

POLI 103: Feminist Interventions in Western Political Thought
MW 9 AM - 12:30 PM
Cowell Academic Building, Room 113

Is feminism simply an “add-on” to liberalism or socialism? Should feminists appeal to the state? Does feminism have a future or is it an outdated ideology? Can feminism speak to all women? And for that matter, what is a “woman” – can we continually appeal to such a universal category? If not, does feminism still serve a purpose? Who is the subject of feminism?

These are only some of the questions that this course seeks to address. The objective of Feminist Interventions is to situate the on-going debates around feminist theory and practice within the context of political theory and the role of the state. Thus, we will be examining topics such as whether/how feminism fits within liberalism and/or socialism, feminist arguments about equality vs. difference, the importance and political usefulness of intersectionality as a legal framework, feminist debates on sex work, and more.

Course Learning Objectives

Through this course:

- Students will become familiar with major feminist contributions to Western political theory.
- Students will learn how to read, understand, and critique political theory via a feminist lens.
- Students will engage in controversies relevant to contemporary Western politics.

By the end of this course:

- Students will be able to identify major threads of feminist inquiry in political theory.
- Students will be able to analyze feminist issues using scholarly evidence.
- Students will be better equipped to discuss political issues surrounding gender and other identities via a critical, intersectional lens.

Assessment

Canvas discussion board posts - 25%

Analytical essay - 25%

Final project - 30%

Course engagement - 20%

Required Texts

You do NOT need to purchase anything for this course. Readings are available on Canvas. If you prefer using printed copies, I recommend purchasing or renting the following book that we will use multiple times:

- Hawkesworth, Mary. *Gender and Political Theory*. Polity Press, 2019.

Classroom Accessibility

Canvas/Internet: Because we're using Canvas discussion boards, it's important to have access to the internet. If this will be an issue for you, please let me know ASAP so we can develop an alternative. There are six assigned Canvas boards throughout the course (we'll do the first one in class together), and **you are allowed to skip one**.

Attendance: Class will be in-person and attendance is important to your "course engagement" grade. Given that we're only meeting ten times, you are allowed **ONE unexcused absence** before it affects your grade. (Notice that there is no limit on excused absences.) Absences can be excused for emergencies and health issues—please be in touch ASAP when you know you will miss class.

Disability: All of us have different needs, strengths, and weaknesses. It is very difficult for me to support you through this course if I don't know how to best match those needs, utilize those strengths, and acknowledge those weaknesses. All that to say: please come talk to me (or email me) about things you may need throughout this course, whether that's fidget toys in class or excused absences or any number of things. You do not need to disclose disability status to me, simply to explain how I can help you succeed. I do not require that students show proof of a DRC accommodation, but I *do encourage* all students to benefit from learning more about DRC services by contacting the DRC (831-459-2089 // drc@ucsc.edu).

Engagement: Standard modes of measuring "participation" are problematic in many ways, but especially in privileging students from particular backgrounds. Therefore, instead of "participation" in this class, I will be evaluating your "engagement" in the course. Evidence of engagement includes:

- Attending class regularly and being an active listener
- Meaningfully participating in Canvas discussion boards
- Being present for and participating in class activities like group work and essay workshops
- Staying apprised of your own progress through the class
- Utilizing resources such as office hours

Notice that "talking in class" is not on this list. You are absolutely encouraged to talk—I desperately *want* to hear voices other than mine—but you are not required to do so in order to get full credit for "course engagement."

Office Hours and Contact Policy

Office hours will be remotely offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays (time TBD). I also encourage students to reach out for in-person office hours appointments on Mondays and Wednesdays after class.

Please give me 24 hours to respond to your email. If I have not responded by then, feel free to reach out again.

Formatting Guidelines

Essays should conform to Chicago-style formatting guidelines. They should be double-spaced, with page numbers in the upper right-hand corner. When citing, you can use either [footnotes](#) or

[parenthetical in-text citations](#). You *do not need* a title page. Every essay should include a properly-formatted bibliography. (Hint: most of the readings on the syllabus are in proper Chicago style and can be copy/pasted into a bibliography.)

Late Policy

Each 24-hour period that a paper is late equals $\frac{1}{3}$ of a letter grade removed from the earned grade. So if a paper has substantively earned a B+ but is submitted one day late, it will earn a B; two days late makes it a B-, and so on. Extensions requested on the date an assignment is due will not be approved. Please review the assignment schedule and ask for extensions early.

Shout-outs

Many thanks to the following professors who, directly or otherwise, contributed to this syllabus. This class was first devised by, and would not be possible without, Vanita Seth (Politics, UCSC). The present syllabus is also informed by courses led by Felicity Amaya Schaeffer and Gina Dent (Feminist Studies, UCSC). Last but not least, this syllabus is indebted to the insight and teaching style of [John McMahan](#) (Political Science, SUNY Plattsburgh).

Schedule

Week 1 - Introduction to Feminist Political Theory

To begin, this week addresses a few basic questions: What makes any particular theory “feminist”? What are (some of) the major concerns that feminist theory highlights in Western political thought? How do we *do* feminist theory? Who is it *for*?

Monday, June 26

Required Reading:

- Hawkesworth, Mary, and Lisa Disch. “Feminist Theory: Transforming the Known World.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, 1-9. Oxford University Press, 2016. (Note that the chapter goes until page 15 but I’m only asking you to read the first 9 pages. Feel free to skim the rest.)
- Hawkesworth, Mary. “Sexed Bodies: Provocations.” In *Gender and Political Theory*, 1-21. Polity Press, 2019.

Recommended Reading:

- Threadcraft, Shatema. “Embodiment.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, edited by Mary Hakesworth and Lisa Disch, 207-26. Oxford University Press, 2016.

WRITE: First Canvas responses! (we’ll do this together in class as a model)

Wednesday, June 28

Required Reading:

- Collins, Patricia Hill. “Distinguishing Features of Black Feminist Thought.” In *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed, 21-44. Routledge, 2000.

- hooks, bell. “Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory.” In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 1-15. South End Press, 1984.

WRITE: Canvas discussion #2. **Group B: due ____ PM on Sunday, July 2nd. Group A: due ____ PM on Sunday, July 2nd.**

Week 2 - Liberalism and Socialism: Add Women and Stir?

This week reviews the basics of liberalism and socialism, as presented in canonical Western theory, through a feminist lens. We will ask: What are the promises of liberalism? How are socialism’s guarantees different from those of liberalism? How does gender and embodiment appear in both of these traditions?

Monday, July 3

Required Reading:

- Rossi, Alice S. “Marriage and Property.” In *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir*, 478-95. Northeastern University Press, 1988.
- Hawkesworth, Mary. “Refiguring the Public and the Private.” In *Gender and Political Theory*, 88-117. Polity Press, 2019.

Recommended Reading:

- Goodwin, Barbara. “Liberalism.” In *Using Political Ideas*, 35-64. John Wiley, 2007.
- Hall, Stuart. “Variants of Liberalism.” In *Politics and Ideology*, edited by James Donald and Stuart Hall, 34-69. Open University Press, 1986.
- Excerpts from: Robinson, Nathan J. *Why You Should Be A Socialist*, 108-111, 139-141. St. Martin’s Griffin, 2019.

WRITE: Canvas discussion #3. **Group A: due ____ PM on Tuesday, July 4th. Group B: due ____ PM on Tuesday, July 4th.**

Wednesday, July 5

Required Reading:

- Nussbaum, Martha C. “The Future of Feminist Liberalism.” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 74, no. 2 (2000): 47-79. [NOTE: skip Part II. read only Parts I, III, & IV.]
- Hartmann, Heidi. “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union.” *Capital and Class* 3, no. 2 (1979): 1-33.

WRITE: Canvas discussion #4. **Group B: due ____ PM on Sunday, July 9th. Group A: due ____ PM on Sunday, July 9th.**

Week 3 - Second-Wave Feminist Interventions: Politics of Difference

What are the main contentions of second-wave feminism? What do we make of a feminist politics of “equality”? What other feminist politics might we explore?

Monday, July 10

Required Reading:

- Eisenstein, Zillah. "Friedan's Liberal 'Feminist Mystique' and the Changing Politics of NOW." In *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, 177-200. Longman Inc., 1981.
- Scott, Joan. "Deconstructing Equality-versus-Difference: Or, the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism." *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 1 (1988): 32-50.

Recommended Reading:

- Thornton, Merle. "Sex Equality is Not Enough for Feminism." In *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, 77-98. Northeastern University Press, 1987.
- Christine DiStefano. "Dilemmas of Difference: Feminism, Modernity, and Postmodernism." In *Feminism/Postmodernism*, edited by Linda J. Nicholson, 63-82. Routledge, 1990.

Wednesday, July 12

Required Reading:

- Kendall, Mikki. "Introduction" and "Solidarity is for White Women." In *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot*, ix-14. Viking, 2020.
- hooks, bell. "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression." In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 17-31. South End Press, 1984.

Recommended Reading:

- Willis, Ellen. "Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism." *Social Text*, no. 9/10 (1984): 91-118.

ASSIGNMENT: Analytical Essay due 11:59 PM on Friday, July 14. (This is because you should spend the weekend reading materials for Week 4.)

Week 4 - Citizenship and Intersectionality

This week, we will study the original articles that theorized intersectionality as a legal framework; then, we will consider how it has become a social and political topic that exceeds its original intention. We will discuss questions such as: how does the state perceive different types of citizens? What does your body have to do with the way you are perceived by the state? What types of politics are revealed when we think from our embodiment?

Monday, July 17

Required Reading:

- Cooper, Brittney. "Intersectionality." In *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, edited by Mary Hakesworth and Lisa Disch, 385-406. Oxford University Press, 2016.

Recommended Reading:

- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1, no. 8 (1989): 139-67.

- Williams, Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." In *The Public Nature of Private Violence*, edited by Martha Albertson Fineman and Roxanne Mykitiuk, 93-118. Routledge, 1994.
- Nash, Jennifer C. *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality*. Duke University Press, 2019.

WRITE: Canvas discussion #5. **Group A: due ____ PM on Tuesday, July 18th. Group B: due ____ PM on Tuesday, July 18th.**

Wednesday, July 19

Required Reading:

- Hawkesworth, Mary. "Theorizing Embodiment" + part of "Reconceptualizing Injustice." In *Gender and Political Theory*, 60-87; 152-64. Polity Press, 2019.
- Threadcraft, Shatema. "Intimate Injustice, Political Obligation, and the Dark Ghetto." In *Intimate Justice: The Black Female Body and the Body Politic*, 113-32. Oxford University Press, 2016.

WRITE: Submit final grading contract. **Due 11:59 PM on Sunday, July 23rd.**

Week 5 - Topics in Controversy: Sex Work, TERFs, and the Subject of Feminism

For our final week, we readdress a question posed in Week 1: who is feminism *for*? In considering two groups of people that feminism often excludes—sex workers and trans* people—this week’s readings explore different types of “exclusionary feminism” and introduce the broad contours of debates over the subject of feminism.

Monday, July 24

Required Reading:

- Miano, Audrey. "Feminism 101: What is a SWERF?" *FEM Magazine*, July 15, 2017. <https://femmagazine.com/feminism-101-what-is-a-swerf/>.
- Alag, Anya. "Feminism 101: What is TERF?" *FEM Magazine*, April 18, 2017. <https://femmagazine.com/feminism-101-what-is-terf/>.

THEN PICK ONE:

- Scoular, Jane. "The 'Subject' of Prostitution: Interpreting the Discursive, Symbolic and Material Position of Sex/Work in Feminist Theory." *Feminist Theory* 5, no. 3 (2044), 343-55. DOI: 10.1177/1464700104046983.
- Bettcher, Talia Mae. "Intersexuality, Transgender, and Transsexuality." In *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, edited by Mary Hakesworth and Lisa Disch, 407-27. Oxford University Press, 2016.

Recommended Reading:

- Enke, Anne, ed. *Transfeminism Perspectives: In and Beyond Transgender and Gender Studies*. Temple University Press, 2012.
- Snorton, C. Riley. *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

WRITE: Canvas discussion #6. **Group B: due ____ PM on Tuesday, July 25th. Group A: due ____ PM on Tuesday, July 25th.**

Wednesday, July 26

Required Reading:

- Carruthers, Charlene A. "All of Us or None of Us." In *Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements*, 1-18. Beacon Press, 2018.

Assignments

Canvas Discussion Board Posts

The class will be divided into two groups. **Before most class meetings, you will respond to a Canvas discussion board.** (Except, of course, for the first meeting.) The first group will write a post by ____ PM on Sundays or Tuesdays before class, and the second will respond to their posts by ____ PM the same evening. (The groups will alternate between writing and responding.) Obviously, I encourage the first group to respond early so the second group doesn't have to wait.

Participation in the discussion board will be graded as either complete or incomplete. Responses for Monday classes will be used in class to generate conversation; responses for Wednesday classes will be used to help us summarize the themes/lessons of the week.

Analytical Essay

The analytical essay asks students to synthesize materials from the first few weeks of reading—in other words, to meaningfully connect ideas from multiple pieces. This is to practice analytical academic writing, and to enable deeper dives into some of the content that students have connected with. The purpose of this assignment overall is to connect the abstract ideas we've discussed with real-life politics.

Students will have two prompt options to choose between, and essays will be evaluated based on criteria elaborated in the assignment sheet.

Final Project

The final project is an opportunity for students to use feminist theory to begin to research a topic they are interested in. **Students will choose a contemporary political issue** (to be approved by the instructor) and then gather sources from outside research in order to **address the topic in a mode of their choosing**. Rather than trying to complete an entire research paper in such a short time frame, you will complete necessary *preliminary* steps that could enable you to pursue academic research in the near future.

Your final project will be evaluated based on a grading contract submitted at the end of Week 4.