GSWS 405-4: THEORETICAL ISSUES IN GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN’S STUDIES

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Lecture: Mondays 9:30 – 13:20; AQ 5020

Course Description:
This course engages with ‘feminist theory’ as a multiple, diverse, and often contradictory body of knowledge, tracing the development of a selection of central and influential intellectual concepts and debates. Since the early 1970s, and largely due to the efforts of social movement activists, the influence of feminist theorizing and research has been felt throughout the academy in a myriad of disciplines. Rather than following an explicitly chronological approach to the development of feminist theories, we will consider the historiography of feminist theoretical knowledge production - the ways in which feminist ideas have been produced, categorized, and historicized. Students will interrogate the notion of a ‘feminist theoretical canon’ through reading a diverse array of texts that engage questions of gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability in nuanced and disparate ways.

In tracing developments of feminist theorizing we will follow an intersectional, discursive, and historical approach, reading against the tendencies to conceptualize feminist theory and knowledge production strictly in terms of categories (liberal, radical, Marxist, etc.), genealogies (“waves”), or intersections (gender or race or sexuality as separate). We will consider the ways in which feminist thinkers have confronted the institutionalization of feminist thought. We will examine the questions and challenges that feminist thinkers have posed to existing bodies of knowledge, and the tensions and debates that arose through and around the development of different theoretical positions. We will ask questions about the basis and scope of theories and explore ethical questions feminist intellectuals have posed within a broad range of fields, such as critical race studies, philosophy, gay, lesbian, queer, and transgender studies, history, and political theory.

Educational Goals:
For more detailed information please see the GSWS website: http://www.sfu.ca/gsws/courses/Educational_Goals.html

Course Texts and Courseware:
- Estelle B. Freedman, The Essential Feminist Reader (Available in SFU Burnaby Bookstore)
- The remaining readings are available on Canvas.

Prerequisite: 45 units including six units of GSWS or WS or GDST. Students with credit for GSWS 311, 411 or WS 311 or 411 may not complete this course for further credit when subtitled Feminist Psychoanalytic Theories.
Course Evaluation and Assignments:

Attendance and Participation: 30% (includes in-class assignments)
- Attendance (13 classes): 15% (approx. 1% of total grade per class)
- In-class participation (13 classes): 10%
- In-class assignments (4 assignments): 5%

Short Written Assignments, total of 20% (4 at 5% each)

Paper Proposal: 15%
- Content: 10%
- Structure/Mechanics: 5%

Final Paper: 35%
- Topic/Questions: 5%
- Critical Analysis: 10%
- References: 10%
- Structure/Mechanics: 10%