

Portland State University

**Gender, Class, Culture**

WS 308u, CRN 64185

*Winter 2010*

Ondine 202

Marlene Howell, Instructor\*

Use the course BLACKBOARD email to contact or the TA's

Office Hours— 12:00-1:00pm, Tuesday, Thursday

4:30pm-5:30pm, Thursday

*at: Abu Rasheed Restaurant, 1921 SW 6th*

TA's: Anthony, Stacey, Katie, Deidre

## Welcome to Gender, Class, Culture!

In this course, we will explore the politics, history, and dynamics of class identities from a variety of perspectives. Being one of the most fluid aspects of our identities, class never the less strikes a deep chord, and informs many of our decisions, creativity, and relationships. Thus it has a cultural voice as well. Our experiences of gender, and race, are determined by class identity also. During the next 11 weeks, we'll learn about ourselves, and each other, examining class as an intersection of identities, culture, and gender.

### LEARNING TOGETHER

This course has a variety of assignment options because people have a variety of learning styles. There are many ways to show what you are learning, and how you incorporate your understanding of the course content into your analysis of class issues. Do not plan to do all assignments. The course design allows you some flexibility and choice!

This is an interactive class! Knowing one another's names, being thoughtful listeners, and assertive, but not dominate speakers, makes the classroom experience more meaningful for everyone. If you are usually a listener, challenge yourself to find, and use your voice. If you are usually a talker, strive to find the balance between being one of the first folks to start a discussion and being comfortable with silence. *Become aware of privilege in your response to the content*

*and classroom dynamics. All of us have privilege in some ways. This class offers us an opportunity to explore it, and deconstruct it. To do so, we start with recognizing it honestly and respectfully, choosing compassion instead of blame, and humor in place of guilt. That's how we grow, personally and politically.*

Class issues often trigger us emotionally. This course happens in the intellect, the heart, in memory, in desire, in hope, in possibility. Our feelings tell us much about where we've been, where we are, and how we'll get to where we want to be regarding class identity. Honoring those feelings, and using them as a basis for your analysis and learning, is the best way to have a meaningful experience in both the process and product of what we create together in the classroom and in our communities.

## Goals

- ❖ to increase awareness of the relationships between class identity, race, gender, culture, and articulate cogent oral, and written, scholarly analyses of them
- ❖ to learn about classism through taking risks and trying new ways of approaching content
- ❖ to learn with, and from, one another in a spirit of solidarity and integrity
- ❖ to increase knowledge of the development of democracies within class systems
- ❖ to show scholarly growth through participation in the community development group project
- ❖ to recognize that this course challenges the class bias inherent in college, and provides opportunities for academic growth that welcome all styles of class based learning

## Books

In Other Words Bookstore, 8 NE Killingsworth, 503 232 6003, is our textbook vendor. They sell texts out of the Women's Resource Center in Montgomery Hall during the first week of classes.

### Required for All Students:

1) *Class Questions: Feminist Answers* (The Gender Lens Series)

by Joan Acker

paperback, 234 pages

Publisher: AltaMira Press (December 28, 2005)

ISBN-10: 0742546306

ISBN-13: 978-0742546301

2) *Taking On the Big Boys: Or Why Feminism Is Good for Families, Business, and the Nation* (Paperback)

by Ellen Bravo

Paperback: 176 pages

Publisher: The Feminist Press at CUNY; Softcover Ed edition (April 1, 2007)

ISBN-10: 1558615458 ISBN-13: 978-1558615458

**One** of the following is required for all students. DO NOT buy your book until we've discussed this in class. I will tell you about each book. We will divide into five small book reading groups, and each group will read, and present, one of the following books at the end of the term.

**\*indicates novel**

\*3) *Strange as this Weather Has Been*

by Ann Pancake

Paperback: 360 pages

Publisher: Counterpoint Press (September 28, 2007)

ISBN-10: 159376166X ISBN-13: 978-1593761660

\*4) And They Didn't Die

by Laretta Ngcobo

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: The Feminist Press at CUNY (April 15, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1558612130

ISBN-13: 978-1558612136

5) Why Women Protest: Women's Movements in Chile (Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics) (Paperback)

by Lisa Baldez

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Cambridge University Press (August 26, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0521010063

ISBN-13: 978-0521010061

6) The Woman Who Watches Over the World: A Native Memoir (Paperback)

by Linda Hogan

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: W.W. Norton & Co. (May 17, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393323056

ISBN-13: 978-0393323054

7) Girls Without Class

by Julie **Bettie**

University of California Press

ISBN 10: 0 520 23542 8

ISBN 13: 978 0 520 23542 7

## Grades

All assignments are graded on a point basis. Other than the group book presentation, LEGOS, and story telling, assignments are optional. Written work is submitted through the course web ct. For help with Blackboard, go to the student help desk in Smith Hall, Room 18, or contact them at [help@pdx.edu](mailto:help@pdx.edu), or 503 725 4357. I only accept written work posted in Blackboard, and I don't accept late work. Since more than half of your grade comes from assignments you choose, it's best to be organized and disciplined! Choose assignments based on your learning style, time, and academic interests. Give yourself a challenge! Most of all, have some fun!

Minimum number of total points needed to earn each grade:

A—2,200    B—2000    C—1800    D—1500

A plus or minus may be used to indicate level of academic achievement.

### Optional Assignments:

#### **Attendance/Participation            50 weekly pts possible**

On Tuesdays at the end of class, some of you will be asked to grade yourself out loud on a scale of 0-50 for your participation that day. 50pts indicates that you came to class on time,

did the assigned readings ahead of time, participated appropriately, i.e., with honest discussion based on clear academic preparation, and no texting, tweeting, web searches, sleeping, grandstanding, or faking! The first day of class does not count toward this cumulative total, but attendance at the final or at another group's book presentation counts for 100 pts. *By the same token, students who come late or miss the final class meeting decrease their total number of participation points by 100 points.*

### **Blackboard Journal**

**1000 total/100 weekly pts possible**

If you attend class on *both days* in a week, you may submit a journal through Blackboard assignments. Its focus is what you learned about yourself and the specific issues we've highlighted during the week. This private journal, read only by Marlene, should reflect on discussions, readings, and personal thoughts that came about in relation to the content of the course. *Full credit journals* reflect on both days of class—activities, lectures, films, discussions, and *the assigned readings for the week*. These are due on Saturdays at 5pm.

### **Free Writes**

**1000 points total possible**

Each Tuesday, there will be a short reading at the beginning of class, followed by an opportunity to do some spontaneous writing about it. The readings come from the required texts. What you write can be your initial posting in our weekly, BB discussion, open to the entire class to read. Participation in this discussion is worth up to 100 points each week, if you make a *substantive initial comment, 3-4 substantive responses to others, engaging in a discussion through correct threading, asking questions, sharing of ideas*. These discussions are facilitated each week by a TA, monitored by Marlene. These are due on Sundays at 5pm.

### **Blackboard Discussion—**

**400 points total possible**

**Association of American Colleges and Universities booklet--Class on Campus: Breaking the Silence Surrounding Socioeconomics; vol. 11, no. 3 | FALL2008**

This booklet, available in PDF format without charge on BB Course Content, examines the meaning and experiences of class on college campuses. Students who want to participate in this extra discussion will sign up for it by Jan 12 through BB email to Marlene. We will then form a closed discussion group on Blackboard, and use Jan 18-Feb 19 to have weekly discussions about booklet. Specific weekly assignments will be posted on the discussion board.

### **Textbook Chapter Written Review (2 per student) 100 pts possible, each one**

Choose any chapter in the required texts that are not covered in class, and write a response to it, focusing on ideas from class discussions as the framework for your analysis. *Understand that this is not a review, but rather, an analysis.* Don't summarize what the author has written. ANALYZE it! Write what you think about their ideas, and explain the basis for your analysis. Grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling will be assessed as part of the overall grade. Remember, spell check often does not recognize homonyms!

## **Required Assignments:**

### **My Class Biography**

**300 total pts possible**

During the first two weeks of the term, we'll take time to present our Class Biographies. Each student will make a 15 minute oral presentation, telling others in a small discussion group about her/his class story. In the story, address some of the questions posted in your Blackboard email. Discuss your childhood, family, high and low points due to class identity, choices you've made that are class based, what your class identity has taught you about gender, and how it has impacted relationships—platonic, romantic, authoritative. When listening to others, you may want to make some notes to discuss in your own journal. Be compassionate and active listeners. Be proud and forthright as a speaker. These stories are where a great deal of learning will happen in this course. TA's will share their stories during the first week of class. Conclude each story by answering *"what do I want others, of other classes, to understand about my class identity and why is this important to me?"*

### **Community Development LEGOS' Group Project**

**300 total pts possible**

For three weeks in mid-term, we'll form small groups and build Lego villages that reflect our class consciousness, striving to realistically meld reality with dreams. Our villages will address environmental concerns, class strata, social/political issues of the day such as immigration and land-use management, gendered/racialized economies, and the role of government. On the last day of the project, Feb 25, **we stay an extra hour**. A group of professional planners and community development experts joins us, evaluating our creations as they listen to each group make a 15 minute presentation of its work. We will learn how to do consensus decision making and use it in this project. Each group receives one grade for the project, unless unforeseen circumstances make this impossible.

### **Book Group**

**300 pts possible per student**

Everyone will choose one of the five group project books, and do an oral group, presentation of it near the end of the term. The focus of all presentations will be to examine, and explain, the narrative, through the lens of class, gender, culture. All presentations address these five questions, plus show a solid general understanding of the theoretical framework of the author. Your first 100 words or so should succinctly answer the questions, "why is this an important book for understanding class identity and politics?" and "what is it that the author(s) want us as readers to understand?" Marlene and the TA will be the primary audience at the presentations. Other students may attend if they wish.

#### **Novels:**

- 1) How does this narrative give rise to an examination of the intersection of gender, class, culture? Share a few excerpts to show this. Put each excerpt into context.
- 2) What did you learn about yourself by reading this book?
- 3) Did you willingly suspend your disbelief? Why? Are the characters authentic?
- 4) Monique Wittig said, "All fiction happened, or will." Relate her idea to this book.
- 5) What do you understand in news ways about the intersection of gender, race, and class as a result of reading this book-- and does the author succeed? Why?

Non Fiction:

- 1) What truths about the intersection of gender, race, class does this analysis, memoir, or study, examine?
- 2) What did you learn about yourself as you read this?
- 3) What stood out for you, and why—give some examples, excerpts, from the book.
- 4) Is this book a success? Would you recommend it—to whom? Why or why not?
- 5) Whose interests are served by the information in this book? Are the ideas realistic?

MY ASSIGNMENT PLAN		
<b>Requirements:</b>		
<b>Telling My Story:</b>		
<b>Community Development LEGOS' Group Project:</b>		
<b>Book Group:</b>		
I'm Assigning Myself	Due Date (s)	Anticipated Grade

**Schedule of assignments**

Please note that each class period begins with a moment of silence in honor of all of those who have fallen in the wars, as well as those who have died due to domestic violence. If you do not care to observe this moment of silence, please come to class a couple of minutes late.

This schedule may be modified to better suit our collective needs.

<b>Jan 5</b>	Intro to Course Four Corners' Exercise TA's introduce themselves Freewrite from <i>Bravo, chaps 4, 10</i> Get your syllabus! What is class identity? Feb 25 extra hour announcement	<b>Jan 7</b>	Moment of Silence Syllabus TA Stories Organize story telling for next week Discussions Open now! Book Groups-choose your book! Feb 25 extra hour announcement
<b>Jan 12</b>	Moment of Silence Freewrite Small groups-stories from 4-5 students in each group <b>CLASSISM ON CAMPUS</b> Send Marlene a BB email by today if you want to be in that extra BB discussion group	<b>Jan 14</b>	Moment of Silence Groups making a difference— global, local Small groups-stories from students in each group Why was MLK in Memphis?

<b>Jan 19</b>	Moment of Silence Freewrite Lecture from Textbooks: <i>Acker chaps preface 1,2</i> <i>Bravo, chap 1,2</i> Ten chairs of Inequality Story Telling Debrief	<b>Jan 21</b>	Moment of Silence Groups making a difference— global, local Lecture: Bravo, chap 9 Presentation of Studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feminist Economics, volume 12, 1-2, Jan-Apr 2006</li> <li>• American Association of University Women</li> <li>• Institute for Women's Policy Research</li> </ul>
<b>Jan 26</b>	Moment of Silence Freewrites Lecture from Textbook: <i>Acker chap 3, 4</i> <i>Bravo chap 7</i> Guest Speaker	<b>Jan 28</b>	Moment of Silence Groups making a difference— global, local Layer Cake Exercise Lecture from textbooks continued: see Jan 26
<b>Feb 2</b>	Moment of Silence Freewrite Lecture from Textbook: <i>Bravo, chaps 3, 8</i> Guest Speaker	<b>Feb 4</b>	Moment of Silence Groups making a difference— global, local Lecture from textbook: <i>Acker chap 6</i> Book Groups Meet: Have the first 100 pgs of your book read by today Introduce Legos
<b>Feb 9</b>	Moment of Silence Freewrite: DN Valentine's Day Let's play Legos	<b>Feb 11</b>	Moment of Silence Groups making a difference— global, local Let's Play Legos
<b>Feb 16</b>	Moment of Silence Freewrite Let's Play Legos	<b>Feb 18</b>	Moment of Silence Groups making a difference Let's Play Legos
<b>Feb 23</b>	Moment of Silence Freewrite Let's Play Legos	<b>Feb 25</b> <b>Class lasts one</b> <b>Extra hour today</b>	Moment of Silence Legos Villages Presentations; Guests evaluate each village
<b>Mar 2</b>	Moment of Silence Freewrite Textbook Lecture: <i>Acker chap 7</i> Book Groups Meet; Dress Rehearsal with your TA this week	<b>Mar 4</b>	Moment of Silence Textbook Lecture: <i>Bravo chaps 9,10</i> Book Groups Meet Dress Rehearsal with your TA this week

<b>Mar 9</b>	2 book groups present: Pancake, Hogan <i>Students who are NOT members of the presenting groups may attend, but are not required to do so</i>	<b>Mar 11</b>	3 book groups present: Ngcobo, Baldez, Bettie <i>Students who are NOT members of the presenting groups may attend, but are not required to do so</i>
<b>MONDAY MARCH 15- 10:15am Beware the Ides of March!</b>	<b>FINAL</b> Bring \$2.00, if you can, for a surprise project!		