INTERNATIONAL FEMINIST THEORY: REDEFINING FEMINISM FROM A TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE
GWSS 4103H/5104

Spring 2007
Thurs, 2:30-5:00
FORD 400

Instructor: Dr. Sara L. Puotinen
Office Hours: Mondays, 3:00-5:00 PM
Office Location: FORD 453
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Course Blog: http://blog.lib.umn.edu/puot0002/gwss4103

Course Description:

In this course, we will investigate the question: How does thinking about feminism from a transnational perspective allow us to redefine the nature and practice of feminists’ social, political and ethical projects? After devoting the first two weeks to some introductory texts on the nature and practice of transnational feminism, the remainder of the course will be divided into five sections: subject, resistance, space, community, and agenda.

We will raise questions, such as: Who is the subject of transnational feminism? How are they able to resist oppressive structures and create their own selfhoods? What types of spaces do they function in? What types of connections and communities do transnational feminists rely on? And, what agendas and visions for the future are important for transnational feminists?

Course Expectations:

Within a small seminar like this, everyone’s participation is crucial. To that end, you are responsible for coming to class fully prepared (with texts in hand), actively and respectfully contributing to discussions, asking questions when you don’t understand the material and giving feedback to me on what is working and not working in the class.

Course Readings:

Mohanty/Alexander. Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures (FG)

Grewal, Inderpal. Transnational America (TA)

Cliff, Michelle. Abeng

Selected readings can be found online or in the course packet available soon at Paradigm Copies located in the Dinkeydome.

Course Requirements:
1. **Participation (20%)**
   You are required to attend class regularly and contribute to class discussions. **More than one unexcused absence will lower your class participation grade.**
   For each class, you must be prepared, with fully read text in hand. Included in this grade are any blog assignments.

2. **Presentation #1: Group Project on a Specific Region or Feminism (20%)**
   You and 1-2 other people are required to give a 45 minute presentation on a specific region or type of feminism. You can pick a specific region, such as Uganda, and examine how feminists function within that region, or you can pick an identity, such as Chicana feminism, and describe how a wide range of feminists, from different regions/locations, organize under that identity. Some possible topics are: Chicana feminism, Italian feminism, Ugandan feminists, Afro-Caribbean feminism. While you may choose your topic, no two groups can do the same region or type of feminism. Please see me for approval. A more detailed handout and sign-up sheet will be handed out in the second week of class.

3. **Presentation #2: Individual Project on an Author (20%)**
   You are required to give a 15-20 minute presentation on one of the authors that we are reading this semester. Your presentation should not focus on an analysis of our assigned reading but instead should provide us with background on the author. In addition to offering some brief biographical information, you must provide us with some context for the author’s theories/work. This will require that you read some additional works by the author. What is the author’s larger argument? How does it connect with our specific reading? What is her intellectual background? What does she contribute to the project of transnational feminism? A more detailed handout and sign-up sheet will be handed out in the second week of class.

4. **Paper/s (40%)**
   You may choose one of the following options for this assignment:
   a. Write a 15-18 page paper on a topic related to transnational feminism. As part of your grade, you will create a 250 word abstract and tentative bibliography. The abstract/bibliography will be due on March 8. The final paper will be due on April 26.
   b. Write three shorter analysis papers (5-7 pages each) on three of the five sections of this course. The first paper on Subject will be due February 22. The second paper on Resistance and Agency or Space will be due on April 5. And the final paper on Community or Agenda will be due on May 3.

If you are a student with a disability, you may receive extra assistance from Disability Services (www.ds.umn.edu). After contacting them, please let me know as soon as possible so that I can accommodate your needs.

**Other Information of Interest:**

Feminist Media Center (FMC)
468 Ford Hall
612-625-645
fmc@umn.edu

Spring 2007 FMC Hours:
Lab Attendant: Jess
Mondays - 10am - 3pm
Tuesdays - 9am - 11:30am
Wednesdays - 11am - 5:30pm
Thursdays - 9am - 11:30am & 3 - 6:30pm

Note: This syllabus is subject to change at any point throughout the semester. Any amendments or alterations will be announced in class and on our class blog.

Course Schedule:

INTRODUCTION

1/18     Distribute and discuss syllabus

1/25     What is Transnational Feminism?

READINGS:
Required
2. UCLA International Institute. “Transnational Feminism: A Range of Disciplinary Perspectives (Online)
   http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=28482
Note: Two copies will be available outside of my office. You may check them out in order to make your own copy of the text

Suggested

ASSIGNMENT: Post a comment on our class blog in which you list some unfamiliar terms and/or confusing concepts from our readings. This post should also include a brief (2-3 sentences) definition of transnational feminism as described by Mohanty/Alexander and Shohat. Post your response by Tuesday 1/23.

SUBJECT

2/1     Who is the subject of transnational feminist theory?
Who is a “third world woman”?

READING:
Required
1. Mohanty. “Under Western Eyes Revisited” (online)
   http://www.journals.uchicago.edu.floyd.lib.umn.edu/Signs/journal/issues/v28n2/280214/280214.html
2. Trinh: “Difference: Third World Special Issue” (CP)

 FILM:
Trinh T. Minh-ha, Reassemblage (40 minutes)

ASSIGNMENT: Post a comment by 2/6 on our class blog about Trinh’s film.
2/8 Transnational Subjects and Democratic Citizenship

READING:
Required
3. Appiah. “Toward a New Cosmopolitanism” (online)

Suggested

2/15 Transnational Feminist Subjects as Consumers and Workers

READING:
Required

Suggested
Collins. Threads: Gender, Labor, and Power in the Global Apparel Industry

ASSIGNMENT:
Post a comment on our blog by Tuesday 2/20 about globalization and its effects (both positive and negative) on our lives and the lives of women around the world.

RESISTANCE AND AGENCY

2/22 Resisting Colonialism?

READING:
Required

FILM: Rabbit Proof Fence

ASSIGNMENT: Post a comment on our blog by Tuesday 2/27 about the film.
If you have chosen to write three small papers, your first paper on the transnational feminist subject is due today

3/1 Critical Agency and the Claiming of Selfhood

READING:
Required

Suggested
Alcaron. “Traddutora. Traditora: A Paradigmatic Figure of Chicana” in Scattered Hegemonies

3/8 Resistance through Storytelling

READING:
Required
1. Trinh. “Grandma’s Story” (CP)
2. Stone-Mediatore, Shari. “Storytelling and Global Politics” (CP)
3. Anzaldúa, Gloria. “La Conciencia” (CP)
4. Allen, Paula-Gunn. “Thus Spoke Pocahontas” (CP)

Suggested
Silko, Leslie Marmon. Storyteller
Kingston, Maxine Hong. The Woman Warrior

3/15 SPRING BREAK

SPACE

3/22 It’s a Nice Place to Visit But I Wouldn’t Want to Live There: Jamaica

READING:
Required
Cliff, Michelle. Abeng

Suggested
Cliff, Michelle. No Telephone to Heaven

FILM: clips from Life and Debt

3/29 Home

READING:
Required

COMMUNITY

4/5 Creating Alliances

READING:
1. Sandoval. “U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I” (CP)
2. Lubiano. “Talking about the State and Imagining Alliances” (CP)
3. Anzaldúa. “Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar or Island: Lesbians-of-Color Hacienda Alianzas” (CP)
4. Lugones, Maria. “Playfulness, ‘World’-Traveling and Loving Perception” (CP)

If you have chosen to write three smaller papers, your second paper on Resistance and Agency or Space is due today.

4/12 Organizing

READING:
Required

VISION

4/19 Women’s Rights as Human Rights?

READING:
3. Dutt. “Reclaiming a Human Rights Culture: Feminism of Difference and Alliance” (CP)
4. Okin. “Feminism, Women’s Human Rights, and Cultural Differences” (online)

4/26 Transnational Feminism after 9/11

READING:

If you chose to do the larger paper, it is due today.

5/3 LAST DAY

If you have chosen to write three smaller papers, your second paper on Community or Agenda is due today.