

## Suggested Topics to Cover in the Course

1. Explanation of Feminism and Sisterhood
  - A. feminism- A movement to end sexism and oppression (Sexism-discrimination based on a person's sex)
  - B. sisterhood- Encourages women to support each other in order to end sexism. Sisterhood recognizes that women (not just men) can be sexist when they are competitive and try to bring each other down. Instead, sisterhood encourages women to reach out to each other and end their own sexist behavior by being nicer to other women.
  
2. Explanation of Sex, Gender, Sexuality, and Transgender
  - A. sex- Whether someone is male or female. This is biological (given at birth)
  - B. gender- How a person is expected to act because of their sex. This is not biological. Society expects someone to act this way (masculine or feminine) because they are male or female.
  - C. sexuality- defined by the sex(s) or gender(s) you are sexually attracted to
  - D. transgender- A person's actions that go against their expected gender, whether feminine or masculine (provide examples of transgendered actions., i.e. women going fishing, men cooking)
  
3. Waves of Feminism
  - A. first wave- Primarily dealt with suffrage (explain what "suffrage" means) and voter rights.
  - B. second wave- Focused on inclusion of women into male dominated fields; white, middle-class woman was "universal" woman; sought equality with men
  - C. third wave- Addresses issues of intersectionality, more inclusive towards all women and their issues (e.g. queer rights, challenges of working class women, women of color), believe in individual choice of women rather than masculinization of women (e.g. if women choose, they can be feminine, stay at home with children, wear revealing clothes, etc. and still be feminists), sisterhood, anyone can be a feminist and do feminist work
  
4. Personal Experiences
  - A. feminism in our personal lives: Relate feminism to a personal scale by explaining why you are a feminist and its importance in your life
  - B. feminism (or lack of) in their lives: Ask the women to share their experiences/impressions, or lack thereof, of feminism, the work "feminists," etc.

## **Example of Way to Breakdown an Agenda\***

\*This agenda is based on the above topics and a course with 4 instructors

### **Instructor 1: Explanation of Feminism and Sisterhood**

A.) Introduce the terms: Before jumping right into defining feminism, sisterhood, sexism, give a bit of a context first. For example, you could say something like, “Feminism is a term that is often misunderstood and defined incorrectly. Although there is no universal definition, the one we like best and find is the most reflective of a universal definition (if there could be) is.... ‘a movement to end sexism and oppression.’”

B.) Then, since you just mentioned ‘sexism,’ it would be easy to then explain that term (just so all the women are on the same page).

C.) Lastly, sisterhood is a term that the women will probably have an easier time relating to. Not all the women may be ready to declare themselves feminists (perhaps because they are still unfamiliar with it, they may have had a bad experience with it, maybe because of the often negative connotations that follow the word, or any other reasons), but ‘sisterhood’ has a friendly connotation and is probably a good stepping stone to embracing feminism. Taking the time to really explain sisterhood and giving examples of sexism (including how women can be sexist to each other) and how sisterhood works against these negativities is a crucial part to introducing this course.

### **Instructor 2: Explanation of Sex, Gender, Sexuality, and Transgender**

A.) Expect questions, concerns, frustrations, misunderstandings, etc. with this section. Just make sure to slowly and clearly go over each term to give a sense of clarity. These terms are important to understand for this class and future classes (e.g. during the “Women in the Workplace” lesson, you can discuss how women are socially expected to stay home and clean/cook because of their gender).

- 1.) Some classes have no trouble accepting these terms, while other classes may have initial hesitations. However, in every class there is always a plethora of questions, so make sure to slowly and clearly explain the terms.
- 2.) It may be beneficial to include these terms in the handout, but leave room for women to write in definitions.
- 3.) One co-instructor could write the terms on the flip-chart as another co-instructor explains them.
- 4.) Make sure the person writing has finished before moving on to the next term (this also ensures that the women had enough time to write down the term).
- 5.) Ask for any questions after each term

B.) The most difficult term for the women to understand will most likely be “transgender.” Many of the women will probably think you either exclusively mean drag queens, or they might think you mean ‘transsexual.’ The easiest way to make sure everyone understands is to explain early on that it is not the same thing as changing your sex or wanting to change your sex (transsexual). Refer to the root word “gender” vs. “sex.”

C.) The term will probably become clearer once you give examples of transgendered activities that everyone could probably relate to (e.g. women watching football, men cooking dinner). You may want to lead a discussion where you ask students for examples. Someone can write these on the board.

### Instructor 3: Waves of Feminism

A.) Discuss the time period (political goals, political climate, etc.)

B.) Make sure that the women understand that knowing the dates and the names of the laws/policies that changed are not as important as realizing that feminism is a fight that began a long time ago and is still going on today.

C.) Lead a conversation on the ways that things have and have not changed.

### Instructor 4: Personal Experiences

A.) Begin with the instructors explaining their personal experiences with feminism/sisterhood. Make sure to include that it’s okay not to identify as a feminist and why/why not the instructors do. Recognize that “feminism” is a political ideology. One can support feminist goals without identifying as a feminist.

B.) Show pictures of famous feminists. Make sure to include diversity in this lesson. In the past, these pictures have included Barack Obama, Ashley Judd, Whoopi Goldberg, Geena Davis, and Margaret Cho in their “This is What a Feminist Looks Like” t-shirts.

C.) Ask the women about their personal thoughts, experiences, and understandings of feminism. Do not tell them that they are wrong. Instead, encourage further conversation and open-minds.