GSWS 822-5: Feminist Theory

Dr. Lara Campbell
Email: lcampbel@sfu.ca
Lecture: Wednesdays 9:30 – 14:20 AQ 5029
Office hours: TBA
Office: AQ 5105

Course Description:
Often referred to as ‘second wave feminism,’ the period of time between the late 1950s and the late 1970s was a period of rich, diverse, and dynamic conversation about gender, feminism, and liberation. Feminist activists and theorists grappled with the meanings of gender, sexual and gender expression, equality, social justice, and the intersections amongst gender, race, class, and sexuality.

This course will focus on a particular period of time, allowing us the opportunity to place these theoretical developments within a rich historical context. By the end of this class, students will understand the relationship of feminism to the left, particularly the civil rights, student, and black power movements of the 1960s and 1970s; the internal debates within feminist theory; the relationship between theory and activism; and the intersection of theories about gender oppression with oppressions of race, class, and sexuality. To reach these goals, we will trace the historical development of feminist theory from the mid-20th century forward (through the study of primary texts of the era), and look at the ways in which current feminist theory is taking up, criticizing, challenging, expanding or growing the theoretical strands of second wave North American feminism.

This course has a very heavy reading list and a great deal of complex, theoretical readings. It won’t be easy, but we will all work together to examine and analyze the texts to the best of our abilities. This course will give you a solid historical background, and will allow you to develop your own personal research interests further into the future. Some weeks we will read an entire book in full; other weeks, we will read selections from larger works, articles, manifestos, or briefs. This will help vary the style of reading and lighten the reading load, but it is also a reflection of the differing styles of second wave feminist theorizing.

Course Texts and Courseware (but any edition will do):
- Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex
- Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique
- bell hooks, Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism
- Susan Wendell, The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
Attendance and Participation: 20%
Seminar Presentation on the weekly topic: 20%
Assignment 1 - Essay Proposal / Annotated Bibliography: 20%
Assignment 2 - Final Paper: 40%