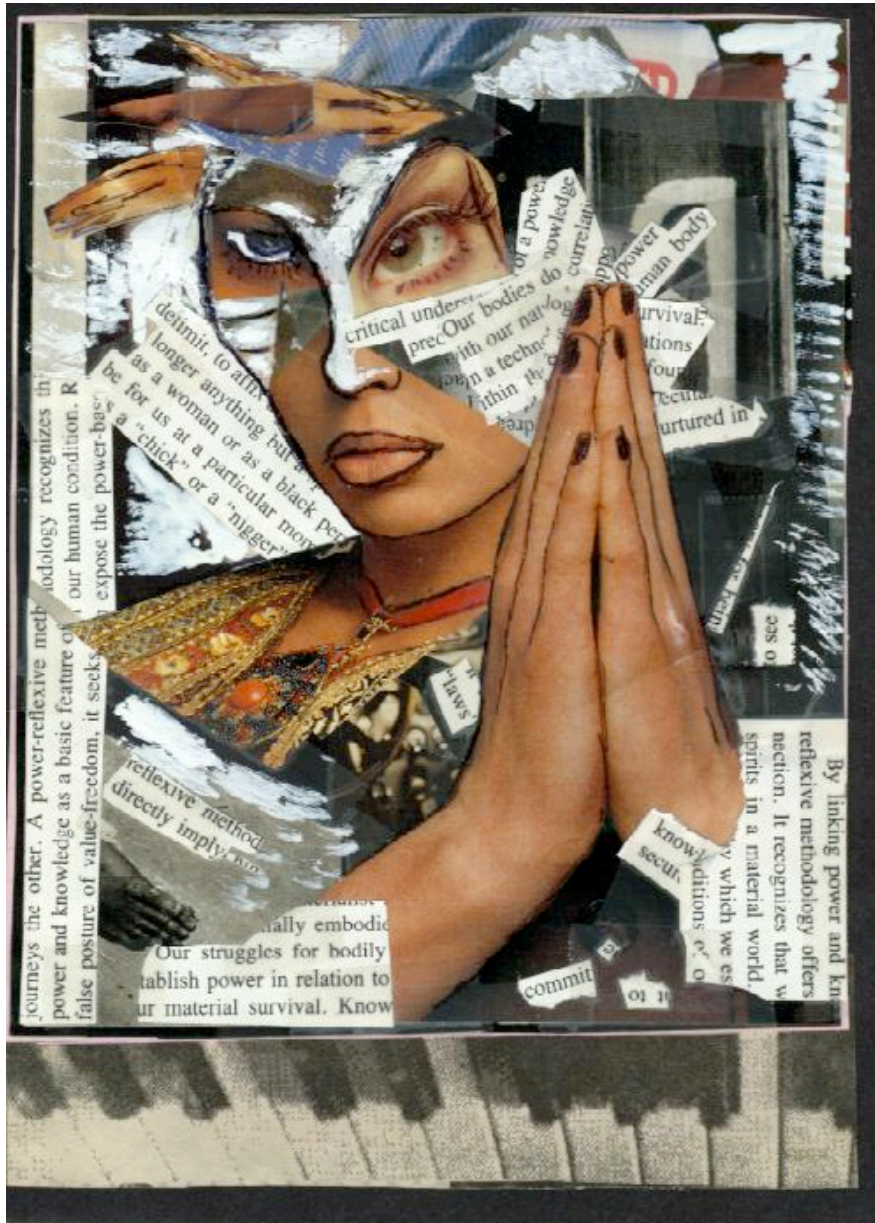


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FEMINIST THEORY
WSP 301/SOC 400
Winter/Spring 2006



S. Pfohl, *sacre mater* (1997)

This course is an advanced introduction to the interdisciplinary, and often provocatively undisciplined, field of feminist theories. We will explore how 'becoming a woman' (or

its refusal) takes place within shifting contexts of history, race, nation, class, culture, sexuality, capitalism, fantasy, technology, and power. At stake in our studies is not only a better understanding of the contested meanings of feminism and the complexities of gendered, racial, economic, sexual, and trans/nation-alized power relations, but also a deeper individual and collective vision of the possibilities for intervening in and transforming these power relations. This course will necessarily fail in its feminist desire to be4 inclusive and just—we will attend to these failures carefully, and make them a productive feature of our work together.

Course expectations This is an advanced seminar, and student participation is key. You are expected to come each week to class having read the assigned readings, prepared to question, critique, elaborate, and discuss. There are no unexcused absences from seminar—if you cannot make it to class, please contact me and Amanda by e-mail in advance of your absence. In addition to weekly readings, you will be keeping a weekly journal of your ‘journey’ through the class; the journals compose—along with your attendance and discussion in seminar—another element of your participation. Doing the readings and writing each week about them will help strengthen your preparation for class, and deepen your understanding of your self as a writer, thinker, and theorist.

Course grades will be based on class participation (including the weekly journals), two 6-7 page essays, and a final exam. The two essays will be based on assigned topics, and guidelines will be handed out in class. Guidelines for the weekly journals will also be handed out in class. The final exam will be a take-home exam, and will cover concepts and readings from the entire course. Grading will be weighted as follows:

Participation/journal	30%
Essay #1 (March 10)	20%
Essay #2 (April 7)	20%
Final exam	30%

Required Texts The required course reader will be available from Campus Copies in Marshall Square Mall on January 24 (course reader #1101). Campus Copies’ phone number is 472-0546. All assignments in the syllabus are from the reader, unless they are marked **(book)**. Required books for the course are available at SU Bookstore in Schine Student Center:

1. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*
2. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

Please note: The readings for the first week of class (January 24) will be available for xeroxing at Bird Library Circulation Desk. You need to make your own xerox copy of the first week’s readings! To find the call number for these readings, please go online to Syracuse University Library. Click on ‘Reserves’ and then ‘Search course reserves.’ Get the call number for the readings by looking under the course number or the instructor

name. With the call number in hand, go to Bird Circulation Desk and ask for the readings...and make your own xerox copy either at the library or elsewhere.

January 17

Introductions: Why K/not Theory?

I. HISTORICAL CONTEXTS: TELLING ORIGIN STORIES

In the beginning was thought, and her name was Woman. (Gunn Allen, 11)

January 24

[please note: The first week's readings are available for copying at the Bird Library Circulation Desk—see instructions above.]

The Birth of Worlds

Monica Sjoog & Barbara Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth* (Harper San Francisco, 1987), pp. 46-70.

Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Beacon Press, 1986), pp. 11-22.

The Birth of U.S. Feminisms

Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 3-16.

Angela Davis, "The Meaning of Emancipation According to Black Woman" (chapter 5) in *Woman, Race & Class* (Random House, 1981), pp. 87-98.

Rosalinda Méndez González, "Distinctions in Western Women's Experience: Ethnicity, Class, and Social Change" in Richardson & Taylor, eds., *Feminist Frontiers II* (McGraw-Hill, 1993), pp. 30-36.

II. STORY, HISTORY, MEMORY, POETRY: THE LANGUAGE(S) OF THEORY

What is considered theory in the dominant academic community is not necessarily what counts as theory for women-of-color. Theory produces effects that change people and the way they perceive the world. Thus we need *teorías* that will enable us to interpret what happens in the world . . . that will reflect what goes on between inner, outer and peripheral "I"s within a person and between the personal "I"s and the collective "we" of our ethnic communities. (Anzaldúa, xxv)

January 31

Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Grandma's Story" (chapter 4) in *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 119-151.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (The Feminist Press, 1973) (**book**).

February 7

Gloria Anzaldúa, “Haciendo caras, una entrada/An Introduction” and “La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness” in Anzaldúa, ed., *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990), pp. xv-xxvii, 377-389.

Patricia Clough, “Introduction” to *Feminist Thought: Desire, Power, and Academic Discourse* (Blackwell, 1994), pp. 1-11.

Inga Muscio, *cunt: a declaration of independence* (Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1998), pp. 3-52.

Jacqueline Zita, “A Suite for the Body (In Four Parts)” (chapter 10) in *Body Talk: Philosophical Reflections on Sex & Gender* (Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 202-208.

III. THEORIZING EVERYDAY LIFE

For the everyday world is neither transparent nor obvious. Fundamental to its organization for us in this form of society is that its inner determinations are not discoverable within it. The everyday world, the world where people are located as they live . . . is generated in its varieties by an organization of social relations that originate ‘elsewhere.’ (Smith, 91-92)

February 14

Dorothy Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Northeastern University Press, 1987), pp. 88-97.

Frigga Haug, ed., “Memory Work” and “The Hair Project” in *Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory* (London: Verso, 1987), pp. 33-52, 91-112.

February 21

Susan Willis, “Gender as Commodity” and “Sweet Dreams” (chapters 2 & 7) in *A Primer for Daily Life* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 23-39, 133-146.

Inderpal Grewal, “Travelling Barbie: Indian Transnationalities and the Global Consumer” (chapter 2) in *Transnational America* (Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 80-120.

IV. IMAGES & POWER: REPRESENTING GENDER AND DIFFERENCE

Every image embodies a way of seeing. (Berger, 10)

February 28

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Penguin Books, 1972), 7-64, 129-155 (**book**).

Patricia Hill Collins, “Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images” (chapter 4) in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), pp. 67-78.

in-class video: *Paris is Burning* (J. Livingston, 1991)

March 7

bell hooks, “Is Paris Burning?” in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), pp. 145-156.

Jackie Goldsby, “Queens of Language” in Martha Gever et al., eds., *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1993), pp. 108-115.

Carla Freccero, “Identity Politics and Postcoloniality” in *Popular Culture: An Introduction* (New York University Press, 1999), pp. 59-75.

Essay #1 due by 12:00 noon on Friday, March 10

Spring break – March 14 – no class

V. HOW WE COME TO KNOW: POLITICS OF EPISTEMOLOGY

I think my problem and ‘our’ problem is how to have simultaneously an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims . . . and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a ‘real’ world, one that can be partially shared and friendly to earth-wide projects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance, modest meaning in suffering, and limited happiness. (Haraway, 187)

Centering women as subjects of knowledge

March 21

Alison M. Jaggar, “Feminist Politics and Epistemology: The Standpoint of Women” (1983). Reprinted in Harding, ed., *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader* (Routledge, 2004), pp. 55-65.

Patricia Hill Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought” (1986). Reprinted in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, pp. 103-122.

Decentering 'Woman' in relations of knowledge and power

March 28

Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" (1991). Reprinted in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, pp. 81-98.

María Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception" in Anzuldúa, ed., *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras*, pp. 390-402.

Feminist critiques of feminist knowledge

April 4

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" in Mohanty et al., eds., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 51-74.

Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Transnational Feminist Practices and Questions of Postmodernity" in Grewal and Kaplan, eds., *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 1-28.

Essay #2 due by 12:00 noon on Friday, April 7

VI. THINKING BODIES

[T]he body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant *materializing* of possibilities. One is not simply a body, but in some very key sense, one does one's body [T]he body *is* a historical situation. (Butler, 272).

April 11

Susan Bordo, "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture" in Diamond and Quinby, eds., *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* (Northeastern University Press, 1988), pp. 87-109.

Judith Butler, selections from *Undoing Gender* (Routledge, 2004), pp. 1-16, 40-43, 50-56.

April 18

Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" (chapter 8) in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (Routledge, 1991), pp. 149-181.

"Possible Worlds: An Interview with Donna Haraway" by Avery Gordon, in Ryan and Gordon, eds., *Body Politics: Disease, Desire, and the Family* (Westview Press, 1994), pp. 241-250.

VII. FEMINIST FUTURES, IM/POSSIBLE HOMES?

How can we fight for a different kind of home? (Gordon, 36)

May 2

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Crafting Feminist Genealogies: On the Geography and Politics of Home, Nation, and Community" in Shohat, ed., *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age* (1998), pp. 485-500.

Paula Gunn Allen, "The Autobiography of a Confluence" (chapter 15) in *Off the Reservation: Reflections on Boundary-Busting, Border-Crossing, Loose Canons* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), pp. 181-192.

Avery Gordon, "War Machines and Washing Machines" in Ryan and Gordon, eds., *Body Politics* (1994), pp. 32-38.