

Introduction to Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Sexuality and Social Justice

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Course Description: This introductory course to intersectionality theory explores the growth of women of color feminist movements within the United States in the second half of the twentieth century. Building off the conviction that the personal is political, we will analyze texts across an array of genres including critical theory, film, poetry and performance. As we discuss and close read these texts together, we will maintain an intersectional lens by identifying how gender and sexuality interlace with race and ethnicity, class, nationality, and religion. Throughout this course, we will challenge the idea of a single or monolithic feminism by instead investigating a multiplicity of women of color feminisms.

In the first unit of class, we will discuss the origins of the theory of intersectionality in the writings of women of color feminists. After addressing these writers' critiques of the refusal of second wave feminists to prioritize race in their platforms, we will move to unit two: intersectionality in the postmodern age. This unit will investigate the relationship between U.S. third world feminist theories of oppositional consciousness and modes of oppression specific to globalizing late capitalism. Finally, unit three will continue these discussions by turning to recent work on transnational feminist coalitions.

Learning Objectives:

- Define intersectionality theory and identify its representations in literature and culture
- Analyze the similarities and differences across women of color feminisms
- Critique race-blind feminist theory and practice
- Develop personal intellectual and/or political commitments to intersectional feminism
- Evaluate the contemporary state of feminist discourse in the United States and abroad

Required Texts:

- Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1980)
- Akasha Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (1982)
- Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (1984)
- bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (1990)
- Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000)
- Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (2003)
- Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, fourth edition (2012)
- Angela Davis, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (2016)

Required Viewings:

- *Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, 1989)

- *Set It Off* (F. Gary Gray 1996)

Course Assignments:

- Midterm Paper: 20%
- Final Research Paper: 30%
- Key Term Definition and Resource Guide: 10%
- Class Presentation 10%
- Class Participation (synchronous and asynchronous): 15%
- Final exam: 15%

Midterm Paper (20%)

The midterm paper will be **3-4 double spaced pages** and will primarily feature a close reading and analysis of an assigned text. You will be expected to make an argument about some element of the text that interests you and provide extensive evidence drawn from your close readings to support your claims. Paper prompts, expectations, and due dates will be detailed in a separate handout. Overall, the purpose of this assignment is for students to critically and deeply engage with course content and make an argument regarding the significance of their particular insights and observations.

Final Research Paper (30%)

The final research paper will be **5-7 double spaced pages** and will also primarily feature a close reading of an assigned text. However, this paper will require you to complete outside research and integrate that information into your analysis. You must therefore find at least **two outside sources** that pertain to your topic. These may include outside fiction, non-fiction, poetry, performance, and film materials. Above all else, your papers must have a clear argument: state your argument explicitly within the opening paragraph of the paper. Then, use the main body of your paper to develop that claim, providing evidence drawn from your observations and reiterating your central thesis at various points. Your conclusion should bring together the various threads of your argument and offer closing meditations.

Key Term Definition and Resource Guide: (10%)

Every student will write a 300-word definition and resource guide for a concept that is central to our class. The definitions will include an explanation of the concept as well as how it relates back to at **least two texts** in our class. The resource guide will include at least **two scholarly sources** that engage with this key term as well as short summaries for each source.

Class Presentation (10%)

Over the course of the semester, each student will give a **6-8-minute** oral presentation on a course reading or film of their choice. The presentation should summarize the broad themes of the text as well as your own specific interests and observations. Although the presentation does not need to contain a formal argument like your papers, it should still demonstrate an in-depth engagement with the text. You must also use some form of **visual aid** such as a printed handout, PowerPoint, Keynote presentation, website, etc.

Class Participation (15 %)

Your final course participation grade will be based on three central elements: attendance, discussion, and preparation:

- *Attendance:* You are permitted **two absences**, no questions asked, without penalty. Absences may be excused only with timely, official documentation from the appropriate university office. For each subsequent absence, you will lose 1 percentage point from your class participation grade. Seven or more absences may be grounds for failure in this course. If you miss class for any reason, you are not excused from the assignments due or completed during that class period. Finally bear in mind that class will start on time each day; habitually entering the (virtual) classroom late is disruptive and will negatively impact your participation grade, as will repeated absences;
- *Preparation:* Preparation is not an abstract ideal but a series of concrete steps. Mark up your books: jot notes in the margin of the text, circle key words, look up words you do not know, scan interesting lines, brainstorm connections and questions. In other words, **read actively**, generating ideas for class discussion and your personal essays as you go. Adequate preparation means you can describe the situation, speaker, and basic argument for any given passage we cover in class; the basic plot and thematic developments in a segment of a novel or play; and the central cinematic devices and themes present in a film.
- *Meaningful Participation:* Active discussion in this classroom is absolutely dependent on adequate preparation. Coming to class with your books thoroughly marked and ideas/questions ready will help facilitate a more stimulating and intellectually exciting learning environment and assist you in confidently articulating your thoughts to a diverse audience. Everyone has 'off' days here and there, but I expect you to be ready and contribute to class each period.

Optional Asynchronous Participation: If you would prefer to participate asynchronously in class discussions, you have the option of completing **forum posts** on the assigned reading and submitting them by midnight before class. Each post should be roughly between **250-500 words** and offer your informal meditations on the assigned reading for that class period. Your forum post will then be integrated into class discussion during our regularly scheduled synchronous sessions.

Your participation in class is of utmost importance to me. If there are any issues I should be aware of in order to ensure your success in the class, please contact me at your earliest convenience so we can devise strategies to make the class accommodating for all.

Final Exam: (15 points)

The final exam will consist of three sections: analysis and identification of specific quotes, short answer questions, and a long essay. The final will be cumulative and will cover all texts discussed in class.

Classroom Environment

Creating a classroom environment that makes all students comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas is critical. I value the opinions and perspectives of individuals from all diverse backgrounds. My goal is that all students' needs are addressed in this course and all perspectives are valued. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation and physical and learning ability. I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all minority student groups. I value your input to improve the climate of my classroom.

Due Dates:

All papers and revisions are due by midnight on the assigned deadline and must be submitted to the proper place on Sakai. All class readings and screenings must be completed before the day they are listed on the course schedule, before the synchronous session. Finally, you are able to request one-**three-day extension** over the course of the semester, no questions asked. Students requesting multiple extensions will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Grading Scale:

A (93-100); A- (90-92); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D+ (67-69); D (63-66); D- (60-62); F (<60).

I will use traditional rounding to determine grades that fall between whole values. Any mixed number with a decimal value of five tenths or higher will round up to the next whole number. (For example, 92.5 will round up to an A as a 93, but 92.4 will not.)

Unit 1: Historical Foundations of Intersectionality

Week 1: Critical Foundations

- Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” in *Sister Outsider* (1984)
- Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” in *Sister Outsider* (1984)
- Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” in *Sister Outsider* (1984)
- Kimberlé Crenshaw, K., 1991 “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” (1991)

Week 2: Critical Foundations, continued

- Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement” in *This Bridge Called My Back* (1980)
- Cherrie Moraga, “La Güera” in *This Bridge* (1980)
- Gloria Anzaldúa, “Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers” in *Bridge* (1980)
- Mitsuye Yamada, “Invisibility Is an Unnatural Disaster: Reflections of an Asian American Woman” in *Bridge* (1980)

Week 3: Black Feminism & Black Women’s Studies

- Gloria T. Hull and Barbara Smith, “Introduction: The Politics of Black Women’s Studies” in *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (1982)
- Ellen Pence, “Racism—A White Issue” in *All the Women Are White* (1982)
- Barbara Smith, “Racism and Women’s Studies” in *All the Women Are White* (1982)
- Barbara Smith, “Toward a Black Feminist Criticism” in *All the Women Are White* (1982)

Week 4: Black Queer Studies

- Cathy Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” (1997)
- Mae G. Henderson and Patrick Johnson Introduction to *Black Queer Studies* (2005)
- *Set It Off* (F. Gary Gray 1996)

Week 5: Women of Color Feminisms: An Overview

- Benita Roth, “Introduction: The Emergence and Development of Racial/Ethnic Feminisms in the 1960s and 1970s” in *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America’s Second Wave* (2004)
- Benita Roth, “To Whom Do You Refer?” in *Separate Roads* (2004)
- Read: Trina Grillo, “Anti-essentialism and Intersectionality: Tools to Dismantle the Master’s House” (1995)

Unit 2: Intersectionality Theory in the Postmodern Age

Week 6: Black Political Longings

- bell hooks, “Liberation Scenes: Speak this Yearning” in *Yearning* (1990)
- bell hooks, “Postmodern Blackness” in *Yearning* (1990)
- bell hooks, “An Aesthetic of Blackness: Strange and Oppositional” in *Yearning* (1990)
- *Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, 1989)

Week 7: Shape-Shifting Bodies & Mestiza Consciousness

- Gloria Anzaldúa, “La herencia de Coatlicue: The Coatlicue State” in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (2012)
- Gloria Anzaldúa, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (2012)
- Gloria Anzaldúa, “La conciencia de la mestiza: Toward a New Consciousness” in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (2012)
- Gloria Anzaldúa, selected poems in in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (2012)

Week 8: Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism

- Chela Sandoval, “Introduction” in *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000) and Foreword by Angela Davis
- Chela Sandoval, “Frederic Jameson: Postmodernism is a Neocolonizing Global Force” in *Methodology* (2000)

Week 9: Differential Consciousness & the Methodology of the Oppressed

- Chela Sandoval, “U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement” in *Methodology* (2000)

- Chela Sandoval, “Love as a Hermeneutics of Social Change, a Decolonizing *Movida*” in *Methodology* (2000)
- Chela Sandoval, “Conclusion: Differential Manifesto, Trans-Languages, and Global Oppositional Politics” in *Methodology* (2000)

Week 10: Women of Color as “cyborg par excellence”?

- Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s” (1985)
- Jasbir Puar, “‘I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess’: Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory” (2012)
- Avitar Brah, and Ann Phoenix, “Ain’t I a woman: Revisiting intersectionality” (2004)

Unit 3: Towards a Trans-National Feminist Coalition

Week 11: Unpacking the “Third World Woman”

- Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (2003)
- Chandra Mohanty, “Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism” in *Feminism Without Borders* (2003)

Week 12: Weak vs. “Radical” Multiculturalism

- Chandra Mohanty, “Race, Multiculturalism, and Pedagogies of Dissent” in *Feminism Without Borders* (2003)
- Wahneema Lubiano, “Like Being Mugged by a Metaphor: Multiculturalism and State Narratives” in *Mapping Multiculturalism* (1996).

Week 13: Decolonizing Feminism

- Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *The New World Border: Prophecies, Poems and Loqueras For the End of the Century* (1996) [selections]
- Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill, “Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections Between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy” (2013)

Week 14: Transnational Coalitions

- Angela Davis, “Progressive Struggles against Insidious Capitalist Individualism” in *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (2016)
- Angel Davis, “Ferguson Reminds Us of the Importance of a Global Context” in *Freedom* (2016)
- Angela Davis, “We Have to Talk about Systemic Change” in *Freedom* (2016)

Week 15: Transnational Solidarities

- Angela Davis, “On Palestine, G4S, and the Prison-Industrial Complex” in *Freedom* (2016)
- Angela Davis, “From Michael Brown to Assata Shakur, the Racist State of America Persists” in *Freedom* (2016)
- Angela Davis, “Feminism and Abolition: Theories and Practices for the Twenty-First Century” in *Freedom* (2016)
- Angela Davis, “Transnational Solidarities” in *Freedom* (2016)