

Portland State University
WS 315 Feminist Analysis
Winter 2008

Dr. Ann Mussey
Office: NH 470
Drop-In Office Hours: Th 2-3:30
also by appt. call 725-3516
Phone: 725-8441
E-mail: use WebCT or musseya@pdx.edu

Writing Assistant: Taren Taylor
E-mail: taren250@aol.com

Office Hours:
Phone:

Course Description

This course asks you to engage in feminist praxis, applying theory to practice. You will put your theoretical knowledge to work constructing a position paper from a feminist perspective on a topic relevant to the course materials. We will begin by exploring feminist thinking related to three topics: rethinking marriage; sex work and migration; and feminism across borders. Then we will narrow our focus to rest on more focused problems related to each general topic.

This course is writing intensive with a strong research component. The class will have the advantage of a writing mentor assigned to work specifically with this class.

Finally, this course is a hybrid WebCT course. We will meet at the regularly scheduled time, but you will access some of the readings for the course on WebCT, communicate with instructors through WebCT, submit weekly writing assignments on WebCT, and hold group discussions on-line.

Reading Materials

The following books will be sold in class during the third week of class:

Uma Narayan, Dislocating Cultures (~ \$32)

Laura Maria Agustin, Sex at the Margins (~\$32)

Additional readings will be posted on WebCT. Go to WebCT and log in using your ODIN user name and password. Click on the link to WS 315.

Assignments

1) Intellectual Journal: You will submit a minimum of 2.5 pages of journal writing during six of the ten weeks for the course. The first entry is due Thursday, January 15, and thereafter, you may choose which weeks you submit journal entries. Entries must be submitted on-line through the WebCT assignment tool by Thursdays at 9am. Each entry should substantively engage with the readings for that particular week with relevant references to readings assigned for previous weeks. DO NOT write about each article separately; rather, explore themes, analyses, frameworks, perspectives, etc. which allow you to treat the articles synthetically. Your journal entries should be think pieces and not polished essays. But we will push you to develop your ideas more fully than you would in a normal informal journal entry. Attention to the mechanics of good writing is a must.

2) Group Work: You will work with a small group on one of the topical questions listed on the syllabus. You may choose to hold your group meetings on-line. Each of you must bring to the group process three research articles relevant to the groups research topic. Your group will select

one of these articles for the rest of the class to read. Finally, your group will facilitate 50-70 minutes of interactive learning with the entire class around the topic and article you assigned to the class. Your group will disseminate the article you select to the class either by making 6 copies for students to borrow from the hanging files outside the WS office one week in advance of your scheduled facilitation in class OR you may provide me with a pdf copy of the reading 9 days in advance so that I may post it on WebCT.

3) Two reflections on the course during the term: 1) One anonymous written reflection on how the course is going for you, including what you like, problems you might be experiencing, and suggestions for making the class better—see syllabus for due date. 2) One written reflection and evaluation of your group work and class facilitation, including an evaluation of your contributions, what worked well in the group, how effective your group was at facilitating active learning in the classroom, and ideas for making future group projects better. This is due one week after your group presentation.

4) Position Paper, including a Preliminary Bibliography, Rough Draft and Peer Review: You will write a position paper (8-10 pages) using relevant materials from the course, sources by your group for the class facilitation project, additional research reading, class discussions, and your own engaged voice. You may either use the questions posed on the syllabus as the basis for your position paper or design your own “problem” related to the course topics. Formal citation of sources using MLA style parenthetical notations is required. You will work on this paper in a layered process that will include small group work, rough draft, peer review of your draft, instructors’ comments, and revisions.

5) Preparation, Attendance, and Participation: Because we will rely primarily on discussions and group work, the time you put into preparation, attendance, and participation is crucial. Missing more than three classes for whatever reason is considered less than “B” work. Late work is accepted, but anything more than one class late is less than “B” work.

Grading Contract: *Most of the work for the course will have low stakes attached to it to encourage thinking and learning rather than an emphasis on grades. Thus, you will receive feedback, but no letter grade on any of the assignments. All assignments will be given a check mark to indicate that they were received and recorded.*

A “B” grade is based on your behavior. You will receive a “B” if you fulfill the following:

1. Attend classes regularly, missing no more than three classes.
2. Arrive on time and leave on time with few exceptions.
3. Turn in all assignments in a timely fashion, this means on the due date or within one class meeting.
4. Demonstrate a willingness to listen and contribute thoughtfully to class discussions.
5. Fully participate in small group work.
6. If you have a serious illness or an unusual life circumstance that prevents you from fulfilling this contract, please see me immediately, and we can renegotiate the contract.

Earning a “B+,” “A-,” or “A” will be based on my judgments regarding the quality of your work. For any grade higher than a “B,” you must fulfill the requirements for a “B” and also demonstrate in your classroom contributions and written work a superior comprehension of the arguments and ideas in the course materials, excellent writing abilities, critical engagement with the ideas in the course, and thoughtful responses to the assignments. You will be given feedback

and guidance, including examples of strong and weak writing, to help you understand and achieve what I judge to be “A” performance. **If you are concerned about your grade at any point in the term, please speak with me.**

Honor Code You are expected to uphold Portland State University's student conduct code. This code prohibits cheating, fraud, and dishonesty (including, but not limited to plagiarism, buying and stealing course assignments and research papers, performing academic assignments for two or more classes without permission from all instructors, unauthorized disclosure and receipt of academic information, and other practices commonly understood to be academically dishonest). Any assignments found to be in violation of the code will receive a failing grade, and all participants will be subject to disciplinary action. Any questions about this policy may be directed to the Office of Student Affairs, Smith Memorial Student Union.

Accessibility Students with disabilities who may need disability-related classroom accommodations for this course are encouraged to contact Disability Services (ext. 5-4150), and to consult with the professor.

Note: Please keep in mind that this syllabus is subject to change (with reasonable notice). Readings, topics, and assignments may be added or removed depending on the needs and interests of the class as a whole. If you miss class, it is always your responsibility to find out what you missed, including changes in assignments or readings.

Schedule of Assignments and Topics:

Marriage: Rights and Resistance

Same-sex marriage is constructed in the dominant discourse as a right and a privilege that should be open to all. But there is a long tradition of feminist critiques of marriage, none of which consider marriage a “privilege” for women, but rather a form of oppression, and yet demands for marriage equality are at the forefront of queer activism. How could these two “movements” have such radically different positions on marriage? Is same-sex marriage a radical demand or a conservative recapitulation of heterosexism and racism? Will it explode gender norms or reinforce them? Are the rights of same-sex couples established at the exclusion of the rights of others even more marginalized? This unit asks you to wrestle with some of the disjunctions between mainstream queer politics and feminist politics to form a feminist informed position on same-sex marriage.

Th Jan 10: Minow, “Relational Rights and Responsibilities”

T Jan 15: Brandzel, “Queering Citizenship”

Assign research topics and divide into groups

Th Jan 17: Cobb, “Race, Religion, Hate, and Incest in Queer Politics”

T Jan 22: Lenon, “Marrying Citizens! Raced Subjects? Re-Thinking the Terrain of Equal Marriage Discourse”

Th Jan 24: Davis, “‘The Great Divorce’ of Government and Marriage: Changing the Nature of the Gay Marriage Debate”

T Jan 29: **Group Facilitation** Assigned readings available outside WS office or on WebCT

Th Jan 31: **Group Facilitation** Assigned readings available outside WS office or on WebCT

Feminism Across Borders

Female circumcision or genital mutilation? The contest over what to call the practices of female infibulation, excision, circumcision or cutting is emblematic of the difficult relationships between Western cultures and Third World cultures. Should there be such a thing as a universal human right that would protect women from female genital surgery/mutilation or is this just another form of cultural imperialism, an the imposition of a false universalism emanating from the West? Are such operations as forced sterilization, breast enlargement, and surgical alteration of intersexed infants and children practiced in the West comparable or altogether different? Should female circumcision/sexual surgery requested by immigrants living in “Western” cultures be performed by medical personnel in their adopted country? Consider the implications of cultural relativism and universalism for global feminism using female genital surgery/mutilation as the focal point. Seek out a number of feminist discussions on the topic of female genital surgery/mutilation, use Narayan’s analysis and insights to help you “read” these discussions and build your own feminist position on the issue of genital surgery/cutting.

T Feb 5: Narayan, Ch 1

Th Feb 7: Narayan, Ch 2

T Feb 12: Narayan, Ch 3

One-page anonymous written reflection evaluating the course due in class

Th Feb 14: Narayan, Ch 4

Video: Warrior Marks

T Feb 19: **Group Facilitation** Assigned readings available outside WS office or on WebCT

Th Feb 21: **Group Facilitation** Assigned readings available outside WS office or on WebCT

Migration or Trafficking?

Trafficking of women in the global market place has been a major topic in the news. At the same time, the ideas of sex radical feminism have become popular on college campuses in the U.S. Is the demand for sexual expression in the U.S., a movement that would benefit women in the sex industry in places like Thailand or the Netherlands? If, as Laura Maria Agustin argues, the “rescue” of women in the global sex market is misguided and fraught with neo-colonialist presumptions, how should feminists approach the issue of human trafficking? Should feminists still be concerned about human trafficking? Is it possible to separate human trafficking from its sexual connotations? In what circumstances is human trafficking a real concern? Is the migration

of labor a source of opportunity and individual agency or one of exploitation and repression?
Address the topic of labor migration with a feminist lens.

T Feb 26: Agustin, “Sexual Commotion” and “Working to Travel, Travelling to Work”

Th Feb 28: Agustin, “A World of Service,” and “The Rise of the Social--and of 'Prostitution' “

T Mar 4: Agustin, “Grasping the Thing Itself: Methodology”

Th Mar 6: **Rough Drafts Due--Peer Review in Class--Bring two hard copies to class**

T Mar 11: Agustin, “From Charity to Solidarity: In the Field with Helpers” and “Partial Truths”

Th Mar 13: **Group Facilitation** Assigned readings available outside WS office or on WebCT

Tues. March 18: **Final Exam Meeting**

Group Facilitation Assigned readings available outside WS office or on WebCT

Final Papers due

