Women’s Studies Department
Simon Fraser University
Spring 1999

WS 315-4  Special Temporary Topic:
Feminist Theory & Post Modernism - Ann McKinnon
Haraway & Baudrillard: “Fin de Siecle, Fin de Sexe” Day - Burnaby

Cultural and political critics from conservative to Marxist poles of the political spectrum -- from Francis Fukyama to Frederic Jameson -- identify post modernism by two related terms: the end of historical consciousness and the deconstruction of binary or identity thinking, specifically through transsexuality. This course will explore the question: How do our cultural imaginings of historical time relate to the changing perceptions of gender? To explore this question, we will compare two of the most influential writers on our media saturated post modern age, Jean Baudrillard and Donna Haraway. To make these ideas more concrete, we will look at the work of Canadian performance artists and critical theorists, Arthur and Marilouise Kroker.

Arguably, western thoughts’ hierarchical logic of binary identities and totalizing narratives have been destabilized principally through feminist and queer interrogation of gender. However, what is seen to be positive regarding gender identities and power, carries the concomitant and dangerously apolitical notion that we no longer have historical sense. The indeterminacy of identities in postmodernity for Jean Baudrillard is inevitable, and the present mindedness that typifies our media age makes a linear and progressive sense of time impossible. Feminists, however, take a different view of history. Women have been left out of modernity’s historical and referential plenitude. Donna Haraway re-represents the problem of indeterminacy and notions of non-linear historical time in the post modern age as liberatory. Postmodern feminism reveals that the signifier of history -- and in the terms of post-modernity, its corollary, gender -- has more than one referent.

Required texts:
ISBN: 0415903874


ISBN: 0804714800

Recommended texts: (on reserve)


Course requirements:
Students will be asked to make one oral presentation comparing two theoretical or critical texts, and one short paper representing a close reading comparing two texts (1000-1500 words). Students are required to write one long essay (2500-3000 words) which should be on the basis of the discoveries that they have made in the first two assignments. Each long essay topic should be decided on in consultation with the instructor.

Course evaluation:
Oral Presentation 25%
Close Reading/Short Essay 25%
Long Essay 35%
Class Participation 15%