

## **WST 124 Introduction to Women's Studies**

*I don't give a damn about semi-radicals.* Helen Keller, 1916

Catalog Description: What is Women's Studies? What is feminism? What have been the historic roles of women in the United States? In the world? How are women's experiences similar? How do they differ? How do class, race, and ethnicity shape women's development? Any student who has ever asked her/himself any of these questions can begin to explore answers in this introductory course in Women's Studies. The inter-disciplinary field of Women's Studies draws from the often-neglected experience of women in order to describe, analyze, and more fully understand the gendered world order. Students will read several primary source selections from each of the different eras of the international feminist movement, as well as complementary texts in Women's History and Literature. This introduction to Women's Studies will engage students in a deeply personal and academic journey that involves classroom discussion of individuals' perceptions and critiques, journal responses to both discussion and reading, and a media project analyzing cultural images of women. This course is required for those pursuing either a minor or an independent major in Women's Studies.

### **Required Book Purchases:**

Gerda Lerner. *The Creation of Patriarchy*. (New York: Oxford), 1996.

Amy Kesselman, Lily McNair, Nancy Schniedewind. *Women: Images and Reality*. (California: Mayfield), 2002.

Jean Baker Miller. *Toward a New Psychology of Women*. (Boston: Beacon Press), 1976..

Peggy McIntosh. "The Interactive Phases of Curricular Revision: A Feminist Perspective, Center for Research on Women, No. 124, 1987.

Alice Walker. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*.

Sherley Ann Williams. *Dessa Rose*. (New York: Harper), 1999.

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance is required for each day the class meets. Students who are unable to attend are required to 1) notify Linda or Peggy before class; and 2) complete additional assignments outside of the syllabus, and make a 10 minute presentation to the class. Students are responsible for requesting extra course assignments to make up for absences. Makeup work must be completed within one week of the absence, unless special arrangements have been made. Failure to comply with the course attendance policy will result in the lowering of the student's grade.

### **Special Assignments**

#### **1) Cultural and Spiritual Autobiography-**

During the first three weeks of the course, we will have extended introductions of participants. Please answer the following questions (completely) and make a 15-minute presentation (taken from your essay) to the class on the day you are assigned to do so. The questions are:

- 1) What was your school life like growing up?
- 2) When did you first notice that girls and boys, men and women, were different? What difference, if any, did this make for you?

- 3) What is your relationship to your body? What image(s) of yourself as a man or woman does you strive to express? What do clothes, weight and/or makeup, do for the cultural image you want to project to the world?
- 4) What kind of spiritual values do you possess? What is the human project?
- 5) What are your political values and beliefs?
  - a) How do you view the abortion controversy in the USA? What is it really about?
  - b) In your opinion, why are there no female heads of state in the USA?
- 6) What is your present understanding of feminism?
- 7) What is your attitude toward conflict?

This assignment should be typed and placed in your three-ring class journal. Your grade for the essay and oral presentation will count for **10%** of your final grade.

## 2) Feminist Social Change Project

In keeping with the contemporary definition of feminism as a social project to end forms of domination in relationships between human beings, each student will complete a "hands-on" project of her/his own design. This is a small project (as projects go). The idea is to do something outside the classroom walls, which will illustrate your contribution to eradicating sexism. Here are some (mostly on-campus) possibilities:

- \* help organize Women United for P.E.A.C.E conference in early March
- \* write an article for the Pinnacle on a topic of concern to women students
- \* organize a "coffee house" night
- \* sponsor an outing to a lecture at UK, ECU, or regional conference
- \* organize others to discuss women's health care on campus
- \* make a presentation of a class paper at a Women's Studies conference
- \* sponsor a Women's History month activity

This assignment will represent **10%** of your final grade.

## 3) AAUW Presentation

As part of the monthly program for AAUW, our class has been invited to participate in a discussion with Hispanic women in the Berea area. The conversation will take place at St. Clare's Catholic Church in the Fellowship Hall at 7:10 p.m. on Tuesday, March 18. The program will be over at 8:30 p.m. Reading and writing assignments will precede the discussion. Those participating in the evening session will receive 6 extra credit points.

## **Participation**

Women's Studies courses are designed to be interactive and highly participatory. One's attendance in class is prerequisite to an excellent grade in participation. While in class, a student is expected to be "present" in mind and spirit as well. This includes cultivating the art of listening, dialoguing with others (encouraging those less comfortable to speak, encouraging those who dominate conversation to moderate their spoken comments). Participation also means reading the dynamics of a group conversation and helping to discern the "next step" in the learning process. Participation marks will constitute **15%** of the final grade.

## **Daily Assignments**

As in most liberal arts courses, the heart of our work will be reading and writing. Daily written assignments and study guides will count for **50%** of the final grade.

## Feminist Website Project

Each student in the course will work with one other person to locate a web site pertinent to our semester study of women's experiences. The web team of two will walk the rest of the class through the interesting parts of the site. Prepare a 2 page handout with a summary of the site, and description of main features and the ways this web site addresses the issues of our course. Be sure to include web site address and appropriate links. This assignment is worth **5%** of the final grade.

## Tests

For the most part, this course relies on extensive reading and writing assignments to assess student progress in the course. However, there will be one comprehensive test on Gerda Lerner's *Creation of Patriarchy*. This test will constitute **10%** of the final grade.

## Extra Credit

There will be multiple opportunities to earn extra credit points in the course. Ten credits constitute one additional percentage point in the course. Examples of extra credit opportunities are: Women United for P.E.A.C.E conference, special off-campus lectures, Peanut Butter and Gender, Women's History Month activities (especially those organized by classmates), extra readings and reports on topics relevant to our study, AAUW presentation,

## Spring Calendar 2003

### Part I. What is Feminism? What is Women's Studies

"Feminism is the articulation of the ancient underground culture and philosophy based on the values that patriarchy has labeled "womanly" but which are necessary for full humanity. Among the principles and values of feminism that are most distinct from those of patriarchy are universal equality, non-violent problem solving, and cooperation with nature, one another, and other species. " Sonia Johnson.

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|----------------------------|--|
| February 6 (Thursday)      | Course introduction. Linda and Peggy present autobiographies; lecture: Plato's "Allegory of the Cave."<br><b>Assignment:</b> Complete autobiography assignment for Tuesday.  |
| February 11 (Tuesday)      | Student presentations of autobiographies.<br><b>Assignment:</b> Read the introduction and Part I (pp. 7-35) in <i>Images</i> .. Use note cards distributed in class to summarize your assigned reading, and write a question for class discussion connected to your particular reading. On the opposite side of the note card, write your definition of feminism. <b>(1)</b> |
| <b>Feb. 12 (Wednesday)</b> | <b>Peanut Butter and Gender</b>  |
| February 13 (Thursday)     | Discussion of assigned readings; autobiographies continued.<br><b>Assignment:</b> Read McIntosh's, " Interactive Phases of Curricular Revision: A Feminist Perspective," and complete the following :<br>(1) Write a one page response. (What did the article say to you?)<br>(2) Respond: how would you characterize your own formal  |

education in terms of McIntosh's interactive stage theory? What would WST 124 look like at stage four? Which of the little women represents your experience as a student? What is the invisible structure at Berea College?

(3) Define the following key terms in the discipline of women's studies: a) personal and curriculum; b) hierarchies of power and value; c) oppression; d) exclusion; e) social construct; f) invisible; g) domestic. This assignment should be approximately four typed pages, and is due on Thursday, Feb.20 (2,3)

**Feb. 16,17,18**

**Vagina Monologues in Baird Lounge (Required attendance at one performance.)**

February 18 (Tuesday)

Student autobiography presentations.

**Assignment:** Read Lerner's *Creation of Patriarchy*, pp. 1-53. Write a one page summary, and one page thoughtful response. Typed, Times 12 pt., single-spaced. Due Tues. Feb. 25. (4)

February 20 (Thursday)

Lecture: "The Broken Pyramid," and discussion of McIntosh essay.

**Part II - What is Patriarchy?**

Patriarchy in its wider definition means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power.

February 25 (Tuesday)

Discuss *Creation of Patriarchy*; lecture: "What is Patriarchy?" followed by film: "Goddess Remembered."

**Assignment:** Read Walker's essay, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" (to be distributed), and type a one page thoughtful response. (5)

**February 26 (Wednesday)**

**Required Peanut Butter and Gender, ""Womanism: A Black Feminist Theology"**

February 27 (Thursday)

Guest Speaker: Rev. Gloria Johnson addresses issues surrounding Black women and feminism.

**Assignment:** Read Lerner's text, pp. 76-100,141-160, "The Woman Slave " and "The Goddesses." Summarize and respond to each chapter. Be sure to pose a question for class discussion. (6)

March 4(Tuesday)

Discuss "The Woman Slave;" lecture: "The Egg and the Sperm."

**Assignment:** Complete write-up of feminist social project proposal. (7)

March 6 (Thursday)

**Assignment:** Read Chapters 180-229 in Lerner's text: "The Covenant," "Symbols," and "The Creation of Patriarchy."

Summarize each chapter in two paragraphs, 6-7 good sentences for each. In two typed pages, write a thoughtful critical response to these three chapters. (8)

- March 11 (Tuesday) Class discussion of "The Covenant," "Symbols," and "The Creation of Patriarchy."  
**Assignment:** Prepare for test on Gerda Lerner's text.
- March 13 (Thursday) Test on Gerda Lerner's *Creation of Patriarchy*  
**Assignment:** Read pp. 1-159 in *Dessa Rose* and prepare for quiz. (9)
- March 18 (Tuesday) Preparation for AAUW meeting. Guest speaker: Olga Gamez; discussion of "Guest speaker: Olga Gamez Lecture: " Dessa Rose: An Historical Analysis"; quiz on reading.  
**Assignment:** Complete reading of *Dessa Rose* and prepare for quiz.(10)
- March 20 (Thursday) Discussion of Dessa Rose.
- March 25,27 (Tues./Thurs) Spring Break
- March 26-27**  
**March 27-29** **Black Women's Conference at UK**  
**Women's Writer's Conference at UK**
- April 1(Tuesday) No class.  
**Assignment:** Read Part II of *Images*, pp. 46-67 and complete study guide.(11)
- April 3 (Thursday) Guest speaker: Dr. Gabriella Rota discusses experiences of Latina women in the USA;  
**Assignment:** Section II, Learning Gender, pp. 69-110 in *Images*, and complete study guide.(12)
- April 8 (Tuesday) Film: "Still Killing Us Softly;" discussion of gender equity in the classroom.  
**Assignment:** Read Selections from Part VI and VIII, readings #89, 94, 134, and 146 and complete study guide.(13)
- April 9 (Wednesday)** **Required field trip to UK: Lecture by Patricia Collins : "It All Depends on Where You Stand: Black Nationalist Feminism, or Black Feminist Nationalism"** Leave Boone Tavern at 3:00 p.m., return after supper at 8:00 p.m.
- April 10 (Thursday) Discuss readings and Patricia Collins lecture.  
**Assignment:** Read pp. 1-97 in Jean Baker Miller's *Towards a New Psychology of Women*; summarize and respond to each chapter and formulate (and respond to) one thoughtful question for class discussion. 3 typed pages. (14)

- April 15(Tuesday) In-class writing: what examples from your own experience either challenge or substantiate Miller's claims in the early chapters of *Toward a New Psychology of Women*?  
**Assignment:** Read pp. 96-136 in *Towards...* and respond to the question, "What does it mean to become "yourself" as a creative, authentic human being? Make a poster/design or write a poem in response. Be prepared to share in class on Thursday. **(15)**
- April 17 (Thursday) Continue discussion of Miller text.  
**Assignment:** Complete feminist web site project and be prepared to present on Tuesday, April 22. **(16)**
- April 22 (Tuesday) Student presentations of feminist web sites. Meeting place: TBA.  
**Assignment:** Read Part III, Gender and Women's Bodies, pp. 122-148 and complete study guide. **(17)**
- April 24 (Thursday) Discuss "Gender and Women's Bodies."  
**Assignment:** Read Part III in *Images* (Sexuality and Relationships), pp. 149-177, and complete study guide. **(18)**
- April 29 (Tuesday) Labor Day. No class**
- May 1 (Thursday) Discuss "Sexuality and Relationships."  
**Assignment:** Read Part V, "Health and Reproductive Freedom," (pp.305-351) in *Images* and Naomi Wolf's chapter from *Misconceptions*, and complete study guide. **(19)**
- May 6 (Tuesday) Guest speaker: Dr. Elaine Roberts in Nursing Department; discussion of readings.  
**Assignment:** Read Part IV "Institutions that Shape Women's Lives " in *Images...*;complete study guide. **(20)**
- May 8 (Thursday) Film: " Jane: An Abortion Service;"  
**Assignment:** Class selects readings from *Images*, and complete study guide. **(21)**
- May 13 (Tuesday) Student organized discussion of readings.  
**Assignment:** Class selects final readings from *Images...***(22)**
- May 15 (Thursday) Student organized discussion of assigned readings.
- May 19 (Monday) Final exam at 10:00 a.m.