WGSS 514: Systems of Oppression in Women's Lives

Mondays: 2:00-5:50 PM
Waldo 244
Credit Hours: 4
Oregon State University, FALL 2014

Dr. Qwo-Li Driskill
280 Waldo
Office Hours: M: 5-6 PM, W: 2-3 PM, and by appointment.
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COURSE INFORMATION

This course will explore the ways intersecting systems of oppression impact women’s lives. We will examine experiences of diverse groups of women, including personal and social effects of oppression, processes of internalization of oppression, identity politics, and resistance. We will study sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, colonialism, ageism, and ableism and the ways these various forms of oppression manifest themselves in social institutions. In particular, we will pay attention to the ways oppressions are deployed and the ways in which women resist and challenge the numerous forms of oppression that impact them.

LEARNING OUTCOMES AND COURSE OBJECTIVES

WHAT WE’LL DO
We will read, talk, write, imagine, and create. This course is designed to challenge you on a number of levels. I do not expect you to agree with or feel comfortable with every aspect of this course. I do, however, expect you to engage critically with these texts, your own writing, and the wider cultures in which you live. It is my expectation that all of us (including myself) will be challenged in new ways.

The learning outcomes for this course include, but are not limited to, the following interrelated skills:

As a result of having taken this course, students will be able to:
• explain how difference is socially constructed and how these social constructions are used to maintain systems of oppression;
• explain oppression as interconnected systems of power and control;
• explain the ways systems of oppression work to maintain social inequality;
• offer historical and contemporary examples of oppression and resistance;
• analyze the ways systems of oppression are manifest in and maintained by social institutions;
• synthesize course readings and activities into a comprehensive theoretical framework about social inequality;
• evaluate social institutions, trends, and events through a lens of gender, race, social class, sexuality, age, ability, religion;
• explain the role of resistance in challenging systems of oppression
REQUIRED TEXTS

BOOKS


Davis, Angela Y. The Meaning of Freedom: And Other Difficult Dialogues. City Lights. 0872865800


ARTICLES AND SELECTED SELECTIONS (on Blackboard)

Aguilar, Delia D. “Tracing the Roots of Intersectionality.” http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2012/aguilar120412.html


Lorde, Audre. "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action."

Shaw, Susan. "I Am Woman: Southern Baptists and Feminism." *Baptist History & Heritage.* Spring 2010

**ASSIGNMENTS & PROJECTS**

**THEORY IN THE FLESH** In *This Bridge Called My Back*, Anzaldúa and Moraga speak of “a theory in the flesh” in which “the physical realities of our lives...all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity.” This project asks you to practice “theory in the flesh” by writing or making (a performance, film, website...it can be anything you want). This project needs to go beyond simple constructions of privilege and oppression to discuss your relationships with systems of oppression—and imagining futures—complexly. Length will vary. A brief context paper (3-5 pp. double spaced) should accompany the project. 100 points.

**JOURNAL READ AROUND**

The purpose of this project is to familiarize yourself with the type of work published in academic journals and to analyze the movement of trends, theories, and arguments within queer and feminist theories. You will:
1. Identify a journal that focuses on queer and feminist theories or publishes a significant amount of work in queer and feminist issues (for example, *GLQ* or *Differences* or another journal closely related to your field of study).
2. Choose a total of 3 issues of *one journal* from different years.
3. Read 3 articles from each issue. (So, that's nine articles).
4. Write brief reviews of each article that summarizes the content and identifies different approaches, debates, or trends.
5. Briefly (5 minutes max) present your findings to the class. (100 points).

**FINAL: CONFERENCE LENGTH PAPER AND PRESENTATION**

The purpose of this project is for you to engage with activist politics within academic contexts. For this project you will need to:
1. Identify a conference you could submit a proposal to (for example, the National Women's Studies Association, Native American and Indigenous Studies, etc. There are tons of conferences out there. Ask if you need help).
2. Following the guidelines of this conference, submit a paper proposal to the instructor. (Due at midterm).
3. Write a conference-length paper focusing on systems of oppression in women's lives.
4. Present this paper to the class, keeping within time guidelines (no more than 20 minutes—10 pp. double spaced).

**CRITICAL RESPONSES**

Every week you will have a critical response due to synthesize your assigned readings. These are not reflections—they are meant to demonstrate your engagement with the subject matter, your own experiences with it, draw connections between the readings and class activities, and relate it to your own lives both inside and outside the university. 1-2 pp. single-spaced. (10 points each, 90 points total).
OUTSIDE EVENT
Throughout the quarter there will be numerous opportunities to attend events outside of the classroom. You will need to attend a campus event of your choice and write a short (2 pages, single spaced) critical reflection, situating it within the contexts of this course. You can turn it in anytime on or before our final. (60 points).

PARTICIPATION POINTS
Part of being in a learning community is participation in class, including online spaces. It is extremely important that you come to class on time, prepared to participate. That means you should have completed any assigned homework before you arrive and be ready to make contributions, whether through class discussion, small group projects, or additional writing. When you are late or unprepared, it disrupts the flow of the class and can interfere with your classmates' experiences in the course. You are expected to be engaged in this class (not the newspaper, your cell phone, etc) during the entire class period. (300 points).

Community and Professional Responsibility

(Dis)ability Access
As an instructor, I am fully committed to ensuring that this space is accessible to people with (dis)abilities.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) POLICY STATEMENT
Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Disability Access Services (DAS). Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 737-4098.

FRAGRANCE FREE POLICY
In order to ensure the health and safety of students with allergies, asthma, Gulf War Syndrome, Multiple Chemical Sensitivities, immune disorders, and other illnesses, the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program has a policy that no scented products should be worn in class or in the WGSS office. This includes perfume, cologne, essential oils, aftershave, scented soaps, scented detergents, scented hair products, etc. You can find more information on how to be fragrance free at:

www.peggymunson.com/mcs/fragrancefree.html

GROUNDRULES AND EXPECTATIONS
As a student, you are a part of a professional community. You have a responsibility to yourself in your own education. You also have a responsibility to your community. Therefore, you should be aware of how your actions impact those around you.

The following are ground rules and expectations for the class, including online spaces:

- Mutual Respect: Perhaps the most important aspect of your community and professional responsibility is respect. Treat each other and me with respect and all times. All of us should feel free to express our thoughts and opinions openly, without fear of penalty, as long as we do so in a courteous way. Also, please do not speak while others are speaking and do not engage in side-conversations.
• **Challenge:** Challenge is a central expectation of this class, and means a number of things. Be open to thinking about writing, language, and society in new ways. Challenge yourself to both "move up" or "move back." This means, notice how much verbal space you take up in class. If you are the kind of person who takes up a lot of verbal space, challenge yourself to "move back" to leave room for others. If you are the kind of person who doesn't speak much in class, challenge yourself to "move up." This space should be one in which we all have the opportunity to participate.

• **Confidentiality:** This is a class that focuses on stories. Personal stories and information are sometimes shared in the classroom or in projects shared with co-learners. Those stories, told or written, remain the property of their teller. Do not bring those stories or personal information, no matter how insignificant they may appear to you, outside of the classroom space without asking permission from the teller.

• **Safety:** As much as possible, this classroom should be safe for all participants. Therefore, hateful behavior or language, for any reason, will not be allowed.

**CLASSROOM ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Community participation, collaboration, and peer review are central components of this course. Attendance, therefore, is mandatory. Unless you have a reason that is considered an excused absence by OSU, you are expected to be in class—on time—for every scheduled class. Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies has a departmental policy that if you miss more than the equivalent of 2 weeks of classes during a 10 week quarter, a letter grade will be deducted for each additional absence. If you are more than 10 minutes late for class, you will be considered absent. If you leave class more than 10 minutes early, you will also be considered absent. If you are less than 10 minutes late, it is up to you to see me after class to change your absence to late. Please notify me in advance of any classes you know you will miss.

**TURNING IN WORK**

Work will be due in class on the day it is due. Unless otherwise specified, turn in all work as hard copies. **Do not email me your assignments unless I ask you to do so.**

If you miss class because of an unexcused absence, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. Missed homework can be turned in the day it is due. If you know you will be missing class because of an unexcused absence, make arrangements with me to turn in work before that class. Students will be allowed one late assignment that can be turned in up to five days late without penalty. Otherwise, late projects will lose 5 points for each day (not class period) it is late. **Unless you have an excused absence, no assignment will be accepted more than five days late, and no assignments will be accepted after the end of our final class period.**

**Evaluation of Student Performance: Grading and Grades**

The grading system consists of twelve basic grades, A, A–, B+, B, B–, C+, C, C–, D+, D, D–, and F. The grade of A denotes exceptional accomplishment; B, superior; C, average; D, inferior; F, failure. Incompletes will only be granted in rare circumstances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory in the Flesh: 100 points</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>93–100 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal Read-Around: 100 Points</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Responses: 90 points (10 points each)</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87–89 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside Event: 60 points</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Presentation and Paper: 350 points</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80%-82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation: 300 points</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79 %</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Total Possible Points: 1000
C          73%-76%
C-         70%-72%
D+  67–69 %
D          60-66%
F          0-59%

PLAGIARISM
Plagiarism covers a wide range of activities, some of which you may know about and others that may surprise you. The most obvious forms of plagiarism include buying papers/projects online or other places, cutting and pasting from the Internet, and using another person's ideas or words without giving proper credit (citing). Any time you quote, you need to cite. Even paraphrasing should include a citation. Plagiarism also includes having someone else write a paper for you. Any form of plagiarism is a serious academic offense and may result in a failing grade on the assignment or the course, and has serious academic consequences at OSU and other universities.

In addition to classroom expectations and policies, please read OSU’s Statement of Expectations for Student Conduct:
http://oregonstate.edu/studentconduct/http://%252Foregonstate.edu/studentconduct/code/index.php

Services and Resources
Associated Students of Oregon State University: http://asosu.oregonstate.edu/
Asia & Pacific Cultural Center: http://oregonstate.edu/apcc/
Centro Cultural César Chávez: http://oregonstate.edu/cccc/
Counseling & Psychological Services: http://oregonstate.edu/counsel/
Emergency Food Pantry: http://oregonstate.edu/hsrc/emergency-food-pantry
Intercultural Student Services: http://oregonstate.edu/dept/iss/
International Student Advising & Services: http://oregonstate.edu/international/atosu/students
Lonnie B. Harris Black Cultural Center: http://oregonstate.edu/bcc/
Native American Longhouse: http://oregonstate.edu/nal/
Pride Center: http://oregonstate.edu/pridecenter/
Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Survivor Services:
http://www.wildlifestewards.4h.orst.edu/cla/women_studies/sexual-assault-and-domestic-violence-survivor-services
Women’s Center: http://oregonstate.edu/womenscenter/
Daily Syllabus

September 30
Forman
Lorde (In Class)

October 7
CR #1 Due
Anzaldúa & Moraga
Duncan, "History of Disease."
Aguilar
Crenshaw
Smith, Andrea. "The Problem with 'Privilege."
Spade

October 14
CR #2 Due
Schweik
Driskill et al, "Sweet Dark Places."
Levins Morales
Caucus Statements
Clare

October 21
CR #3 Due
Allison
Lee
"Theory in the Flesh" Project Due

October 28
CR #4 Due
Dunbar-Ortiz
Shaw
Smith, Andrea. Native Americans and the Christian Right.

November 4
CR #5 Due
Shirazi
Schulman
Journal Read Around Due

November 11
CR #6 Due
Duncan, Patti. “Gendered Migrations."
Abdulhadi et al.
Conference Paper Proposal Due

November 18
CR #7 Due
Maracle
(Qwo-Li out of town. Online activities TBA).

November 25
CR #8 Due
Freehling-Burton
*The Revolution Starts at Home*

December 2
CR #9
Osei-Kofi
Davis

FINAL: Tuesday, December 10th, 12:00-1:50 PM
Final Presentations