WOMEN’S STUDIES PROGRAM

FALL 1991

W.S. 400-5/W.S. 800-5

ADVANCED WOMEN’S STUDIES

In the Advanced Women’s Studies seminar this term, we will explore challenges posted by feminist theorists to theory-building sciences, and even the natural sciences. Our study of these challenges will operate on two levels. On one level, we will contrast feminist and traditional (malestream) theories of various aspects of women’s lives and issues of concern to women. On the basis of this work, we can begin to construct our own ideas about how feminist methodology(ies) may differ from traditional approaches in a number of fields. Of course, feminist theorists have thought deeply about the nature of feminist theorizing in various disciplines, and how they differ from malestream approaches. In order to supplement and enrich our own thinking about this matter, on our second level of exploration, we will examine feminist "meta-theories" about the nature of feminist methodology and research.

Topics at the first level of exploration will be taken up in the context of oral presentations, and hence will be chosen by the students. Each topic will have two components: (1) a discipline in which traditional and feminist approaches are to be examined (for example, history anthropology, political science, psychology, sociology, linguistics, economics, philosophy, literary studies, ecology, theology, law, art history, biochemistry, physics), and (2) a particular aspect of women’s lives, or issues of relevance to women’s concerns (for example, women’s sexualities, wage labour, non-wage labour, the family, reproductive technologies, violence against women, spirituality, abortion, eating disorders, mother-daughter relationships).

Topics at the second level will emerge from the required course readings. In general, we will focus on questions about the nature of feminist method, including the question of whether or not it even makes sense to speak of "feminist methodology." In this context, we will also address the question of essentialism (roughly, the question whether anyone can justifiably make claims about women as such, without attending to differences among women in terms of race, class, ethnicity, sexual identity, age, and physical ability/disability).

The seminar will meet for two 2 1/2 hour-long sessions per week and will be structure by student presentations, class discussions and lectures by the instructor.

REQUIRED READING


Plus sections from:


(over)
RECOMMENDED READING


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Undergraduate students and Graduate students:

10% Attendance and Participation
15% Oral Presentation #1 (including write-up)
20% Oral Presentation #2 (including write-up)
30% Term Paper
25% Take-Home Final

* The term paper will require students to relate the work of the course to their major disciplines. For undergraduates, the required length will be 10-15 pages; for graduates, the required length will be 20-25 pages.

Prerequisite: Nine credits in Women’s Studies including WS 100

TUTORIALS WILL BE HELD DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASSES.