy

REQUIRED TEXTS

All required readings will be posted to the class Gauchospace page. The readings are subject to change throughout the quarter, so please refer to Gauchospace for updated reading and assignment information.

Our class discussions will include a considerable amount of close reading and analysis. For this reason, I strongly encourage you to print out and mark up the readings or to bring a device that will allow you to reference the readings and your notes in class.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

- Attendance, participation, preparation (20%)
- Weekly reading responses (40%)
- 3 short synthesis papers (30%)
- Feminist theory application presentation (10%)

Detailed information about course assignments will be posted on Gauchospace and introduced and discussed during class.

CLASS POLICIES

We will have discussions in this course which will require us to interrogate many of our closely held beliefs and values. Due to the personal and intimate nature of the course topics and materials, we will workshop class policies together on Day 1.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

- **Counseling & Support Services:** <http://counseling.sa.ucsb.edu>; 805.893.4411
- **Women, Gender, & Sexual Equity Department:** <http://wgse.sa.ucsb.edu>
- **Campus Advocacy, Resources, & Education:** <http://wgse.sa.ucsb.edu/care/home>; 805.893.4613
- **Campus Learning Assistance Services:** <http://clas.ucsb.edu>; 805.893.3269
- **DSP Accommodations:** This course welcomes and accommodates all interested students. Students who require accommodations to fully participate in the course should contact the Disabled Students Program ASAP: <http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu>; 805.893.2668.

IMPORTANT DATES

Thurs 1/26 Synthesis Paper #1 due in class
Thurs 3/9 Synthesis Paper #2 due in class
Weds 3/22 Synthesis Paper #3 and analytical reflection due to Rachel's mailbox by 4pm (you are welcome to turn this assignment in earlier if that works better for you)

My theory application presentation date: _____

ATTENDANCE, PREPARATION, & PARTICIPATION

Your attendance, preparation, and participation are worth 20% of your final grade.

Attendance:

Class attendance and participation are essential. I take attendance every day. You can miss one class with no penalty, but subsequent absences will reduce your participation grade.

Preparation:

The success of our class depends on your preparation and involvement. Read actively and critically. Mark up your texts and write in the margins. Underline and highlight. Note important passages and be prepared to reference the texts in class.

Participation:

Contribute thoughtfully, respectfully, and frequently. Your class contributions should reflect critical engagement with the course material. There are many ways to participate. Your participation grade includes work completed in class, including group work, activities, and free-writes. If you anticipate any problems with participating in class discussions, please meet with me ASAP to discuss options.

APPLIED THEORY PRESENTATION

Your presentation is worth 10% of your final grade.

Each student will present once between weeks 4-8. Presentations should *use* the day's reading and theoretical concept(s) and framework(s) to present a critical analysis of a current event or cultural product. For example, in the week focusing on affect, I might use the theory of affective economies to examine how a recent speech about immigration uses emotional language to construct ideas of the nation. Or I might use the theory of affective economies to examine a flyer about the DC Women's March. Or a Youtube clip. Or an advertisement. Or a campus event, etc. While you are of course encouraged to draw on other theories discussed in class, make sure that your central framework of analysis draws from the day's main text.

Two to three people will be assigned to present on each day. I'll leave it up to you to decide whether you'd each prefer to present on different examples or if you'd rather collaborate to discuss the same example as a group. Presentations should be about 7-10 minutes long, leaving time for questions and discussion.

Engage your classmates: ask them discussion questions, have them share ideas or do activities, etc. Please, please, please, no Powerpoint presentations! You can present from your seat or use the projector and board to discuss material. I encourage presenters to email me the material to be analyzed 24 hours before the presentation so I can make copies or post it to Gauchospace.

If you find your theory application compelling, you are welcome to continue and expand on your analysis of this example in your Synthesis Paper #2.

READING RESPONSES

Your reading responses are worth 40% of your final grade.

You are responsible for weekly reading responses due each Thursday. Responses should be approximately 1-1.5 double-spaced pages per day, meaning that on most Thursdays, you will turn in 2-3 pages of writing. If there are multiple readings assigned on one day, your reading response should focus on the reading marked with asterisks (**) on Gauchospace.

Responses must be turned in as a hardcopy in class. If you must be absent on a Thursday, be sure to email or drop off your reading responses *before* the start of class to receive credit. Late reading responses will receive *at most* half credit. Keep in mind that these reading responses add up quickly!

In your response, you should:

1. Trace the main argument of Tuesday's reading in **1 paragraph**, drawing on terms and short quotes from the text.
2. Re-state the main argument of Tuesday's reading in **1 sentence**.
3. Re-re-state the main argument of Tuesday's reading in **1 paragraph, using everyday language** (ie. How would you explain this argument to a family member or friend who has no background in feminist theory?).
4. Repeat steps 1-3 with Thursday's reading.
5. Answer **ONE** synthesis question for the week. Synthesis questions are listed on the syllabus and at the bottom of each week section on Gauchospace. Again, you only need to answer **ONE** each week.

SYNTHESIS PAPERS

Your three short synthesis papers are worth 30% of your final grade (10% for each paper).

You will write three synthesis papers that address the key questions and themes of each unit (due 1/26, 3/9, and 3/22). Each synthesis paper should be a maximum of 3-4 double-spaced pages. Each paper must include a Works Cited page.

Keep in mind that you are expected to keep up with the readings and reading responses while you complete your synthesis papers. Given the time and attention required for each assignment, I strongly, strongly recommend that you plan ahead.

SYNTHESIS PAPER #1: What stories are told about feminist theory? Due Thurs 1/26

According to our readings, what are the most significant limitations of the taken-for-granted, dominant narrative of feminist theory? Choose two significant issues discussed in our readings and explain 1) how they work, 2) how they came to be, and 3) why they present a problem for feminism and feminist theorists. In your conclusion, briefly discuss how these narratives might be addressed or disrupted.

SYNTHESIS PAPER #2: How are feminist theories used? Due Thurs 3/9

Select a specific political or popular example—anything from a speech, to a policy, to a video, to an ad, etc. Begin your paper by briefly introducing your example. Then, analyze this one example using two different theoretical frameworks or tools we have discussed during Unit 2. In your conclusion, discuss if/how these two theoretical frameworks led you to think about your example differently. You may continue to work with the same example you used for your presentation or you may choose a completely new example.

SYNTHESIS PAPER #3: What is the role of feminist theory? Due Weds 3/22

This paper should answer the question, “What is the role of feminist theory in the current moment?” You may answer this question using traditional academic conventions or you may answer using a different genre (ex. zine, video, infographic, flyer, letter, etc.). If you choose to complete your response in a nontraditional genre, be sure to tailor it to a specific audience (fellow Feminist Studies majors, activists, students taking Feminist Studies 20, antifeminists, etc.). Keep in mind the critiques you discussed in Paper #1. See if you can craft your response in a way that does not replicate these issues.

Synthesis Paper #3 is the final assignment that you will submit for the course. When you turn in Paper #3, please also submit a 1-2 page double-spaced analytic reflection about your project and the overall course. This response should address 1) how and why you chose the form and focus of your final paper and 2) what you have learned about feminist theory, particularly in relation to each of the three main questions structuring the course.

UNIT 1: WHAT STORIES ARE TOLD ABOUT FEMINIST THEORY?

Readings must be completed *before* class on the day they are listed. i.e. readings listed in the Tuesday row must be completed by Tuesday at 2pm.

Readings marked with asterisks (**) should be the focus of your reading response. Any readings without asterisks should be used to deepen your understanding of the material and to inform your answer to the weekly reading response synthesis question and the paper at the end of each unit.

WEEK 1: THE WHAT AND WHY OF FEMINIST THEORY

Tues 1/10	<p>Welcome, Course Overview, and Community Expectations</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Theory Head Zine</i>
Thurs 1/12	<p>Roles of Feminist Theory</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • **bell hooks. 1991. "Theory as Liberatory Practice." <i>Yale Journal of Law and Feminism</i> 4(1): 1-12.
<p>Answer <u>ONE</u> of the following synthesis questions in your weekly reading response:</p> <p>A. How do you think hooks would define the word "theory" (in 1-2 sentences)?</p> <p>B. According to hooks, why is talking about theory so divisive?</p> <p>C. How does hooks characterize the relationship between theory and practice?</p>	
<p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading response due on Thursday (1) 	

WEEK 2: DECONSTRUCTING FEMINIST THEORY AND HISTORY

Tues 1/17	<p>Feminist History as Discourse</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elle Covington. 2015. "On Women's Equality Day, a Very Brief Timeline of Feminist History in America." <i>Bustle</i>, August 26. https://www.bustle.com/articles/106524-on-womens-equality-day-a-very-brief-timeline-of-feminist-history-in-america. • **Becky Thompson. 2002. "Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism." <i>Feminist Studies</i> 28 (2): 336-360.
--------------	---

Thurs 1/19	<p>Telling Stories about Academic Feminism</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • **Clare Hemmings. 2005. "Telling Feminist Stories." <i>Feminist Studies</i> 6: 115-139.
<p>Answer <u>ONE</u> of the following synthesis questions in your weekly reading response:</p> <p>A. What is the relationship between "discourse" and the stories we tell about feminist theory?</p> <p>B. How do discourse, power, and knowledge operation in the ways we tell stories about feminist theory?</p> <p>C. What are the dominant narratives about feminist theory? How do the authors from the week disrupt these narratives?</p>	
<p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading response due on Thursday (2) 	

UNIT 2: HOW ARE FEMINIST THEORIES USED?

Readings must be completed *before* class on the day they are listed. i.e. readings listed in the Tuesday row must be completed by Tuesday at 2pm.

Readings marked with asterisks (**) should be the focus of your reading response. Any readings without asterisks should be used to deepen your understanding of the material and to inform your answer to the weekly reading response synthesis question and the paper at the end of each unit.

WEEK 3: THEORIZING INTERSECTIONALITY AND INSTITUTIONS

Tues 1/24	<p>Intersectionality</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • **Kimberlé Crenshaw. 1989. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist.” <i>University of Chicago Legal Forum</i>, 139–67. • Kimberlé Crenshaw. 2015. “Why Intersectionality Can’t Wait.” <i>The Washington Post</i>, September 24. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2015/09/24/why-intersectionality-cant-wait/?utm_term=.d43f871111db.
Thurs 1/26	<p>Intersectionality, Part 2</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • **Barbara Tomlinson. 2013. “To Tell the Truth and Not Get Trapped: Desire, Distance, and Intersectionality at the Scene of Argument.” <i>Signs</i> 38 (4): 993–1017.
<p>Answer <u>ONE</u> of the following synthesis questions in your weekly reading response:</p> <p>A. What are the differences between how Crenshaw defines and discusses intersectionality and the ways in which it is invoked in 1) public and 2) academic discourses?</p> <p>B. How do the patterns of argument privileged by academic institutions shape how intersectionality is discussed in academic texts?</p> <p>C. How has intersectionality shaped ideas about what counts as feminist theory? Feel free to draw on any of the Week 1 and 2 readings in addition to Crenshaw and Tomlinson for specific examples.</p>	
<p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading responses due on Thursday (2) • Synthesis Paper #1 due on Thursday 	

WEEK 4: THEORIZING NEOLIBERALISM, PRECARIETY, AND POWER

Tues 1/31	<p>Political Responsibility and Structural Injustice</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • **Iris Marion Young. 2003. "Political Responsibility and Structural Injustice." University of Kansas.
Thurs 2/2	<p>Neoliberalism and Neoliberal Feminism</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • **Catherine Rottenberg. 2014. "The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism." <i>Cultural Studies</i> 28(3): 418-437.
<p>Answer <u>ONE</u> of the following synthesis questions in your weekly reading response:</p> <p>A. What idea about political responsibility are supported by the rise of neoliberal feminism?</p> <p>B. What similarities do you see between Young and Rottenberg's arguments? In what ways do their arguments diverge?</p> <p>C. What is the role of "choice" and "liability" in in shaping arguments about structural injustice and neoliberal feminism?</p>	
<p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading responses due on Thursday (2) • Synthesis Paper #1 due on Tuesday 	

WEEK 5: THEORIZING INTERPELLATION, CITIZENSHIP, & ABJECTION

Tues 2/7	<p>Citizenship and Interpellation</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • **Leti Volpp. 2002. "The Citizen and the Terrorist." <i>Immigration and Nationality Law Review</i> 23 561-586. • Glenn Greewald. 2017. "Trump's Muslim Ban is Culmination of War on Terror Mentality, but Still Uniquely Shameful." <i>The Intercept</i>, January 28. https://theintercept.com/2017/01/28/trumps-muslim-ban-is-culmination-of-war-on-terror-mentality-but-still-uniquely-shameful/.
Thurs 2/9	<p>Social Abjection</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • **Imogen Tyler. 2013. "Introduction." <i>Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain</i>. London: Zed Books.
<p>Answer <u>ONE</u> of the following synthesis questions in your weekly reading response:</p>	

<p>A. According to Volpp and Tyler, what is the relationship between citizenship and exclusion? In both pieces, how do exclusion and abjection shape state 1) boundaries and practices and 2) individual experiences and resistance?</p> <p>B. Volpp and Tyler discuss different geographic regions (US vs Britain) and focus on different phenomenon (construction of “potential terrorists” vs. revolt of “disenfranchised populations”). Drawing on the theoretical tools each author develops in their text: what do you think that Volpp would argue about the context Tyler describes, and vice versa?</p> <p>C. How does power operate in both Volpp and Tyler’s arguments? How are abject groups constructed and by whom? What underwrites state and individual investment in abjection and exclusion?</p>
<p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading responses due on Thursday (2 pages)

WEEK 6: THEORIZING AFFECT, POLITICS, & TRUTH

<p>Tues 2/14</p>	<p>Affective Economies</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • **Sara Ahmed. 2004. “Affective Economies.” <i>Social Text</i> 22(2): 117-139.
<p>Thurs 2/16</p>	<p>Ethical Witnessing</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • **Paula Ioanide. 2015. “Introduction: Facts and Evidence Don’t Work Here.” In <i>The Emotional Politics of Racism: How Feelings Trump Facts in an Era of Colorblindness</i>. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
<p>Answer <u>ONE</u> of the following synthesis questions in your weekly reading response:</p> <p>A. According to Ahmed and Ioanide, why do feelings trump facts? Given the definition of affect developed in these texts, what would it take to change public feelings?</p> <p>B. Why is affect so central to the field of feminist studies? What types of arguments, analyses, and interventions are facilitated by a focus on affect?</p> <p>C. Ioanide argues that “antiracist feminist justice requires creating socially shared affective receptivity, not merely ideological or cognitive openness” (15). What does “affective receptivity” mean in this context and what would it require?</p>	
<p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading responses due on Thursday (2 pages) 	

WEEK 7: THEORIZING BODIES, VULNERABILITY, AND PROTEST

Tues 2/21	<p>Vulnerability</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Butler, Judith. 2012. “Bodily Vulnerability, Coalitions, and Street Politics.” In <i>The State of Things</i>, edited by Marta Kuzma, Pablo LaFuente, and Peter Osborne, 161–97. Oslo: Office of Contemporary Art Norway.
Thurs 2/23	<p>Precarity and Protest</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Athena Athanasiou. 2014. “Precarious Intensities: Gendered Bodies in the Streets and Squares of Greece.” <i>Signs</i> 40(1): 1-9. Ijeoma Oluo. 2017. “When You Brag that the Women’s March Was Nonviolent.” <i>The Establishment</i>, January 23. https://theestablishment.co/when-you-brag-that-the-womens-marches-were-nonviolent-b042133ae2bb.
<p>Answer <u>ONE</u> of the following synthesis questions in your weekly reading response:</p> <p>A. According to these readings, how are precarity and protest connected? What forms of coalition are formed in the context of protest?</p> <p>B. What is the role of gendered and racialized bodies in the protest sphere, for protesters on both the right and left?</p> <p>C. Referring to Butler and Athanasiou’s arguments, (how) is physical, embodied protest different from, for example, digital activism or other types of protests?</p>	
<p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading responses due on Thursday (2 pages) 	

WEEK 8: THEORIZING ACTIVISM

Tues 2/28	<p>Questioning a Theory/Activism Divide</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <p>Required for everyone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Naomi Greyser and Margot Weiss. 2012. “Introduction.” <i>American Quarterly</i> 64(4): 787-793. <p>Choose AT LEAST TWO additional readings from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Naomi Greyser. 2012. “Academic and Activist Assemblages: An Interview with Jasbir Puar.” <i>American Quarterly</i> 64(4): 841-843. Margot Weiss. 2012. “Reinvigorating the Queer Political Imagination’: A Roundtable with Ryan Conrad, Yasmin Nair, and Karma Chávez of Against Equality.” <i>American Quarterly</i> 64(4): 787-793.485-489. Naomi Greyser. 2012. “Gender Nerds at Heart: An interview on Bridging the
--------------	---

	<p>Blogging/Academic Divide with Feministing.com.” <i>American Quarterly</i> 64(4): 837-839.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margot Weiss. 2012. “Intellectual Inquiry Otherwise: An Interview with Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore.” <i>American Quarterly</i> 64(4): 833-836. <p>In lieu of a typical reading response, please respond to the following questions (in the usual 1-1.5 double-spaced pages): According to Greseyer and Weiss’s introduction, what are some of the promises and risks of academic activism? How do arguments about activism change across the different interviews you read? How do you think each interviewee’s social location shapes their perspective? What do you see as the relationship between theory and practice?</p>
<p>Thurs 3/2</p>	<p>In-Class Work Time</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
<p>Answer <u>ONE</u> of the following synthesis questions in your weekly reading response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above for reading response instructions 	
<p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading responses due on Thursday (2) 	

UNIT 3: WHAT IS FEMINIST THEORY FOR?

*Readings must be completed *before* class on the day they are listed. i.e. readings listed in the Tuesday row must be completed by Tuesday at 2pm.

WEEK 9: TRAVELING THEORY

Tues 3/7	<p>Decolonizing Feminist Critique</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chandra Talpade Mohanty. 2013. "Transnational Feminist Crossings: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique." <i>Signs</i> 38 (4): 967-991.
Thurs 3/9	<p>Untimely Feminist Knowledge Production</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eva Bendix Petersen. 2016. "Turned On, Turned Off: On Timely and Untimely Feminist Knowledge Production." <i>NORA</i> 24(1): 5-17.
<p>Answer <u>ONE</u> of the following synthesis questions in your weekly reading response:</p> <p>A. According to Mohanty and Petersen, how can feminist theory travel across 1) geographic borders and 2) time? What issues potentially arise within each case?</p> <p>B. How can the desire to be "timely" (Petersen 5) potentially lead to "thresholds of disappearance" (see Mohanty 970)?</p> <p>C. How do Mohanty and Petersen each suggest that feminist theory needs to change? Drawing from the readings, what might this look like in practice?</p>	
<p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading responses due on Thursday (2) Synthesis Paper #2 due on Thursday 	

WEEK 10: THE FUTURE OF FEMINIST THEORY

Tues 3/14	<p>Feminist Attachments</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> George Yancy. 2016. "I Am a Dangerous Professor." <i>The New York Times</i>, November 30. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/30/opinion/i-am-a-dangerous-professor.html. Sara Ahmed. 2010. "Feminist Killjoys." <i>The Scholar and Feminist Online</i> 8(3). [Excerpted].
Thurs 3/16	<p>Course Wrap Up & Final Thoughts</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p>

- N/A

Answer **ONE** of the following synthesis questions in your weekly reading response:

- A. According to both Yancy and Ahmed, how does *unhappiness* shape the fields of feminist and critical race studies? What is the effect of focusing on unhappy subjects?
- B. In these pieces, Yancy and Ahmed primarily discuss the role of emotions that are typically viewed as negative. Building off their arguments, what is the role of *positive* emotion in shaping people's attachment to feminism and feminist scholarship?
- C. In what ways can instructors serve as feminist killjoys? In what ways can students serve as feminist killjoys? How does this shape the feminist classroom?

Assignments:

- Reading response due on Thursday (1 page)
- **Final Portfolio due to Rachel's mailbox in SH 4701 by 4pm on Monday 3/22**