Women’s Studies 101: Women, Culture, and Representation
Fall 2009, Monday & Wednesday, 2:25-3:15pm, 19 Ingraham

Lecturer: Amy Barber (acbarber@wisc.edu)

Section Leaders:
Samaa Abdurraqib  
srabdurraqib@wisc.edu  
301: Th 8:50am (52 Bascom)  
305: Th 9:55am (6112 Social Science)  
306: Th 11:00am (113 Ingraham)

Ari Eisenberg  
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302: Th 12:05pm (113 Ingraham)  
303: Th 1:20 pm (113 Ingraham)  
304: Th 2:25 pm (123 Ingraham)

OVERVIEW

This course emphasizes the development of feminist analytical and critical thinking skills to examine representations of women in western culture, primarily in cultures of the United States. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, we will survey historical and contemporary meanings of woman in western culture, and how these gendered meanings relate to race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality.

Our analysis of the meanings of gender will concentrate on representation—that is, how gender gets represented in the stories and images that circulate in culture. We will analyze meanings of woman across a variety of cultural texts and contexts and explore how the dominant ways of representing women have been supported or challenged through representations by and for women. We will look at dominant ideas about the roles, emotions, desires and work considered proper for women, and consider how these ideas or meanings are circulated in societies. Lectures and discussions will illustrate strategies for reading gender representations for their cultural, political, and personal implications. Class papers and assignments will provide opportunities to apply and comment on these approaches in your own work.

Some guiding questions will be: What are the prevailing ideas today about what it means to be/act as a woman, and what is the history behind these ideas? How do such ideas contribute to the institutions (e.g., school, family, the media) and systems of meaning and order (e.g., politics, economics, religion, science, romance) that organize our lives? How do they shape our identities, the way we see ourselves and others, and the choices we make? How do they influence our relationships with friends and lovers, families and communities, and the cultural products we consume and create?

This course provides a feminist framework and critical tools for thinking, writing, and speaking about gender issues that bear on our lives. You will be asked to engage with different schools of thought and reflect on your own preconceptions and convictions as you encounter ideas that challenge them. The course does not ask you to adopt particular beliefs about feminism, social institutions, or cultural practices. We welcome diverse viewpoints as we delve into the central question, how do meanings of gender shape self and society? Along the way, we will be asking how conceptions of power, oppression, freedom, and agency inform the sorts of answers we give to this question.

POLICIES
• Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. You may miss one discussion section without penalty. More than one absence will affect your ability to perform well in this class. Absences of two or more days will be severely penalized. You are expected to attend the entire class; partial absences will be counted in the formulation of your attendance and participation grade. If you know you will be absent during the term for religious holidays, athletics, or other reasons, let the instructor know
in writing during the first two weeks of the semester so that we can make sure that you can meet the course requirements. If you have a medical reason for missing class, notify your instructor as soon as possible. Written documentation is required to excuse absences for medical reasons. Excessive absences can lead to failing this course.

- **E-mail:** Do not submit assignments or drafts as e-mail attachments. When e-mailing your instructor with a question, include an informative subject header, and allow a response time of 48 hours (note: instructors do not have weekend office e-mail access).

- **Classlist:** The classlist will be used to send materials and announcements. Students are responsible for any changes to the syllabus announced 24 hours in advance, so please check your e-mail regularly.

- **Readings:** You are expected to read the course material by the day listed in the syllabus. You will find it helpful to take notes and write summaries of the readings as you complete them (exam questions will draw directly from the readings, as well as lectures).

- **Participation:** Your active involvement is crucial to the success of this class. Your participation grade will reflect the quantity and quality of comments made in lecture and discussion and how diligently you work to connect your own ideas to each week’s readings and themes in class.

- **Papers:** You are required to write two papers for this course. Paper assignments will be discussed and instructional handouts will be provided well in advance of due dates for papers. **Late papers will be assessed a penalty of one grade per day** (e.g., A to AB). All assignments and exams must be completed to receive a grade for this class. Make-up exams and paper extensions will be granted only in cases of well-documented hardship.

- **Exams:** Exams will ask you to synthesize arguments and apply critical concepts encountered in this course. Review sheets will be provided, but the notes you take on the readings and during lecture will help you review and prepare in advance. The midterm will be held Wednesday, October 21, in class. The final exam is scheduled for Monday, December 14, in class. There are NO MAKE-UP EXAMS, so if you are unable to make it to the scheduled exam dates, you should consider dropping the course and taking it another semester.

If you have questions about a grade, speak first to your instructor. If the question is not resolved, speak to the instructor of the course. If the question is still not resolved, speak with the Chair, Julie D’Acci, or Associate Chair, Christina Ewig. They will attempt to resolve the issue informally and inform you of the Appeals Procedures if no resolution is reached informally.

The McBurney Disability Resource Center provides assistance to students with physical, learning, sensory, or psychological disabilities. You may contact the McBurney center at 263-2741, 263-6393 (TTY), 1305 Linden Drive, www.mcburney.wisc.edu, for more information on the services it provides. **If you need special accommodations, please speak to the lecturer as soon as possible.**

**Academic Conduct:** All work submitted should be entirely your own. The University of Wisconsin and the Women’s Studies Program consider academic misconduct a serious violation. The university’s rules in regard to academic honesty will be strictly enforced. Academic misconduct may be grounds for failing an assignment or the course.
EVALUATION
Grade Breakdown
  Paper 1  15%
  Paper 2  20%
  Midterm  20%
  Final    25%
  Section  20% (10% Discussion Section Assignments, 10% Participation)

REQUIRED TEXTS
  2) Readings on Electronic Reserve

The book is at A Room of One’s Own bookstore (307 W. Johnson St., 257-7888). Electronic Reserve readings are available through My UW.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

WIR = Women, Images and Realities
ER = Electronic Reserve

WEEKS ONE/TWO
Introduction: What is gender? What is feminism?
  W, 9/2: WIR: Intro to Chapter I (8-15), “Voices of Women’s Studies Students” (29-34)
          ER: Kolata, “Who is Female? Science Can’t Say,” Lorber, “‘Night to His Day:’ The Social Construction of Gender”

WEEK THREE
Ideology and Discourse
  M, 9/14: WIR: Introduction to Chapter II (42-44), Introduction to Chapter IV (170-178)
          ER: Frye, “Oppression”

WEEK FOUR
Social Construction of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Class, Sexuality
         ER: Sandra Lipsitz Bem, excerpt from “Androcentrism”
         ER: Combahee Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement”

WEEK FIVE
Women America Before 1900
**First Paper due in section**

**WEEK SIX**

*Women in America through the 1970s*

**M, 10/5:** ER: Orleck, “We Are That Mythical Thing Called the Public” (excerpt), Coughlan, “Changing Roles in Modern Marriage” from *Life* 1956

WIR: Friedan, “The Problem That Has No Name” (46-49)

**W, 10/7:** ER: Kennedy and Davis, “Maybe cause things were harder” (excerpt)

Additional Reading TBA

**WEEK SEVEN**

*The Second Wave*


**W, 10/14:** WIR: Garcia, “The Development of Chicana and Feminist Discourse” (565-573)

Shanley, “Thoughts on Indian Feminism” (573-575)

ER: Ransdell, “Lesbian Feminism and the Feminist Movement”

**WEEK EIGHT**

*Postfeminism and the “Backlash”*

**M, 10/19:** WIR: Faludi, “Blame it on Feminism” (577-583)


**W, 10/21:** Midterm Exam (In Class)

**WEEK NINE**

*Popular Media Representations*

**M, 10/26:** ER: Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (excerpt), Kellner, “Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture,” Mihesusa, “Stereotypes and Images of Indian Women”


**WEEK TEN**

*Women as Commodity Audiences*

**M, 11/2:** ER: Jhally, “Image-Based Culture,” Goldman, “Constructing and Addressing the Audience as Commodity”

**Beauty and Embodiment**

Frater, *Fat Chicks Rule* (excerpt)

**WEEK ELEVEN**

*Girl Power and the Third Wave*

**M, 11/10:** ER: AAUW, “The Educational System is Not Meeting Girls’ Needs,” Labi, “Girl Power”

WIR: Walker, “Becoming the Third Wave” (599-601)

**W, 11/12:** WIR: Baumgardner & Richards, “Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism and the Future” (627-632)


**WEEK TWELVE**

**M, 11/16:** In-Class Screening

**W, 11/18:** In-Class Screening

**WEEK THIRTEEN**

*Western Representations of Muslim Women*

**Guest Lecturer: Samaa Abdurraqib**

**M, 11/23:** Readings TBA

**W, 11/25:** No Class. Happy Thanksgiving!

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

*Marrige, Motherhood, and Family*

**M, 11/30:** WIR: Wolf, “Brideland” (61-62), Ackelsberg & Plaskow, “Why We’re Not Getting Married” (274-275), Lehrer, “Family and Women’s Lives” (244-250)


ER: Susan Douglas and Meredith Michaels, “The Mommy Wars”

**Second paper due in section**

**WEEK FIFTEEN**

*Women and Work*

**M, 12/7:** WIR: Bravo et. al, “An Overview of Women and Work” (180-184), “Gender Segregation and Pay Differentials in Occupations” (185), Bravo et. al, “9to5: Organizing Low-Wage Women” (197-201), Louie, “Each Day I Go Home With a New Wound in My Heart” (208-212), Albelda, “New Welfare Regime” (231-237)

*The Power and Politics of Sexuality*

**W, 12/9:** ER: Levy, “Raunch Culture”

Additional Readings TBA

**WEEK SIXTEEN**

**M, 12/15:** Final Exam (In Class)