GENWS 441: THEORIES OF SEXUALITIES: PLEASURE, POWER AND PROFIT

This course explores the dangerous liaisons between sexualities, gender, race and class, spanning the era of colonialism to the contemporary US “war on terror.” What does sexuality have to do with race? What does race have to do with gender? What about class: where do money and economic power fit in? How do we come to know what we know about gender and sexuality anyway? How do we come to know what we know about race? How do we personally live and experience these different categories? How did they emerge historically? And what do these different aspects of our lives have to do with imperialism? What is imperialism in the first place? Is the United States now an empire? What does that question have to do with sexuality and gender? And what about the race and gender dynamics of nationalism in a global era?

Above all, what do all these questions mean personally to you—to the way you lead your own lives, here and now? How will these questions shape your own lives in 21st century United States, and how will your explorations of these questions deepen and illuminate your understanding of the complex questions about race, gender and sexuality in a globalizing world—some of the most urgent questions of our time?

The question that recurs throughout this course is the question of power. Why, for example, are women’s sexualities so often feared and so vigilantly policed? Why have women’s voices, as well as our sexual desires, been historically silenced; how can women give voice to our own stories and to our own desires? How can we lay claim to our bodies and own our sexualities, varied as they are? Why is it so taboo to even talk about relations between sexuality and money? What is the history of the “whore stigma”? Why are ordinary women called sluts? Why is calling someone a prostitute, a whore, one of the worst insults imaginable? And what do these aspects of our sexual lives have to do with currently urgent questions about nationalism and imperialism? What does nationalism have to do with gender and sexuality in the first place? And, critically, what about sexual violence? How, above all, can women resist and empower ourselves?
GENWS 441: COURSE THEMES

Themes that will recur throughout the course are:
--the lay of the land; gender and the crisis of origins; colonialism; discovery narratives; feminizing the terra incognita
--the race, gender, class matrix
--the family romance; marriage; monogamy; property and money
--sexuality and money--why so taboo?
--the sex work debates (prostitution; stripping; porn and commercial fetishism)
--imperialism, race and gender
--nationalism and sexuality
--sexuality and violence
--madness and female sexuality
--memories and stories: whose voices get heard?
--queer sexualities
--strategies of resistance
--the unequal politics of gender in a globalizing world

A recurring theme of this class is power: how is power imposed, lived, resisted, challenged, and transformed?

COURSE READINGS:

Required books are available at A Room of Ones Own (Tel: 2577888. email: room@itis.com). Please let me know immediately if books are not available.

Required Books:

Sigmund Freud, Dora: A Study of a Case of Hysteria
Jane Juffer, At Home with Pornography
Priscilla Alexander & Delacoste, Sex Work
Jean Rhys, Wide Sargasso Sea
Nawal El Saadawi, Woman At Point Zero
Mahvish Rukhsana Khan, My Guantanamo Diary
Audre Lorde, Zami

E-Reader
An online E-Reader (articles, supplementary materials, bibliographies, as well as copies of the course outline and schedule, handouts and essay topics) is available through E-Reserves under GENWS441. ASK ME, please, if you don’t know how to access E-Reserves! Let me know immediately if the material has problems (missing pages, etc).
A central goal of this class is to make the ideas and themes we engage with meaningful to your own lives. Throughout the semester, I will expect you to interact with the material, not just passively listen and read and watch. In this course, I want you to do at least three things:

a) be very familiar with the readings
b) form your own opinions and ideas
c) be able to say, clearly and articulately, why you have your opinions.

Of course, your opinions may, and should, change along the way. Mine do. All real learning involves changing one’s mind. Otherwise you are not learning. So I will not be simply lecturing at you. Each class will be interactive. I will spend most of the first class each week lecturing. The second class will be open to more discussion. In some classes, we might break into smaller groups, so that different voices and opinions can be voiced and heard. As an integral part of the course, we will also have four or five major group presentations.

Because of this class structure, regular attendance and keeping up with the readings is essential. At the same time, the class discussion may on occasion effect and change the direction of the class, so please note that there will be some flexibility to the schedule across the semester. It is your responsibility to check the schedules that I will hand out.

**Requirements:**

1. **Regular attendance** and vigorous participation.
2. You must have the assigned texts in front of you at each class.
3. You will write EITHER two short papers (6-8 pp) or one long paper (10-12pp). See schedule for deadlines. I will send out essay guidelines and topics.
4. You will keep a regular journal. Your journal will involve writing down any ideas, questions, inspired thoughts arising from the readings, lectures and discussions. Your journal must be typed, with your name on it, to be handed in every week. Your journals are designed to keep you thinking and writing. Keep e-copies. At the end of the course, you should put all your journal entries into a folder and hand it in with the final essay. Each entry should be no less than one paragraph and not longer than a page or page and 1/2. Your journal writing must comprise coherent, complete, grammatical sentences, not just random scatterings of phrases. Really think about your ideas before writing them down.

NB: The journals are NOT a forum to discuss problems you might be having with the course itself. That’s what office hours are for. Come and talk with me whenever you want to. That’s what I am here for.

5. **Group Presentations.** We will divide the class into 4 or 5 groups. Each group will choose from the topics, or choose your own topic. You will all work together collaboratively then take one class period to present your material to the class.
Workshops should be as compelling, captivating, original, informative as possible. You can use multi-media and new media.

6) **Film Screenings:** There will be film screenings throughout the course. Attendance at these screenings is mandatory, as the films are regarded as required texts for the class and the following discussions.

**GRADING CRITERIA:**

I grade according to the same general criteria as everyone else: Coherent, organized argument; logical development of ideas; clarity and quality of ideas and argument; originality of ideas and insights; clear, articulate style; originality and fluency of style; thoroughness of research (where applicable); correct grammar and punctuation.

Overall Grades are based on:

- a) the quality of all your writing, group presentations, class participations, journals
- b) the effort and progress I see you making over the course of the semester
- c) vigorous class participation
- d) absolutely regular attendance, except when ill
- e) the timely completion of all your assignments.

**E-MAIL POLICY:**

Because we have all become overloaded with email, much as I would like to, I cannot have extended discussions or answer detailed questions via email. That is what office hours are for. Please do not hesitate to come and talk.

--If you have had to miss a class PLEASE DO NOT ASK ME TO REPEAT THE CLASS ON EMAIL. I cannot do this.

**NOTE:** *I do not accept assignments, revisions, or final papers over the internet.*

**OFFICE HOURS:**

If you want to meet me for office hours, please make an appointment with me beforehand, either via email or phone, by 9 the evening before. I will try to give each of you at least fifteen minutes, much more if possible. If you have a pre-assigned appointment time, you won’t have to waste your own valuable time sitting around and waiting. Unless I say otherwise, we will meet at Steep and Brew on State Street and on the Terrace, when warm.

**ILLNESS:**

Absolutely do NOT come to class if you are ill, with anything. Email me and excuse yourself. Do not drag yourself in, as you will only prolong your own misery, and you will also encourage those eager germs to travel onto your classmates, and, worse!, to me, causing us all misery. *Stay in bed and get better!*