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WST 4309-001: Feminist Theory

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WST 4309 Feminist Theory
Sect. 001, CRN 30565
MW 4-5:15 pm in CH 3290
Spring, 2018

“I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. . . . I saw in theory then a location for healing.” bell hooks, “Theory as Liberatory Practice” (1994)

Dr. Jeannie Ludlow

Office: Coleman 3139

Mailbox: English, CH 3155

e-mail: jludlow via D2L, please. **Please** use D2L to email me for course-related questions or concerns whenever possible. I receive hundreds of emails a week, and D2L helps me keep all your emails in one place, so I don’t miss them.

Office Hours: MWF 11-12; T 1:30-4:30, and by appointment.

Availability: If you would like to meet with me outside of these office hours, please do email for an appointment; I will do my best to accommodate your schedule. I check my email in the morning and in the afternoon on week days and almost never on weekends.

Description: This course examines feminist theory and its application to cultural and academic issues. It provides an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of gender politics and gendered experiences. This section of WST 4309 will focus on gender and activism.

Course Format and Expectations: This is a seminar course, which by definition means that it is student-centered and student-driven. It is my educational philosophy that each of us is responsible for her/his own education; the role of the “professor” is to guide and facilitate the learning process, not to tell students what to think. Therefore, it is expected that students will come to class fully prepared to engage in discussions, activities, etc., that revolve around the assigned materials. This is a feminist course, which means that the course content and teaching are based in a particular political perspective. It is, however, never expected that students will unquestioningly agree with (or even completely understand) materials assigned for class. Critical thinking and articulation of disagreements and difficulties are encouraged.

Student Learning Objectives—at the end of WST 4309 you should be able to:

1. think critically about gender issues as they relate to a variety of academic disciplines;
 2. articulate how political, social, economic, and/or religious factors influence gendered expectations;
 3. articulate values pertaining to gender differences across as well as within cultures;
 4. articulate the ways gender, race, and culture influence your own role as a responsible citizen of your community and of the global community;
 5. articulate an awareness of cultural contexts in which people have lived and worked;
 6. demonstrate an ability to speak knowledgeably about the relationship of gender to several disciplines that comprise Women’s Studies;
- and
7. demonstrate an ability to write clearly about the historical development and/or contemporary applications of feminist theory.

Special circumstances: Any student who needs disability accommodations for this course should please speak with me as soon as possible. Please note that the University’s Office of Disability Services (581-6583) will help with designated learning needs, mobility needs, etc.

GRADES will be earned through the following graded components, which will be assigned whole letter grades:

1. Participation (includes attendance, weekly posting of discussion questions on D2L, daily in-class writing, in-class and on-line activities and discussion, and successful completion of all reading and homework assignments)—must be worth a minimum of 10% of total grade
2. Individual public expression—must be worth a minimum of 10% of total grade
3. Two take-home exams—must be worth a minimum of 10% of total grade
4. Whole-class project related to course theme (activism) with short written report—must be worth a minimum of 10% of total grade
5. Kimball book response/review—must be worth a minimum of 10% of total grade

You will choose how your grade will be earned; 50% has been designated. You may choose to distribute the value among the graded components in any way that suits you. Please take care that your percentages all add up to 100%. Your decision must be registered with me by the beginning of class on Jan. 24 (no exceptions), or I will assign each of your components 20% (please see the graded components worksheet).

IN ORDER TO PASS THIS COURSE, YOU MUST COMPLETE FOR GRADING
ALL FIVE MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS, AS LISTED ABOVE
(TWO EXAMS, PUBLIC EXPRESSION, CLASS PROJECT, BOOK RESPONSE/REVIEW)

OUT OF CLASS ASSIGNMENT/MEETING: As a class, we will attend the WHAM keynote speech, which is still in the process of being scheduled. This speech is an important part of your required course materials, so it is very important that you plan ahead and make sure to be there. If you simply cannot attend for some reason, please speak with me as soon as possible; I will give you an appropriate alternative writing assignment, so you will not lose any credit.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Attendance is crucial to your grade. In-class graded activities will only be accepted for grading during the class session in which they are done (no make ups for in-class work; no exceptions). In addition, please keep in mind that you will be responsible for everything that is said, viewed, assigned, etc., during any class sessions that you miss. Information from lectures, discussions, and in-class activities will be covered on the exams. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate to find out what you missed and to make sure that you get copies of handouts, worksheets, etc., from me. If you are late to class, it is your job to check with me at the end of class to make sure you are marked “not absent.”

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: In this course, we will comply with EIU’s academic integrity policy (please see your catalog). I have absolutely no tolerance for plagiarism or cheating. Please note that “plagiarism or cheating” includes (but is not limited to) the following:

1. **quoting** from a source without correctly citing that source and/or without using quotation marks
2. **paraphrasing** from a source without correctly citing that source
3. turning in a paper with an **incorrect or incomplete works cited list**
4. **falsifying data**
5. turning in **someone else’s work** as your own—this includes (but is not limited to)
 - a. **copying** another’s work from a quiz or assignment
 - b. turning in work that **someone else wrote** for you
 - c. using on-line or hard copy **paper mills**
6. turning in **your own work that was written for another course**, without prior permission.

IMPORTANT: This is a senior-level course; you are expected to demonstrate senior-level facility with proper research, writing, and citation conventions. In your papers, do not cite/use Wikipedia, Yahoo Answers, Wiki Answers, Ask.com, or any other non-academic, non-reliable source. Be certain

your paper uses a standard, accepted academic citation style (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago Manual of Style, ASA, etc.) correctly and consistently. If you do not know how to use your citation style correctly, please get help. The best help is found in my office, on the Purdue OWL (online writing lab) website (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>), and in EIU's Writing Center (<http://castle.eiu.edu/writing/>).

Violations of EIU's academic integrity policy will result in an **automatic failing grade** in this course and notification of the Office of Student Services. For more information, see www.eiu.edu/~judicial.

LATE POLICY: Late work is strongly discouraged. However, late is better than not at all. Work will depreciate in value one letter grade for each school day it is late, beginning at 11:00 a.m. on the day it is due, unless otherwise noted. All work is due at the time noted in the schedule.

Materials needed:

PLEASE NOTE: You are required to do all assigned reading for this course. One required text for this course is available from Textbook Rental. Several required readings will also be available only via D2L. REQUIRED TEXT from TRS

Mann, Susan Archer. *Doing Feminist Theory: From Modernity to Postmodernity*. Oxford UP, 2012.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*.

TEXT AVAILABLE ONLINE (D2L)

Kimball, Gayle. *Resist! Goals and Tactics for Changemakers*. Book manuscript in progress. Our class is beta-testing this textbook; your feedback for the author will help her make the text better before it is published.

TEXT AVAILABLE TO BORROW/BUY FROM JEANNIE

Berger, Michele, and Cheryl Radeloff. *Transforming Scholarship: Why Women's and Gender Studies Students Are Changing Themselves and the World*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-415-83653-1. (You may use this number to order a copy from a discount online bookstore such as Alibris or Powell's or ABE books. Be sure to get the 2nd edition!)

If you need help with D2L, please let me know. If you cannot find something that is supposed to be there, please let me know that, too.

A great on-line dictionary site: www.onelook.com

ASSIGNMENTS AND PROTOCOL

E-mail guidelines: When you communicate with your instructors, whether by e-mail, by phone, or in person, you are engaging in a professional exchange. Please be sure to reflect this professionalism in your communication. Also, please note that I only check my e-mail two or three times each school day. Give me at least one full school day (24 hours, M – F) to answer any e-mail message—I typically do not check my campus e-mail on weekends. (PLEASE NOTE: these are very good guidelines to follow for other professional emails: prospective employers, funders, etc.)

PARTICIPATION

Participation consists of regular attendance and productive participation in class discussions and in-class activities. Please note that the **bolded** phrases are most important.

A = almost perfect attendance and almost never late; **active and substantive participation in class discussions, explicitly about the materials assigned for that day or unit**, involving obvious critical thought and making connections to other materials or examples; avoidance of "side" conversations in class; leadership role in group activities and discussion; professional interactions

with others in class, even when disagreeing strongly, and in all communications with professor; inattention to cell phones and other electronic devices, except for class work

- B = almost perfect attendance and almost never late; **consistent participation in class discussions and activities with some references to assigned materials**, even when confused or struggling with ideas; professional behavior in class (including not carrying on "side" conversations and not being rude) and in all communication with professor; inattention to cell phones and other electronic devices, except for class work
- C = consistent attendance with full preparation of course materials but **little to no verbal participation in discussions** unless required; professional behavior in class and in all communications with professor; consistent "follower" role in group activities; OR consistent **enthusiastic participation in discussions and activities, with no explicit evidence of full preparation of course materials**; professional behavior in class and in all communications with professor; inattention to cell phones and other electronic devices, except for class work
- D = frequent lateness or absence; unprofessional, rude, or inappropriate behavior in class or on the discussion board (including, but not limited to, doing homework for other classes, reading newspapers in class, occasionally attending to electronics, "side" conversations, etc.)
- F = missing class; disruptive or hostile behavior in class or on the course discussion board; frequently attending to cell phones or other electronic devices during class.

Theme-related project

One of the assignments in this class is to develop, create, and carry out a project related to our Women's History and Awareness Month (WHAM) theme. This year's focus is on **gender and activism**. As a class, you will need to design and create your project, as a class, and implement it before the last week of March. Again, I will be sure you have the materials you need, so the assignment doesn't cost you any money.

TIMELINE:

2/5 in-class meeting to start the planning/idea generation process; start doing your research!

2/14 short in-class meeting to check in with one another, get organized, etc.

2/26 class session given to the project

4/3 each student will turn in an individually-written short report in which you: a) describe what you learned doing this project; b) give the project as a whole a letter grade and write a full paragraph explaining why that is the correct grade for the project; and c) assign a separate letter grade to each student in the class (including yourself) and tell why that is the grade you think that person earned. If you do not turn in this report, you will not pass the display project assignment.

Exams

Your midterm will be a take-home exam comprised of a few short answer questions (dealing with important terminology) and one essay (scholarly paper); you may be asked about any materials covered in class up to that point. It is due in D2L dropbox on Thu., 3/1/17.

Your final exam is comprehensive (covers the entire semester) and will be a combination exam: a take-home essay (scholarly paper) and an in-class short answer exam. You will turn in your take-home essay via D2L dropbox before the beginning of the in-class final exam session (5:15 p.m. on Mon., 4/30), after which you will receive the in-class final exam to complete.

Kimball book response/review

Our class has been invited to beta-test a new Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies textbook about global activism. The manuscript of the book is available on D2L in the folder titled "Kimball." We will read and discuss this text just as we would any other course textbook. After we have completed the

book, you will write a response/review of the text that the author can use to revise and improve it before she publishes it.

Public expression—this assignment asks you to find a way to communicate something important about **feminist theory** (not just about feminism and not just about women) to a general audience. You may do this in any way that appeals to you: make visual art; make music; dance; write a poem, a blog, a story, a news article, a manifesto, a monologue, a children's book; speak; create signs; create a twitter chain (live-tweet the WHAM keynote or a class session or another speaker's presentation) or Pinterest page; organize an event; create a game; have a dinner party. Really, do anything you like. The only restriction on this assignment is that it **cannot be a scholarly paper**; it must be for a general (non-academic) audience. Here is what must happen: 1) your expression must help your audience understand something about feminist theory (NOTE: you need to provide evidence of this—before-and-after surveys, handouts, interactive feedback, something); 2) you must provide some kind of documentary evidence of the event (photos, recording, inviting me to the event, etc.); 3) your expression must be completed after spring break and before April 20; 4) you must write a very short explanation of what you did, what aspect(s) of feminist theory it illuminated, and how it helped people understand that bit of feminist theory better. When you turn in this statement, you should also provide the evidence of your expression and its effectiveness (surveys, feedback, etc.).