

## History of Feminism

GSWS 200/HIST 259/W

TR 2-4:40pm

Location: Meliora 205

**Instructor:** Brianna Theobald

**Contact Info:** brianna.theobald@rochester.edu

454 Rush Rhees Library

**Office Hours:** Tuesday 12:30-2pm

**Course Description:** This seminar-style course will explore histories of feminism--indeed, feminisms, *plural*--with a particular but not exclusive focus on feminist theories and movements that have emerged in the United States over the past two centuries. Collectively, we will consider key questions including: How has feminism been defined across time and space? How have feminists understood sexual and gender inequality in various historical contexts? How have feminists dealt with questions of race, class, and sexuality? How and why have feminist objectives and agendas differed? And, finally, what is the relevance of feminism today?

**Content Warning:** By its very nature, this course regularly addresses sensitive and explicit material, including regarding sexual and other forms of violence. I will not be able to anticipate or warn you every time sensitive or explicit topics might be discussed. If you choose to take this course, please be aware that we will encounter such issues in course readings, and they may emerge in class discussions.

**Required Reading:** Students must complete assigned reading prior to almost every class session, but you don't need to purchase any texts for this course. All required materials will be available on Blackboard or through the library website. I encourage you to print the readings, take careful notes, and/or have a laptop or other device available so you can access the readings during class discussions.

### Grade Breakdown:

94-100% = A	87-89% = B+	77-79% = C+	67-69% = D+
90-93% = A-	83-86% = B	73-76% = C	63-66% = D
	80-82% = B-	70-72% = C-	60-62% = D-

### Assessment:

Participation:	20%
Critical Responses:	30% (3 papers @ 10% each)
Voices of Feminism Paper:	20%
Oral History Paper:	30%

**Participation:** This is a seminar-style course, and its success depends on active student participation. Your participation grade will be based on three aspects of your participation this semester: 1) regular attendance, having completed any assigned reading or other activities; 2) consistent, thoughtful, and informed participation in class discussions; and 3) a leadership role in one class discussion.

*Regarding attendance:* I understand that life happens, and that the occasional absence is to be expected. If you have to miss class, please be as proactive as possible in staying on top of the reading and assignments listed on the below course schedule; I also recommend consulting with a classmate for notes and/or an overview of what you missed. Because we only meet once a week, more than two absences may result in a notable drop in your participation grade.

*Regarding participation in class discussions:* Much of our class time will be spent discussing course material as a group, and we all benefit from hearing a diversity of perspectives. Disagreement is to be expected, and is welcome, but disrespectful or offensive comments will not be tolerated.

I recognize that some students are more comfortable speaking up in class than others. While I encourage everyone to view class discussions as an opportunity to expand their comfort zones and further develop their public speaking skills, small-group discussions and in-class writing assignments will provide additional opportunities for demonstrating one's engagement with course material.

*Regarding the role of discussion leader:* For most class sessions, two or three students will be responsible for jumpstarting our discussion. Please email me 3-4 possible discussion questions by 9am the morning of your assigned discussion. These questions should engage thoughtfully with one—or, ideally, several—of the assigned readings (or other media) for that class session and should be specific (e.g., “How do these feminists differ in their conception of marriage?”) rather than overly general (e.g., “What did you like about these readings?”). Your goal is to generate a robust, substantive discussion.

Written Work: An overwhelming majority of your grade will be derived from *writing*. We will spend time discussing what constitutes good academic writing in class, but I encourage anyone who would like extra writing assistance to reach out to the U of R Writing and Speaking Center. They're fantastic! Learn more about this resource here:  
<http://writing.rochester.edu/tutoring/index.html>.

**\*\*Note that all written assignments will be submitted via Blackboard.**

**Three Critical Response Papers (2-3 pp.):** You may choose to submit a response paper for any class session between weeks 2 and 14, *except* for the session for which you are assigned to help lead the discussion. Critical response papers should analyze themes or questions of particular interest to you in two or more of that day's assigned sources.

**Voices of Feminism Paper (4-6 pp.):** Using a transcript from the [Voices of Feminism Oral History Project](#), this assignment gives students an opportunity to learn about oral history and about a notable feminist's life history in their own words. After carefully reading an interview transcript of their choice, students will write a paper that analyzes (rather than strictly summarizes) their chosen interviewee's understanding of and relation to feminism, as well as any significant themes that emerged during the interview. See the assignment sheet on Blackboard for further instructions.

**Oral History Paper (5-7 pp.):** Students will help produce their own primary source for their final paper. Each student will interview a person of their choosing (a friend, a parent or other family member, a mentor, etc.) about the history of feminism during their lifetime and their understanding of and relationship to feminism in the present. You will then use the interview transcript or recording to write a paper regarding what you learned and how this relates to our course material. See the assignment sheet on Blackboard for further instructions.

**\*\*For W Students:** Your Oral History Paper should be 10-12 pages in length. One interview is the minimum for W students, and I encourage you to consider conducting multiple interviews. The paper should also include substantive engagement with secondary sources. Finally, a complete draft of your paper must be submitted to me via email at least two weeks before the final due date; you will be expected to revise your final paper based on my feedback.

### **Course Policies and Expectations:**

Credit Hours: The College's credit hour policy on undergraduate courses is to award 4 credit hours for courses that meet for the equivalent of 3 periods of 50 minutes each week. Students enrolled in GSWS 200/HIST 259 are expected to devote at least one hour each week outside of class to analyzing the course readings, working alone or in groups, and to researching in depth their topics for the final paper.

Late Assignments: Assignments are due via Blackboard at the start of class on the date indicated on the below schedule. If you are unable to meet an occasional deadline, there is a two-day grace period before a late penalty is applied. Papers submitted more than a few days after the deadline may not receive the same level of instructor feedback.

Accommodation Policies: I'm happy to make accommodations as recommended by UR Disability Services. Should you need accommodations, I encourage you to make these arrangements sooner rather than later.

Academic Integrity: Academic honesty is at the core of the historical discipline, and you'll find that it is something I care deeply about. All work submitted must be your own, prepared especially for this course. I will report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty to the University's Board on Academic Honesty. That said, I am happy to discuss any questions you may have about what does and does not constitute plagiarism, provided this conversation occurs *before* you submit the assignment. For helpful discussions of plagiarism (including subtle instances), see the American Historical Association's "Defining Plagiarism," <https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/teaching-resources-for-historians/plagiarism-curricular-materials-for-history-instructors/defining-plagiarism>.

### **Course Schedule:**

*\*Note that the below categories and session titles are not mutually exclusive. In fact, part of our work this semester will be exploring overlaps, intersections, and ongoing themes, as well as differences and divergences.*

Week 1 (Jan. 12): Setting the Stage: Concepts and Key Terms

bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice," from *Teaching to Transgress* (1994)

Laughlin et al., "Is It Time To Jump Ship?" (2010)

\*\*please read the mini-essays by Laughlin, Gallagher, Nadasen, and Zarnow

Week 2 (Jan. 19): "Feminist since 1492"

Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism" (2013)

Gunn Allen, "The Red Roots of White Feminism" (1986)

Matilda Joslyn Gage primary sources

In-Class Film: [\*Without a Whisper\*](#)

Week 3 (Jan. 26): Liberal Feminisms

Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, introduction (1792)

Sarah Grimke, "Letter on the Equality of the Sexes" (1838)

Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions (1848)

Lucretia Mott, "Discourse on Woman" (1849)

Nancy Hewitt, "Re-rooting American Women's Activism" (2001)

Week 4 (Feb. 2): Suffrage and Beyond

Emma Goldman, "Woman Suffrage" (1911) and "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation" (1911)

Crystal Eastman, "Birth Control in the Feminist Program"

Ida B. Wells, "Lynch Law in America"

Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "The Nineteenth Amendment and Its Outcome for African American Women" (2020)

Nancy Cott, "Feminist Politics in the 1920s" (1994)

Week 5 (Feb. 9): "The Problem of Woman"

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Volume I: introduction; Volume II: introduction; first several pages of ch. 5 "The Married Woman" and ch. 6 "Motherhood" (1949)

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, ch. 1 (1963)

NOW Bill of Rights (1967)

Week 6 (Feb. 16): Women's Liberation: A Sampling

Kathie Sarachild, "Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon"

Redstockings Manifesto

Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, excerpts

Barbara Ehrenreich, "What is Socialist Feminism?"

Charlotte Bunch, Lesbians in revolt

Radicalesbians, "The Woman identified Woman"

Week 7 (Feb. 23): Black Feminisms and Intersectionality

Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement" (1977)

Audre Lorde, "Learning from the 1960s" (1982)

Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins" (1991)

Jennifer C. Nash, "Intersectionality" (2021)

Week 8 (Mar. 2): “Radical Women of Color” Feminisms  
Selections from *This Bridge Called My Back*:  
Cherrie Moraga, “Preface, 1981”  
Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, “Introduction, 1981”  
Mitsuye Yamada, “Invisibility as an Unnatural Disaster” and “Asian Pacific American Women and Feminism”

**\*\*Voices of Feminism Paper due via Blackboard at the start of class.** Come to class prepared to discuss basic biographical info regarding the feminist you chose to write about, as well as significant themes from the interview transcript.

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10 (Mar. 16): Indigenous Feminisms  
Kate Shanley, “Thoughts on Indian Feminism” (1984)  
Jennifer Denetdale, “Chairmen, Presidents, and Princesses” (2006)  
Lisa Kahaleole Hall, “Navigating Our Own ‘Sea of Islands’” (2009)  
The Red Nation, “Indigenous Feminism Does Not Discriminate” (2019)

Week 11 (Mar. 23): Queer and Trans Feminisms  
A. Finn Enke, “Collective Memory and the Transfeminist 1970s”  
Emi Koyama, “The Trans Feminist Manifesto”  
Kai Pyle, “Naming and Reclaiming”

Week 12 (Mar. 30): Sex and Violence  
Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic” (1978)  
Andrea Dworkin, “Pornography and Male Supremacy” (1981); *Intercourse*, excerpt (1987)  
Ellen Willis, “Toward a Feminist Sexual Revolution” (1982)  
Angela Davis, “The Color of Violence Against Women” (2000)  
The Red Nation Podcast, “#MMIWG, land, bodies, & consent” (2020)

Week 13 (Apr. 6): Reproductive Rights and Justice  
Susan Brownmiller, “Everywoman’s Abortions” (1969)  
Loretta Ross, “Understanding Reproductive Justice” (2005/6)  
Selections from special issue of *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (2022)

Week 14 (Apr. 13): Transnational Feminisms  
Manisha Desai, “Transnational and Global Feminisms” (2007)  
Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes” (1986)  
Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes Revisited” (2003)

Week 15 (Apr. 20): Feminism in 2023  
No reading.

**\*\*Oral History Papers due via Blackboard at the start of class.** Come to class prepared to discuss the themes that emerged in your interview, insights that you gained about feminism, and your experience of the oral history process.