

Women's Studies 330: Women of Color in the U.S.

Fall 2009

TR 12:00-1:50

328 Cramer Hall

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Course Description:

This course examines the theoretical perspectives of women of color in the U.S. Emphasizing that women of color are complex subjects whose actions are constrained but not determined by intersecting structures of gender, sexuality, race, nation and global capitalism, this course draws on critical theory, history, legal analysis, ethnography, film, fiction, and poetry to illustrate the multifaceted dimensions of women of color's lives. We will begin by interrogating the ways that white privilege has shaped women's studies and analyzing the impacts that this phenomenon has had on women of color. Next, we will trace the historical and political emergence of the category, women of color, and explore what it means to call oneself a woman of color. Then, we will look at some of the key cultural, political, and economic issues facing women of color in the U.S. today including globalization, colonialism, war, and various forms of state violence. Finally, we will analyze contemporary possibilities for coalition building around the category, women of color.

Course Objectives:

- To develop an understanding of the category, women of color, as a political identity.
- To analyze the processes by which race, gender, sexuality, and class are socially constructed in relation to each other and to recognize the ways in which these inseparable categories of difference structure women of color's lives.
- To examine issues such as cultural representation, globalization, colonialism, war, sexual violence, reproductive freedom, immigration control, and police violence from the perspectives of women of color.
- To center the experiences of women of color within feminist analysis and practice.

Required Reading:

The following books are required reading for the course:

1. Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*
2. Sarah Husain, *Voices of Resistance: Muslim Women on War, Faith and Sexuality*

3. *Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, Color of Violence: The Incite! Anthology*

These books are available for purchase at the PSU bookstore. In addition to the required books, articles will be made available to you electronically through Blackboard. To access these readings, go to psuonline.pdx.edu, and log in with your ODIN username and password. Please print out the articles so that you can more effectively take notes and so that you can have them to refer to during class discussions. Please do not use your laptops in class. These articles are required reading for the course. Therefore, it is important that you plan ahead to have regular internet access.

Course Requirements:

1. *Attendance and Participation (10%)*: Students are expected to attend all class meetings, be on time, finish all reading assignments prior to class, and be engaged in class discussions. Participation includes both speaking and listening. Therefore, students should come to class prepared to both express their own thoughts and questions on course material and to listen and learn from their classmates. Class discussions are an essential component of this course, and the success of the course depends upon your participation. You are allowed to miss two classes without it affecting your grade. For each class you miss after the two excused absences, your attendance grade will be reduced by the equivalent of one full letter grade. If you miss more than six classes, you will automatically fail the course. Exceptions to this policy may be made in cases of illness. However, it is your responsibility to contact me and make arrangements to make up missed work in a timely manner. Pop quizzes, in-class writing, and informal homework assignments will also be included as part of your attendance and participation grade.
2. *Weekly Online Discussion Posts (10%)*: You are required to post to the online discussion board once a week beginning the second week of class. We will divide the class into three groups as follows:
 - Group A- Students whose last names begin with the letters A-G
 - Group B- Students whose last names begin with the letters H-R
 - Group C- Students whose last names begin with the letters S-ZEach week individuals in one group will be responsible for posting two discussion questions about the week's readings by Wednesday at midnight. These questions will form the basis of part of our discussion in Thursday's class. Individuals in the other two groups are required to post a response to one or more of the questions by midnight the following Monday. These responses must be at least 250 words long and include at least one specific reference to class texts. The dates on which discussion posts are due are listed in the course schedule. Discussion posts will not be accepted late.
3. *Autobiography Project (20%)*: You are required to write a book review of an autobiography or memoir written by a woman of color. Your review should make

connections between the autobiography you choose and themes discussed in this course. The autobiography project is due on Tuesday, November 24. You will receive more specific details about the project later in the term.

4. *Take-Home Midterm Exam (25%)*: Questions for the take-home midterm will be distributed on Tuesday, November 3. The midterm is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, November 5.
5. *Take-Home Final Exam (35%)*: Questions for the take-home final will be distributed on Thursday, December 3. The final is due on Tuesday, December 8.

You are responsible for meeting the above deadlines, for information given in class about assignments and changes to the syllabus, and above all, for contacting me about any problems that you may encounter. The material covered in this course can be quite challenging. Therefore, if you have questions or are struggling with the material in any way, it is essential that you come talk to me as soon as possible. Additionally, if there are personal issues that make it difficult or impossible for you to complete assignments or come to class, it is your responsibility to let me know in a timely manner so that we can work together to make sure that you successfully complete the course.

Class Schedule and Reading List

Note: Essays in *The Color of Violence* Anthology are marked (COV). All other essays are available online through the class Blackboard page.

I. Decentering Whiteness in Women's Studies

9/29: Introduction

10/1: Naming Whiteness

Readings: Peggy MacIntosh, "White Privilege"

Patti Duncan, "Decentering Whiteness"

María Lugones, "Hablando Cara a Cara/ Speaking Face to Face"

10/6: Racism and the Production of Knowledge

Readings: Audre Lorde, "Poetry is Not a Luxury," "The Master's Tools," "An Open Letter to Mary Daly"

Elsa Barkley Brown, "What Has Happened Here"

II. Women of Color: Defining the Category and Key Concepts

10/8: Historical Perspectives

Readings: Selections from *This Bridge Called My Back*:

Cherríe Moraga, "Refugees of a World on Fire"

Cherríe Moraga, "Preface"

Donna Kate Rushin, "The Bridge Poem"

Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, "Introduction"
The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement"

*Discussion posts on these readings:

Group A- post questions by 10/7

Groups B&C- post responses by 10/12

10/13: Theory in the Flesh

Readings: Selections from *This Bridge Called My Back*:

Nelly Wong, "When I Was Growing Up"

Cherrie Moraga, "La Guera"

Barbara Cameron, "Gee, You Don't Seem Like An Indian From the
Reservation"

Mirtha Quintanales, "I Paid Very Hard for My Immigrant Ignorance"

10/15: Borderlands

Readings: Gloria Anzaldúa, "The Homeland, Atzlán/ El otro México" and "La
consciencia de la mestiza/ Towards a New Consciousness" from
Borderlands/La Frontera

*Discussion posts on these readings:

Group A- post questions by 10/14

Groups B&C- post responses by 10/19

10/20: Representations and Controlling Images

Readings: Patricia Hill Collins, "Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images"
Tricia Rose, "Two Inches or a Yard"

10/22: Redefining Culture

Readings: Leti Volpp, "Blaming Culture for Bad Behavior"

Purvi Shah, "Redefining Home"

*Discussion posts on these readings:

Group B- post questions by 10/21

Groups A&C- post responses by 10/26

III. Contemporary Issues and Activism

10/27: Sexual Violence

Readings: Aishah Simmons, "The War Against Black Women, and the Making of NO!"
(COV, pp. 170-8)

Andrea Smith, *Conquest*, pp. 1-79.

10/29: Reproductive Freedom

Readings: Andrea Smith, *Conquest*, pp. 79-118.

Dorothy Roberts, "Feminism, Race and Adoption Policy" (COV, pp. 42-52)

Loretta Ross, "The Color of Choice: White Supremacy and Reproductive Justice"
(COV, pp. 53-65)

*Discussion posts on these readings:

Group B- post questions by 10/28
Groups A&C- post responses by 11/2

11/3: Resisting Colonial Gender Violence

Readings: Andrea Smith, *Conquest*, pp. 119-192.

Haunani-Kay Trask, "The Color of Violence" (COV, pp. 81-7)

11/5: Midterm Due – No Class

11/10: Women of Color in the Global Economy

Readings: Grace Chang, "Global Exchange: The World Bank, 'Welfare Reform,' and the Trade in Migrant Women"

Miriam Ching-Yoon Louie, "La Mujer Luchando, El Mundo Transformando: Mexican Immigrant Women Workers"

11/12: Gender and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment

Readings: Syd Lindsley, "The Gendered Assault on Immigrants"

Sylvanna Falcón, "National Security and the Violation of Women" (COV, pp. 119-129)

Renee Saucedo, "INS Raids and How Immigrant Women are Fighting Back" (COV, pp.135-7)

*Discussion posts on these readings:

Group C- post questions by 11/11

Groups A&B- post responses by 11/16

11/17: Policing Women of Color

Readings: Andrea Ritchie, "Law Enforcement Violence Against Women of Color" (COV, pp. 138-156)

Patricia Allard, "Crime, Punishment, and Economic Violence" (COV, pp. 157-163)

Stormy Ogden, Pomo Woman, Ex-Prisoner, Speaks Out (COV, pp. 164-169)

Critical Resistance and Incite!, "Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex" (COV, pp. 223-226)

11/19: Women of Color and the War on Terrorism

Readings: Nadine Naber, et. al., "The Forgotten '-ism'" (COV, pp 97-112)

S.R., "Don't Liberate Me" (COV, p. 118)

Sarah Husain, ed., *Voices of Resistance*, Introduction

*Discussion posts on these readings:

Group C- post questions by 11/18

Groups A&B- post responses by 11/23

11/24: War on Terrorism (continued)

Readings: Sarah Husain, ed., *Voices of Resistance*, Part I and II.

*Autobiography Project Due

12/1: Unclaiming the Nation/Re-claiming Our Bodies and Sexualities
Readings: Sarah Husain, ed., *Voices of Resistance*, Part III and IV.

12/3: Building Coalitions

Readings: Andrea Smith, "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White
Supremacy" (COV, pp. 66-73)
Sista II Sista, "Sistas Makin' Moves" (COV, pp. 196-207)
Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Coalition Politics"

***Final Exam Questions Distributed**

12/8: Final Exam Due