WOMEN'S STUDIES DEPARTMENT

W.S. 400-5 - ADVANCED WOMEN'S STUDIES

At this point we need the University with its libraries, laboratories, archives, collections, and some -- but not all -- of the kinds of trained thinking and expertise that it has to offer. We need to consciously and critically select what is genuinely viable and what we can use from the masculine intellectual tradition, as we possess ourselves of the knowledge skills and perspectives that can refine our goal of self-determination with discipline and wisdom.

Adrienne Rich

In this course we will examine feminist deconstruction of the epistemology and methodology of existing disciplines. Our purpose will be to reveal and critique the underlying assumptions, paradigms and ideological commitments of those disciplines as they relate to the study of women. We will question such concepts as "objectivity", "rationality", "bias", "value-free research", and even "truth", and will seek to locate the academy in a social, cultural, economic and political context.

We will also explore attempts at a feminist "reconstruction" of both the means and products of human inquiry. This reconstruction goes beyond "adding women in" as legitimate subjects and objects of study. Rather, at its most developed, the feminist reconstruction project posits a feminist knowledge and way of knowing distinct from those of traditional male theory and practice. In there such a thing as a women's truth? If there is, is it to be discovered in the academy? Can feminist research methodologies, with their unabashedly political aims and commitments, produce clearer, less distorted versions of the truth of women's (and men's) lives? What would the world look like if women wrote the textbooks?

The objective of the course will be to provide students with the analytical tools necessary to critically examine their own disciplines together with some vision, if not a blueprint, of a more integrative approach to knowledge.

Required Texts

Lebowitz, Andrea, Star Gazing: Changing Feminist Literary Criticism. Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of women cont'd over
Course Requirements

Students will conduct an original research project using feminist methods.

Project outline 10%
Mid-term take home exam 15%
Major project 35%
Final take-home exam 25%
Attendance and participation 10%

Prerequisite: 9 credits in Women's Studies including W.S. 100