

GOV 1029 Feminist Political Thought

Tuesdays 1:30-2:45 EST, Thursdays 6:30-7:45 EST

Fall Semester 2020

Professor Katrina Forrester

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11-12, 2-3

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Teaching Fellows: Kierstan Carter and Soren Dudley



Course Description:

What is feminism? What is patriarchy? What and who is a woman? How does gender relate to sexuality, and to class and race? Should housework be waged, should sex be for sale, and should feminists trust the state? This course is an introduction to feminist political thought since the mid-twentieth century. It introduces students to classic texts of late twentieth-century feminism, explores the key arguments that have preoccupied radical, socialist, liberal, Black, postcolonial and queer feminists, examines how these arguments have changed over time, and asks how debates about equality, work, and identity matter today.

We will proceed chronologically, reading texts mostly written during feminism's so-called 'second wave', by a range of influential thinkers including Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, bell hooks and Catharine MacKinnon. We will examine how feminists theorized patriarchy, capitalism, labor, property and the state; the relationship of claims of sex, gender, race, and class; the development of contemporary ideas about sexuality, identity, and gender; and how and whether these ideas change how fundamental problems in political theory are understood.

Course Requirements:

Undergraduate students:

1. Participation (25%):

- a. **Class Participation (15%)** Class Participation is an essential part of making a section work. Participation means more than just attendance. You are expected to come to each class ready to discuss the assigned material. Contributions to class discussions in the form of thoughtful, productive comments or questions are an essential part of your participation grade. If for any reason you struggle to participate on zoom, please let your TF know. You can also participate via the chat function.
- b. **Weekly responses (10%)** Each week you will send 2-3 brief questions/ comments about the reading to your TF by 5pm the day before section. These responses give you an opportunity to reflect on the week's readings and to pose questions about the readings for clarification or explanation. The questions you ask will inform your in-class discussions

2. **Presentation (15%)** Once during the semester, you will do a 5-minute in-class oral statement on the authors and texts we are reading for class. The presentation will give brief background information on the authors and the contributions they have made to feminist thought and will raise some questions about their ideas and arguments. The assigned student will also guide in-class discussion with questions. You will prepare a 1-page handout to circulate to your section and TF by email before section

3. EITHER:

- a. **READING RESPONSES (25%):** You will write a 1-2 page response to the readings in a given week. You need to do FOUR responses over the semester. These will be sent to your TF by Monday of the following week. You can choose to do these responses at any time during the semester to allow **maximum flexibility** and choice. However, **this should not be the same week** you are assigned to do your presentation.

Suggestions for responses. The reading response can be either (a) a reading of at least 2 texts in context, reconstructing the debate, with your own interpretation/ analysis about a question or idea that interested you in the readings or (b) A response to a question that arises from the readings that **defends a feminist position** or set of ideas by developing a sustained argument with reference to at least 2 readings (see appendix on paper questions for examples). Both options will involve analysis and critical engagement with arguments and direct engagement with, and citation of, texts on the syllabus. These responses are not summaries of the readings, but give you the opportunity to reflect on the week's readings through practices of close readings of particular excerpts from the text.

You can also use these opportunities to put readings in conversation with previous readings and class discussions. When writing responses, please provide page numbers and authors last names when referring to specific texts.

If you choose to take the reading response track, you must submit your first response by, at the latest, October 2

OR

- b. **MID SEMESTER PAPER (25%):** 6-8 pages due October 18. This will be an analysis of ONE theme or idea through a reading of texts that we have read in the first half of the semester. There are a variety of ways to approach this. You can either (a) analyze the texts in historical context, reconstructing a debate, with your own interpretation/ analysis or (b) make a sustained philosophical argument in response to a question that arises from the readings (for example: “If we shouldn’t sell our bodies, why not?”). Both (a) and (b) will involve writing papers with a strong thesis statement, critical engagement with arguments and direct engagement with, and citation of, texts on the syllabus. Both options will involve close engagement with at least 3 readings on the syllabus and additional readings (if you are focusing on a particular topic on the syllabus, this will include the ‘recommended’ readings).
- 4. **FINAL PAPER (35%):** 10 pages due December 9. This will be either a paper that responds to paper questions that will be provided or a different topic that you agree *in advance* with your TF. As with the mid semester paper, the final paper can either explore one theorist, a debate, a set of texts or a set of ideas in feminist thought. It can explore their ideas in historical context, or it can take the form of a political theory/ political philosophy paper that defends a feminist position or set of ideas by developing a sustained philosophical argument. You can work from and cite the texts and arguments we have studied or chose your own, in consultation with your TF.

Graduate students:

1 x 25-30 pages paper due December 9

Remote Teaching Policies:

All undergraduate students will be expected to attend **at least one lecture per week** synchronously and must attend sections synchronously. Lectures will be recorded and available for **one week** to watch or listen to asynchronously.

Graduate section, which is optional, will meet at 3pm Fridays.

Zoom guidelines: join the Zoom session in a quiet place. Arrive to the Zoom session on time and stay until the end. Turn on your video (if you need to turn them off for a moment, that's fine, but default to on). If you need to have your video off for some reason, please check with your teaching fellow first. For lecture, mute your microphone unless you are speaking. Prof Forrester will stay at the zoom meeting for 15 minutes after the lecture has ended; if you have questions, stay on.

Classroom Policy: Close browser tabs and apps not required for participating in class. In “normal times”, this is a no laptop class – this is obviously not possible now! But please try to minimize distractions. Take notes by hand – it's a good skill to learn. Lectures will be the same length as non-remote lectures; if you find yourself getting distracted, you can listen again for up to a week after the synchronous lecture. If you are engaging a lecture asynchronously, feel free to watch or listen like a podcast. Whatever helps your concentration. Remember that lectures will only be available for **one week after the live lecture**.

Recording: Official recordings will be available for **one week** after each lecture is given on the canvas page. Personal audio and/or video recording of lectures, seminars, or labs, on phones or other devices **is not permitted**. The reasons for this policy are: a) it interferes with learning to take good notes; b) it violates intellectual property and common courtesy; c) it violates the privacy of the classroom, which is particularly important when studying sensitive topics; c) it is illegal to record people without their permission in the state of Massachusetts.

The Harvard policy on recording states that: “By attending course sessions remotely and accessing course recordings, students acknowledge that they may not post, publish, sell, or otherwise publicly distribute course materials without the written permission of the course instructor. Such materials include, but are not limited to, the following: video or audio recordings, assignments, problem sets, examinations, other students' work, and answer keys. Students who sell, post, publish, or distribute course materials without written permission, whether for the purposes of soliciting answers or otherwise, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including requirement to withdraw from the College. Further, students may not make video or audio recordings of class sessions for their own use without written permission of the instructor.”

Contingency Plans: if there is a global outage during lecture, then Professor Forrester will record the lecture and post this on canvas. If Prof. Forrester has network difficulties but all else is fine, then the TFs Soren or Kierstan will continue the lecture. If there is a global outage during section, section will be rescheduled. If your TFs connection goes down during section, stay in the meeting and continue discussion until they return or for at least 15 mins.

Late Policy: We all know this is a challenging time, and we want to make sure that everyone can do their best work. If you want to allow for maximum flexibility and want to choose when to submit work, you can take option 3(a) – the Reading Response Track. If you need to apply for an extension on the papers, please be in touch with your resident dean. If you are struggling or if you just need a bit more time on your paper, please be in touch with your TF or Professor Forrester as soon as you can: we can work something out if you keep lines of communication

open. However, papers turned in late *without prior discussion* with the TF will be marked down 1/2 grade per day.

Course Prerequisites:

There are no prerequisites for this class. If you have taken political theory/ social theory/ philosophy/ WGS classes, that will be useful to you, but not at all required. All are welcome.

Readings:

ALL READING will be available online on the course website or via Hollis. There are many feminist resources available digitally, especially through the Gale Database, so you will have no problem researching your final paper remotely.

The following books will also be available for purchase (recommended and available but not mandatory)

To buy or rent digital copies please go to: <https://tinyurl.com/F20-GOVT-1029-1>

Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949)

bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984) (Routledge, 2015)

Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (Mac, 1970)

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (Norton, 1963)

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1990)

Where there are “recommended” readings, these are **not obligatory** for undergraduate students. However, **if you answer a paper topic on a related question, it is expected that you will have read the recommended reading.**

Graduate students should read recommended readings.

ALL READINGS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Collaboration Policy Statement

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to scholarly work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc), you must also acknowledge this assistance

Weekly Syllabus

1. Feminist Foundations: An Introduction to Feminist Theory (09/03)

bell hooks, 'Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression' in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984) (Routledge, 2015), 18-33

Lorna Finlayson, 'Feminist theory, feminist practice' and 'Outposts in your head: ideology, patriarchy and critique' in *An Introduction to Feminism* (Cambridge, 2016), 4-24

2. Feminist Foundations: The Second Sex (09/08)

Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949)

'Introduction', 3-17

'Destiny', 44-8, 50-61, 62-68

'Myths', 159-187

'Childhood', 283-313

'Women's Situation and Character', 661-664, 'Independent Woman' and conclusion, 721-766

Recommended: either 'The Girl' or 'Sexual Initiation'; and either 'The Woman in Love' or 'The Mystic'

3. Feminist Foundations: Feminine Mystique [Guest lecture by Dr Maggie Doherty] (09/10)

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)

'The Problem that Has No Name', 'The Sexual Sell', 'A New Life Plan for Women'

4. Liberation and Revolution: Black, White, and Red Feminisms (09/15)

Claudia Jones, "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!" *Political Affairs* 1949

Juliet Mitchell, 'Women: The Longest Revolution', *New Left Review* (1966), 11-37

5. Liberation and Revolution: Radical Feminism (09/17)

Carol Hanisch and Elizabeth Sunderland, 'Women of the World Unite! We Have Nothing to Lose but our Men!' (1968)

Shulamith Firestone, 'Abortion Rally Speech' (1968)

Frances Beale, 'Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female' (1969)

Carol Hanisch, 'The Personal is Political' (1970)

Ellen Willis, 'Women and the Left' (1970)

The Chicago Women's Liberation Union, 'How to Start Your Own Consciousness-Raising Group' (1971)

<http://www.uic.edu/orgs/cwluherstory/CWLUArchive/crcwlu.html>

6. Liberation and Revolution: Patriarchy (09/22)

Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970), ch 6: 'Love', ch 10: 'Alternatives', 113-130, 202-216

Content note: Firestone uses the n-word and racist slurs in the set readings.

Zillah Eisenstein, 'Developing a Theory of Capitalist Patriarchy and Socialism Feminism', *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* (Monthly Review, 1979), 5-40

7. Liberation and Revolution: Sisterhood or Solidarity? Black and Third World Feminisms (09/24)

"Young Lords Party Position Paper on Women" (1970) in *The Young Lords: A Reader*, 169-174

Combahee River Collective, 'A Black Feminist Statement' (1977)

Mirta Vidal, "Women: New Voice of La Raza" in *Chicanas Speak Out* (1971), 1-9

bell hooks, 'Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Among Women' in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984) (Routledge, 2015), 43-67

Audre Lorde, 'Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,' in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Crossing Press, 1984), 25-28

8. Liberation and Revolution: Work and Housework I (09/29)

Silvia Federici, 'Wages Against Housework' (1974), and 'Why Sexuality is Work' (1975) in *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle* (PM Press, 2012), 1- 8, 23-27

Birth Announcement, Black Women for Wages for Housework (1976)

Mariarosa Dalla Costa, 'A General Strike'[1974]

<https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/10/20/mariarosa-dalla-costa-a-general-strike>

9. Liberation and Revolution: Work and Housework II (10/01)

bell hooks, 'Rethinking the Nature of Work', in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984) (Routledge, 2015), 96-107

Angela Davis, 'The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working Class Perspective', *Women, Race and Class* (Knopf, 1981), 222-244

Patricia Hill Collins, 'Work, Family, and Black Women's Oppression', in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* [1990] (Routledge, new edn 2000), Chapter 3: 45-68.

10. Sex, Work, Power, and Harm: Sexual Harassment (10/06)

Catherine MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women* (selections) (1979)

Mary Bularzik, 'Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: Historical Notes' (1978)

Recommended: Carrie Baker, "Race, Class, and Sexual Harassment in the 1970s" *Feminist Studies* (2004)

11. Sex, Work, Power, and Harm: Pornography (10/08)

Catharine MacKinnon, 'Only Words,' in Drucilla Cornell, ed., *Feminism & Pornography*, (Oxford, 2000): 94-120

Ellen Willis, 'Lust Horizons: Is the Women's Movement Pro-Sex?' (1981) in *No More Nice Girls* (Wesleyan, 1992), 3-14

Laura Kipnis, '(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading *Hustler*,' in L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, and P. Treichler (eds.), *Cultural Studies*, Routledge, 1992), 373-91

Recommended: Angela Carter, 'Polemical Preface: Pornography in the Service of Women,' in Drucilla Cornell (ed), *Feminism & Pornography*, (Oxford, 2000): 527-539

Content Note: these readings contain graphic descriptions of pornography

12. Sex, Work, Power, and Harm: Contracts and Sex Work (10/13)

Carole Pateman, 'Wives, Slaves and Wage-Slaves' and 'What's Wrong with Prostitution?' in *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, 1988), 116-153, 189-218

Juno Mac and Molly Smith, Chapter 1: "Sex" and Chapter 2: "Work", in *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers' Rights* (2018), 22-55.

13. Sex, Work, Power, and Harm: Markets and Bodies (10/15)

Debra Satz, 'Markets in Women's Reproductive Labor' and 'Markets in Women's Sexual Labor' in *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale* (2010), 115-155 (online via Hollis)

Anne Phillips, 'It's My Body and I'll Do What I like With It: Bodies as Objects and Property', *Political Theory* (2011): 724-748

Dorothy Roberts, "Race and the New Reproduction", in *Killing the Black Body*, 246-293

14. Sex, Work, Power, and Harm: The State (10/20)

Catharine MacKinnon, 'Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence,' *Signs* v. 8 (1983): 635-658.

Francis Fox Piven, 'Ideology and the State: Women, Power and the Welfare State', in Linda Gordon, *Women, the State and Welfare* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 250-264

Wendy Brown, 'Finding the Man in the State', *Feminist Studies* 18. 1 (1992), 7-34

Shatema Threadcraft and Lisa Miller, 'Black Women, Victimization, and the Limits of the Liberal State,' *Theoretical Criminology* (2017), Vol. 21(4) 478–493

15. Unsettling Norms/ The Feminist Subject: Sexuality and its History 10/22

Michel Foucault, 'We 'Other Victorians', *The History of Sexuality vol 1* (1978) 1-49, 135-159

16. Unsettling Norms/ The Feminist Subject: Sexuality and Identities (10/27)

Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', *Signs* (1980), 631-660

Gayle Rubin, 'Thinking Sex' (1984): 1-34

Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" in *Sister Outsider* (1984), 53-59

17. Unsettling Norms/ The Feminist Subject: Postcolonial Feminisms (10/29) [Guest Lecture by Prof Durba Mitra]

Chandra Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,' *boundary 2* (1984): 333-358

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak? (1988)

18. Unsettling Norms/ The Feminist Subject: Gender (11/03)

Judith Butler, 'Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire', *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York: Routledge, 1990), 1-34, 181-190

Recommended: Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe; An American Grammar Book" (1987)

19. Unsettling Norms/ The Feminist Subject: Intersectionality (11/05)

Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review* 1241 (1991)

Jennifer C Nash, 'Re-thinking Intersectionality' *Feminist Review* (2008)

20: Unsettling Norms/ The Feminist Subject: Feminism and Queer Politics (11/10)

Cathy Cohen, 'Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?', in Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (eds), *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Duke, 2005), 437-465

Lisa Duggan, 'Queering the State', *Social Text* (1994)

Recommended: Janet Halley, *Split Decisions: How and Why to take a Break from Feminism*, 41- 58, 119-132 OR Nancy Fraser, 'From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age', *New Left Review* (1995), 68-93

21: Unsettling Norms/ The Feminist Subject: Afro-Caribbean Feminisms (11/12) [Guest Lecture by Prof Sandy Placido]

Andaiye, *The Point is to Change the World*, selections

Angela Jorge, "The Black Puerto Rican Woman in Contemporary American Society"

Ana-Maurine Lara, "Strategic Universalism and Dominican LGBT Activist Struggles for Civil and Human Rights" (2018), 99-114

"Expanding the Dialogues: Afro-Latinx Feminisms" (2017)

<https://latinxtalk.org/2017/11/28/expanding-the-dialogues-afro-latinx-feminisms/>

Recommended: Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond Liberal and Marxist Leninist Feminisms: Towards an Autonomous Frame of Reference" (1982/2018)

22. Nature and Technology: The Cyborg Manifesto [Guest Lecture by Dr Moira Weigel (11/17)]

Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century' (1984)

Recommended: Helen Hester, "What is Xenofeminism?" in *Xenofeminism* (2018)

23. Nature and Technology: Nature and the Environment [Guest Lecture by Dr Alyssa Battistoni] (11/19)

Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, "Introduction," *Ecofeminism* (1993)

Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations*, selections

Naomi Klein, "The Right to Regenerate" in *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate* (2014)

24. Trans studies (11/24)

Susan Stryker, 'Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin' *LQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10.2 (2004) 212-215

Susan Stryker, '(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies' (2013)

Jack Halberstam, "Making Trans* Bodies" in *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*, 22-44

Recommended: Cressida Heyes, 'Feminist Solidarity after Queer Theory: The Case of Transgender' *Signs* (2003); 1093-1120 and Gayle Rubin, 'Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender and Boundaries', 471-481

25. THANKSGIVING NO CLASS (11/26)

26. Feminism in 2020: Social reproduction, Covid-19 and the crisis of care: (12/01)

Nancy Fraser, 'Behind Marx's Hidden Abode', *New Left Review* 86 (March-April, 2014).

Sarah Leonard and Nancy Fraser, 'Capitalism's Crisis of Care', *Dissent* (Fall, 2016):
<https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/nancy-fraser-interview-capitalism-crisis-of-care>

Sarah Jaffe and Tithi Battarcharya, “Social Reproduction and the Pandemic” (April 2020), https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/social-reproduction-and-the-pandemic-with-tithi-bhattacharya

Recommended: 'Family Matters', an interview with Melinda Cooper, Viewpoint Magazine (March, 2018): <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2018/03/19/family-matters/>

27. Feminism in 2020: Feminism and Abolition (12/03)

Angela Davis, ‘How Gender Structures the Prison System’ in *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003) 60-83

Victoria Law, ‘Against Carceral Feminism’, *Jacobinmag* (2014)

Beth E Richie, “How anti-violence activism taught me to become a prison abolitionist”, *Feminist Wire* (2014)

Incite! Critical Resistance: A Statement on Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex (2001) <https://incite-national.org/incite-critical-resistance-statement/>

Recommended: Beth E Richie, ‘A Black feminist response to male violence and the state’ in *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America’s Prison Nation* (2012)