ENG 500 Introduction to Feminist Theory

Spring 2018

Maria Margaroni

Description of the Course

The aim of this course is to offer students the basic theoretical background required for the comprehension and analysis of issues relating to Gender Studies. Given the multiplicity of methodologies and perspectives, the course is not designed to be comprehensive and will not cover systematically the history of women’s movements. It will focus, instead, on key issues and debates in Feminist and Gender Theory. Through the study of selected texts (both classic and more recent contributions to feminist thought), the students will have the opportunity to discuss the major concerns and intellectual developments in Feminist Theory. They will also be encouraged to compare and evaluate different theoretical approaches by bringing them into dialogue and by considering each in light of specific literary texts or films.

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge & Understanding (Theory Component)

- Develop familiarity with the history of women’s movements and an understanding of the major traditions of feminist theory;
- Appreciate the benefits of interdisciplinary research in the comprehension and analysis of issues relating to Gender Studies;
- Investigate the social and psychic complexity of gender issues, their inextricability from concerns that relate to class, race, sexuality, physical or mental ability, criminality and legality;
- Examine the key concerns and debates in feminist theory; develop the ability to comparatively discuss and evaluate different positions in these debates.

Key Skills (Practical Component)

- Apply the required skills in scholarly research to evaluate the bibliography studied and to put forward a theoretically-informed argument in a well-written academic essay;
- Debate the validity of different arguments and compose informed responses to the competing theoretical perspectives examined in the course;
- Develop effective presentation skills.
Assessment

The final grade for this course will be based on:

- short interventions/presentations on one or more of the texts discussed in class;
- a position paper (approx. 1,500 words) on a particular theorist or question debated in the field of Gender Studies;
- an essay (approx. 2,500 words) to be submitted on the day of the final exam;
- a one-page outline of the main argument of your essay plus working bibliography sheet (due by Week 12);
- the completion of assigned reading before each meeting;
- active participation in class-discussions; and
- regular attendance.

Please note that academic honesty is absolutely required: plagiarism is unacceptable in any form and will automatically lead to your failure in the course.

Required Texts


All other primary texts are included in your course packet.

Texts for Further Reading (books marked * are on short loan)


Outline of the course

Week 1: Introduction to the course.

Liberal Feminism: Women and “The Rights of Man”

Week 2: Rosemarie Tong, “Liberal Feminism” (16-23).


Week 3: Rosemarie Tong, “Critiques of Liberal Feminism” (37-47).


Week 4: Materialist Feminism: The Gendered Division of Labour

**Week 5:** Rosemarie Tong, “Marxist and Socialist Feminism,” (106-111, 115, 118-125).


Rosemarie Tong, “Critiques of Marxist and Socialist Feminism,” (125-127).

**Week 6:** *Radical Perspectives on Sexuality and Reproduction*

Rosemarie Tong, “Radical Feminism: Libertarian and Cultural Perspectives” (48-51, 65-74, 82-89).


**Week 7:** Monique Wittig (cont.)

Rosemarie Tong, “Critiques of Radical-Libertarian and Radical-Cultural Feminism” (90-95).

**Week 8:** *Psychoanalytic Feminism: Desire, Language and the Production of*
Femininity

Rosemarie Tong, “Psychoanalytic Feminism” (128-133).


Week 9: Rosemarie Tong, “Psychoanalytic Feminism” (152-158).


Week 10: Rosemarie Tong, “Psychoanalytic Feminism” (158-162)


Week 11: Multicultural, Global and Postcolonial Feminism

Rosemarie Tong, “Multicultural, Global, and Postcolonial Feminism” (200-215).


Week 12: Rosemarie Tong, “Multicultural, Global, and Postcolonial Feminism” (215-236).

Week 13: Postmodern Feminism: Performativity and Irony

Rosemarie Tong, “Postmodern and Third-Wave Feminism” (270-274, 277-284)
