Women’s Studies Department  
Simon Fraser University  
Fall 1997  

W.S. 310-3/W.S.830-5  Special Topics: Race, Class and Gender  
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Day - Burnaby Campus  

Race, class and gender are too often defined as immutable and essential categories - “natural”, timeless and unchanging. This third-year level course will challenge these assumptions by examining how race, class and gender relations are socially constructed. The mutually re-inforcing character of these relations will be explored by addressing their historical development, as well as how they continue to be reproduced in everyday life. By exploring different theoretical approaches, i.e. liberalism, marxism, feminism and anti-racism, etc., course participants will develop critical skills in analysing the impact of these social relations in women’s lives. Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of these theories, course participants will explore the possibilities for the transformation of these inter-locking systems of oppression and exploitation.

Lectures and tutorials will be supplemented with films and guest speakers. Course participants will be asked to work on a group Plan of Action to explore the divisions of race, class and gender in their communities, and how these divisions could be transcended. The Plan could focus on policy development, public education, or other strategic actions for individuals, organizations, movements, or institutions to undertake in the process of social change.

Required reading:


A package of selected articles will be available on reserve in the library.

Recommended reading:

Lorde, A. Sister Outsider, The Crossing Press 1984

Davis, A. Women, Race and Class, Vintage Books 1983

Wright, R. Native Son, Harper & Row 1940


Course Assignments:

Class participation 10%
Class presentation 10%
Mid-Term Discussion paper (5 pages) 20%
Plan of Action (4 pages) 25%
Final Paper (12 pages) 35%

Women’s Studies graduate courses are offered in conjunction with undergraduate courses. Graduate students are requested to meet with the instructor to discuss the increased workload and grading expectations.