

**Feminist Pedagogies**  
**Fall 2009**  
**Syllabus Assignment/Thoughts**

**ASSIGNMENT**

You are required to design a syllabus for a possible course. You must incorporate feminist content and/or feminist teaching methods into your syllabus.

This syllabus will include a 1-2 page informal reflection on the process of constructing the syllabus and a tentative bibliography of assigned readings. You should also include a brief statement (a paragraph or two) in which you: a. describe your own vision of feminist pedagogy and b. explain how the syllabus reflects this vision.

You will submit a draft of your syllabus along with your informal reflection statement and bibliography on **November 18th** for peer review and a final version (with a revised informal reflection statement and bibliography) on **December 16th**.

**DEVELOPING A SYLLABUS**

**1. What kind of course do I want to teach?**

Is it possible to incorporate my teaching/research/scholarship? If so, how?

Do I want to have more students or less?

Do I want a wide range of students (with varying levels of experience and knowledge)?

Or, do I want all of my students to have a good working knowledge of the course area prior to taking the course? Prerequisites?

How do I translate my own research/teaching interests into an interesting/compelling/effective course?

How do I create a course that complements other work being done in the department? That speaks to the needs and interests of the students? That generates a lot of student interest?

How do I create a course that addresses issues of diversity and social justice in productive ways?

**2. Course Goals**

What do I want to students to learn from my class?

How specific should my goals be?

How can I achieve those goals?

What goals are specific to my discipline/department?\*

\*Course goals from GWSS website:

- To study interdisciplinary scholarship on women and gender;
- To focus on multicultural and cross-cultural studies both in the United States and globally;
- To develop critical, analytical and interdisciplinary problem-solving skills;
- To enhance research skills and creative talents;
- To develop new ideas and theories about women and gender that challenges assumptions and contribute to social change.

### **3. Course Organization**

Pacing of the course...when do I assign the really tough material? How do I introduce the topic? How do I get into the "meat" of the course?

What kind of learning process do I anticipate my students will go through? How do I help create/shape that process?

How do I negotiate a wide range of levels (of knowledge/experience) in my course? How does this negotiation get reflected in my organization of the course?

How thought out should my course organization be? Should I carefully plan the structure, with specific themes/topics or, keep it more open and unstructured?

How should I teach the class differently depending upon whether it is an upper-level versus intro-level course?\* What are some of the key differences?

\*see: <http://seejanecompute.blogspot.com/2006/01/blogging-about-teaching-miniseries.html>

How do I structure my due dates? Should I make a lot due in the first half of the semester? Or, should I make most of it due at the end?

How do I structure the course in ways that allow for flexibility?

### **4. Readings and Content**

How difficult do I make the course? Should I pick readings that pushes students to their limits or ones that are accessible and not too overwhelming?

How much reading should I assign? How much can the students handle? Is it better to push them to read a lot, or just assign a little, but make sure that they really read it?

Should I factor in cost when I am putting together the readings? How much should cost matter?

What level of reading can undergraduate students handle? Should I use classic texts or try to make the course more contemporary? How can I do both?

How should I incorporate multiple perspectives? Should they (e.g.: race, class, gender, sexuality) be addressed in separate weeks to highlight them, or should they be incorporated into the class?

How can I include a diverse range of types of materials? Novels, films, etc.?

How do I negotiate a wide range of levels (of knowledge/experience) in my course? How does this negotiation get reflected in my reading selections?

Should I assign mostly whole books? Or, should I do a mixture of articles, chapters? What about anthologies?

Should I include readings about feminist pedagogy in the course?

## **5. Assignments**

What kinds of assignments should I have?

How much do I want to grade?

What types of assignments do they need in order to engage with the material?

How do I structure my due dates? Should I make a lot due in the first half of the semester? Or, should I make most of it due at the end?

Extra credit?

How do I negotiate a wide range of levels (of knowledge/experience) in my course? How does this negotiation get reflected in my assignments?

How should I incorporate technology into my assignments?

Small group presentations: Are they effective? Student presentations in general?

What kinds of assignments should I use to make sure that students are reading the materials? Are getting the concepts?

How can I create assignments that enable students to think about the class (our discussions, readings) in relation to the University (as an institution, Community) and in relation to a larger network of communities (local, transnational, global)?

How can I create assignments that encourage students to work with each other and to rely on each other as important sources of knowledge/insight? Should I require peer/affinity groups? Facebook study groups?

How structured should I be in the assignments? Should I encourage creativity? If so, how? Should the assignments be broad or very specific? What are the benefits/drawbacks of these two approaches?

## **6. The Syllabus as an important document**

How much should I include on my syllabus?

What tone do I want to set with this syllabus? How will this syllabus reflect my teaching philosophy/approach?

Should it be really long, or should I make it brief? When is it too much and overwhelming? When is it too little?

How much detail should I give in my description?

How do I describe the course so that students get a good sense of what the class is about?

How explicit should I be in my own interests in the topic and my reasons for organizing the course the way that I have?

Should I anticipate problems and address them in the syllabus, or wait until they might come up in class to address them?

Should I negotiate the syllabus with my students? If so, how? How much input should they have in what happens in the class? How do I represent that in the syllabus that I give them on the first day?

Should I describe my teaching methods or teaching style on the syllabus? Should I discuss how I use feminist pedagogy?

How specific should I be in my description of the assignments?

## **7. Incorporating feminist pedagogical values**

What sorts of activities/readings/assignments can I create that will help us to build alliances/create community?

How do we establish trust (between teacher and students, students)?

Should I include a description of my own feminist values on the syllabus? Should I be explicit? Or, should I be subversive in my "hidden" use of these techniques?

What are my feminist pedagogical values?

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