Feminist Theory and Methodology

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Office Hours: Wed, 1-3
Office: Raab 107
Time: Mon, Wed, 5:00-6:20
Location: Golding 107
Class Site: https://moodle2.brandeis.edu/course/view.php?id=9071

Course Description
What are people referring to when they say “neoliberalism?” What is postcolonial, and is it opposed to neocolonial? And what, in the name of Judith Butler, do we mean by embodied performativity?

This course introduces upper-level students to feminist theory, and ways in which feminist theory intersects or occurs at the confluence of various disciplines, including queer studies, sociology, anthropology and other social theory, the humanities, the sciences, and pedagogy. The course focuses on reading and understanding theoretical texts. Although this class focuses on theory, we will also explore methodology and practice, since theory, methodology, and practice cannot (and should not) be completely divorced from one another. We will examine theory from a wide variety of disciplines and consider: how do we read a theoretical text? How do we use it? Critique it? How do theoretical texts “speak” to one another across disciplines with different styles and methodologies of writing?

Although this is largely a reading (and writing) course, theory does not occur in a vacuum. Over the course of the semester, we will also examine the ways in which theory and practice overlap and intersect, question and explore the ethics of working in the community, and consider how social policy is framed in academic theory and by those affected by it. We will also examine the identities and experiences of those we work with, their relationship to our own identities, and consider what this means in terms of theory.

Course Goals
This course will introduce students to high-level theory used in feminist thinking; will teach students to read and critique analysis from various fields and disciplines; will encourage students to question and construct their own theory and theses; and discuss the intersections between theory and practice, various identities, and our conceptual map of the world and our experiences in that world. Students will be exposed to feminist, queer, intersectional, and other theories and will thus gain the opportunity to apply, form, and question theory for themselves.

By the end of the course, students will be able to speak with tolerable familiarity of several different prominent writers and theoretical frameworks used in current feminist writing. More importantly, you will have gained theory-reading and analytical skills to identify, use, and research theory on your own.

Required Readings: Books will be available at the bookstore and on reserve at the library. For purchasing, I recommend trying the Advanced Book Exchange, at http://www.abebooks.com, a consortium of independent used booksellers which I have found very useful in the past for finding multiple copies of used books (in varying conditions and prices).
Additional required articles—marked in the syllabus with the word reserve in bold print—will also be available to students via the library. These articles are essential to the course. A link to the library reserves is available via our course website.

PLEASE NOTE (re reserve): The library does NOT make articles OR book chapters available online, but these are available via LATTE. The library will have the required books on reserve.

All reserve materials are available on our course website.

Required Books (will also be on reserve in the library):

Recommended Reading (we will be reading portions of some of these)

Course Requirements:
Attendance and participation in class discussion 10%
Discussion Questions: 10%
Reflective Essay: 30%
Grant Proposal Prework: 15%
Final Project (Grant Proposal & Review) 35%

General Requirements: Class attendance and participation are both essential to this class. For this reason, unexcused absences will impact your grade; the discussion we do in class cannot be replicated by simply doing the reading. Also, this is a seminar class, and so it is necessary to do the
reading beforehand to participate in the discussion. It also makes the class more engaging if we have things to talk about. Although this is not a writing intensive course, the papers are another vehicle for you to reflect on the reading topics and to introduce your own ideas; creativity, critical thinking, and good analysis are all highly encouraged. Please note that reading must be completed before class.

No cell phones, pagers, or other communication devices will be permitted in class, unless you are an EMT or other medical professional on call. Laptops will also not be permitted without my prior consent.

Specific Assignments: Please note that more detailed assignment sheets will be available on our website in the folder marked "Class Assignments."

Reading Response Questions: Students will submit discussion questions to the class on a biweekly or triweekly basis (depending on the size of the class). These will be due at 6:00 pm the night before class, posted on the class blog, in order to facilitate class discussion.

Reflective Essay: Halfway through the semester, students will write a 5-7 page essay using some of the theoretical material we have been exploring via our reading.

Research and Grant Preparation Exercises: Throughout the semester, students will complete exercises (such as online ethnics training and presenting a bibliography) in preparation for writing the final grant application assignment.

Grant Application: Near the end of the semester, students will write a grant application using actual guidelines, and will review (in writing) grant applications submitted by other students.

Email Policy: Emails will be answered within 24 hours, except for weekend days (when I cannot guarantee to check my email as regularly). I do not check email between the hours of 9 pm and 8 am. Please keep emails short and to the point; longer commentary may be better discussed during office hours. Written work will not be accepted via email except through prior arrangement.

Written Work: Assignment sheets will be made available on the class website, and due dates are specified in the syllabus. Written work submitted later than fifteen minutes after the beginning of class on the due date will be lowered by a third of a grade for each day late, except in cases of illness or emergency. All sources MUST be cited. Please use in-text citation. For example:

American teenage girls seem to be in a liminal state, for "as a society, we discarded the Victorian moral umbrella over girls before we agreed on useful strategies and programs--a kind of 'social Gore-Tex' to help them stay dry" (Brumberg 1997: 201).

Works Cited:


NOTE. Proper anthropological citation utilizes the LAST NAME of the author, the YEAR of the publication date, and the PAGE number, in that order. I will also accept MLA citation.

Be sure to include the works cited page. All papers must be word-processed and printed, spellchecked, double-spaced, with reasonable margins, and stapled. Please include page numbers and use a font no smaller than ten point and no larger than twelve. I highly encourage you to
proofread as grammar and punctuation are essential parts of writing well, and writing is one of the main tools of the social sciences. Clear and readable prose is also highly esteemed!

**Extension Days Policy:** Students in my upper-level classes are given five automatic extension days to use as they wish. I understand that due dates tend to fall together on the academic calendar and this is a courtesy to you so that you can arrange your obligations more comfortably. You do not need to consult with me about the use of extension days. Follow this procedure:

--Mark on the front page of the paper that you are using extension days and how many;
--Turn your paper in to LATTE on the day you wish to turn it in.

Please note that you can choose to use as many or as few as you like at a time. Weekend days count; for example if a paper is due on Friday and you wish to turn it in on Monday, you must use three extension days, not one. Extension days, of course, apply only to written work, and not to in-class assignments, "quick homework" (such as bringing examples to class), or extra credit work.

--The final project, the grant application, is exempt from the extension days policy as we are discussing it in class and it must be ready for anonymous peer review. However, you may use extension days on the first paper, on the grant application prep assignments (proposal and bibliography) and on the final written review.

**Courtesy:** I require and expect all students to treat each other with courtesy. Harassment, whether physical, sexual, or verbal, **will not be tolerated in this class.** We may be discussing some sensitive and sometimes upsetting topics; I expect this classroom to be a safe space for students to express their views. A sheet for classroom courtesy will be circulated, discussed, and edited by the class during the second week of class.

If you have any problems or questions, I encourage you to bring them to me, or to the head of the WGS department.

**Regrade Requests:** In the event of a grade dispute, I will re-evaluate the entire work according to my grading rubric. A higher grade is not guaranteed.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is expected of all students. All work turned in must be the work of the student whose name appears at the top of the paper, except where you have specifically requested and received permission for a collaborative effort. All students are expected to cite their sources fully (whether from texts, interviews, or online). If you have any questions on when or whether to cite, please do not hesitate to ask. You may not turn in work for this class which you have previously turned in for other classes. Plagiarism will be dealt with according to the Academic Honesty Policy; **plagiarized work will result in a failure of the class** and further sanctions, at the discretion of the Brandeis College Administrative Board, may result.

**Required Statement: Four-Credit Course (with three hours of class-time per week)**
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

*Please note* that you may need to spend more than 9 hours of study time depending the varying amount of reading, writing, assignments, etc. per week.

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately with your letter from the Accessible Education Office. All communications will be kept confidential.
**Schedule of Readings and Due Dates**

**Week 1:** First Class Meeting
1/18  **Reading:** none
   Introduction to the class; lecture and discussion on methodology, praxis, feminist, queer, and critical race theory; discussion of terminology & courtesy outline.

**Week 2:** Academia and Colonialism and Post-Colonial Theory
Warnings: discussion of violence, McDonald.
   In-class discussion and development of class courtesy outline.


**Week 3:** Theory and Ethics: Who is at risk in research? Who checks?
Warnings: discussions of poverty and illness, Nama & Swartz, Horn; prison, Fine & Torre; discussion of unethical medical practices, Reverby & Elliott; graphic discussion of suicide, Elliott.
   **Recommended:** Coy, Maddy. 2006. "This Morning I'm a Researcher, This Afternoon I'm an Outreach Worker: Ethical Dilemmas in Practitioner Research." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 9(5): 419-31. **reserve**

   **Recommended:** Fine, Michelle, and Maria Elena Torre. 2006. "Intimate Details: Participatory Action Research in Prison." *Action Research* 4(3): 253-269. **reserve**

Online IRB ethics training should be completed by the end of this week. Visit [http://www.brandeis.edu/ora/compliance/irb/training.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/ora/compliance/irb/training.html)
Week 4: Is Theory Liberatory? For Whom?


Week 5: Gender Theory
Warnings: discussion of violence, Weston, Butler.


Break: 2/20-2/24

Week 6: Queer Theory
Warnings: discussion of violence: Warner, Smith, Stanley, Nair, & Ware (graphic).


Week 7: Feminist Epistemology

Reflective Essay due.

Week 8: Critical Race Theory

Warnings: graphic descriptions of sexual violence, Smith.


Week 9: Intersectionality

Warnings: descriptions of domestic violence, Crenshaw; description of microaggressions, Beoku-Betts and Njambi.


One Page Grant Proposal Topic Due

Week 10: Disability Theory

Warnings: description of pain, Hedva, Hoffman et al., Anderson et al.


Bibliography for Grant Proposal Due

Week 11: Violence, Prison, and Post-Prison Theory

Warnings: graphic descriptions of violence in ALL readings this week.


Williams, Rachel Marie-Crane. Police Violence Zine. Download here: [https://policeviolence.wordpress.com/zine/] Online.


Break: 4/10-4/18

Weeks 12-13: Understanding Capitalism

Warnings: descriptions of poverty, Killermartinis; descriptions of stripping, Borda; depictions of stripping, Live Nude Girls Unite.


Week 14: The White Savior Industrial Complex & Affect Theory

Warnings: Racism, Kony2012


Recommended (if you haven't seen/read these before):


***4/29 Grant Applications Due (at 11:55 pm to LATTE)*** ABSOLUTE DEADLINE (I need to anonymize these and pass them out to groups for reading!)


Recommended: Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, and Frank Adam. 1995. “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins.” Critical Inquiry 21(2): 496-522. [to be on reserve when JSTOR works again]


5/3 Reading: Your anonymized grant application pack (will be posted by 5/1) in-class sessions discussing anonymized grant applications

5/5 Reading Period Ends

Final written evaluations of your grant applications due; you may use extension days on this assignment