WS 207-3:  Introduction to Feminist Theory

Dr. Liz Philipose

Purpose and Content
This course is designed as an introduction to feminist theory. Given that the literature in feminist theory is vast and the topics innumerable, we are taking a select view, but one that touches on many relevant issues in feminist theory. While the bulk of what we consider is Western feminism, we will also consider some aspects of global feminist theory. Much of the course will follow from a close reading of Simone de Beauvoir’s classic text *The Second Sex*, and Susan Bordo’s *Unbearable Weight*, with additional articles that accompany these texts throughout the course.

Some of the questions we will consider include: Why does theory matter? How does Western knowledge, including psychoanalysis, philosophy, anthropology and medicine, construct gender? How have women’s bodies been defined through these bodies of knowledge? Whose interests are reflected in knowledge? What counts as knowledge? How does feminist theory generate its own truths about the world? How and why do you know what you know? By the end of the course, you should be quite familiar with the significance of feminist theory for understanding basic social relations in gendered systems.

Required Texts
3. Custom Courseware package

Assignments and Grading Structure
Attendance 10%
Reading Assignments 30%
Group Presentation & Written Summary: 15%
Mid-Term Assignment - take home (5-7 pps) 20%
Final Assignment - take home (7-9 pps) 25%
*(see over for details of assignments)*

Prerequisites
WS 101 or WS 102, may be taken concurrently.

The Department of Women’s Studies encourages clarity of thought and expression and good writing. Students will be evaluated on these skills in all courses given by the Department.