

# PS 4465 Feminist Political Theory

The Ohio State University | Autumn 2016

*Time:* W & F 2:20-3:40PM | *Location:* MacPherson Lab 1040

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This course provides an introduction to contemporary feminist political theories. Throughout the semester, we will examine political and interdisciplinary concepts/issues in relation to feminist theory.

## COURSE GOALS

The goal of this course is, first, to understand that the evolution of feminism, both in theory and political practice. A second goal is to draw two kinds of connections: (a) between the innovations of feminist theory and broader topics in political theory, and (b) between feminist theory and your daily practice/experience.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the ways in which feminism is and can be articulated,
2. Describe who are the subjects of feminist theory,
3. Understand how we might challenge the centrality of gender in feminist analyses by scrutinizing the way in which race, class, and sexuality affect our gender experiences, and
4. Work on creating a feminist praxis (practice informed by theory) and transform traditional conceptions of social justice.
5. Become critical readers of news about contemporary feminist issues
6. Effectively plan, research, write, revise, and complete a response paper.

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, students will be required to both think and write critically, imaginatively and reflectively about the material dealt with in class. Keeping up to date with the readings and participating respectfully in the class are crucial components of the learning process. To ensure these goals are met the following assignments will be used: (1) Frequent group work will be used to facilitate high levels and varied types of class involvement (Appendix A); (2) Microthemes and Lock & Key assignments will be used to facilitate a close reading of hard texts (Appendix B); (3) Midterm and final exams will test students' understanding of basic concepts; (4) A response paper will help students develop and sharpen analytic and writing skills (Appendix D).

## DISABILITY SERVICES

**The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to**

**register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.** SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); [614-292-3307](tel:614-292-3307); [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

## READING ASSIGNMENTS

You are expected to have prepared the readings by the day for which they are assigned. By "prepared," I mean read them carefully using the readings questions provided on *Canvas*, thought about them, and applied whatever note-taking system works for you. These readings are not like textbooks; they will probably take you longer than usual to read, and you may need to re-read sections, so plan accordingly.

## CLASS PARTICIPATION

This class may differ from some of your other courses in that it requires a considerable amount of active and sustained participation and engagement. Come to class ready to work actively on your understanding of feminist theory, and on your ability to analyze texts and examine complex issues. Your work for this class will involve both autonomous and collaborative learning. The idea of autonomy stresses your responsibility for your own learning, while collaborative learning stresses your responsibility for teaching and learning from one another.

My responsibility as a teacher is to set up the conditions that encourage this learning and to engage in analytic thinking with you. So this class is not like a theater, where you come and watch me perform. It is more like a lab, where you come in to work with, examine, and enhance the knowledge gained from the readings and from your own experiences.

You will work in participatory learning groups for much of the semester, and you will remain in a particular group for several class periods in a row. (See the instructions for learning group interaction in Appendix A).<sup>1</sup> In addition to small group work, the class as a whole will work together to discuss and analyze issues. I expect everyone to participate in the larger discussions as well, in order to practice and develop your communicative abilities.

You and two partners will also lead the class discussion at least once in the semester. The schedule of presentations will be determined during the first few weeks of the course according to the number of students. You will be given the choice of leading a session that appeals to you or will be assigned randomly to one if that is your preference.

I have a very broad notion of participation; it includes attentive listening, asking questions of one another (including "what do you mean?"), reading relevant passages aloud, helping another person find the right page, explaining why you agree or disagree with what someone else has said, taking detailed notes, and engaging in and facilitating discussion. Everyone must experiment with a variety of forms of participation, rather than always playing the same role.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that group work is one objective part of your participation grade. If you miss a class and miss the group activity that day you will need to complete the assignment individually or will receive no credit.

<sup>2</sup> Audre Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," in *Sister Outsider*, p. 44.

I understand that some people are nervous about speaking in public, but I still expect you to challenge yourself to do so. Poet Audre Lorde reminds that us that we (or some of us) have been socialized to respect fear more than our own needs but silence only gets us away from developing our own language and from self-definition.<sup>2</sup>

Your participation grade will rely on both subjective and objective measures. Subjective measures include my evaluation of your labor in the classroom, including group work and your turn as class leader. Objective measures include attendance, possession of readings, and quality of group work.

#### ATTENDANCE

Your attendance at each class session is required. Lecture, group work, and group discussion are all forms of enhanced learning that complement your reading of the class material, which depends on you being present in the classroom. If you are not in class, everyone also misses your potential contribution to group work or discussion.

**\*\* A sign-in sheet will be passed around at each class session to keep the official attendance record. It is your responsibility to make sure that you sign this sheet each day. \*\***

However, I understand that life is not fully in our control and thus you will have three “free” absences. You will receive one attendance credit for each class you attend (we have 26 scheduled class meetings this semester, including the final examination day). Regardless of the quality of your other participatory activities, attendance credits will operate as a **floor** for receiving a particular *participation* grade.

|    |   |
|----|---|
| A  | To receive this grade you must at least have 23 attendance credits. |
| A- | To receive this grade you must have at least 22 attendance credits. |
| B  | To receive this grade you must have at least 21 attendance credits. |
| C  | To receive this grade you must have at least 20 attendance credits. |

Absences will be excused only if: **(a)** you have a medical or family emergency, AND **(b)** you meet with another student in the class to replicate the participation that you missed, and affirm to me that you have done so. Excused absences do not count against attendance credit.

#### SYLLABUS STATEMENT / REFLECTIVE LEARNING EXERCISE

Review this syllabus and course books carefully—especially the course policies, procedures, assignments, and expectations – and also reflect on your impressions after our first class meeting. Drawing on these sources of evidence, write one or two paragraphs about how you expect to do in this course. What assignments or activities do you think you will do well on and why? What assignments or activities do you think will be difficult for you and why? What parts of your reading and writing history make you confident about some parts and hesitant about others?

The point of this exercise is to reflect on your own intellectual practice, to assess what you do well and what you need to work on. It is also good initial practice at interpreting texts and examining evidence from your own life, both of which are important to our work in this class. This exercise provides useful information so that I can think about how best to support your intellectual development.

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<sup>2</sup>Audre Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," in *Sister Outsider*, p. 44.

The statement is due on Carmen Dropbox on **Friday, August 26**, through Canvas Dropbox. These will not be graded.

### **FEMINISM BIO / PAPER**

In a brief essay (1 to 1 ½ pages, single-spaced, with a blank line between paragraphs, standard margins and fonts) write a short autobiography of yourself. Trace, if you can, events in your past that have influenced your views of “feminism” and “feminists.” What about your life may have led you to this class? Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why or why not?

This essay is due on **Friday, September 2**. Bring a hard copy to class, and submit a copy through Carmen Dropbox. These will not be graded. We will compile anonymous excerpts for distribution to the class.

### **MICROTHEMES AND LOCK & KEY ASSIGNMENTS**

Instead of having quizzes, you will write six short writing assignments (identified in as Microthemes and Lock & Key) over the course of the semester (they are described in APPENDIX B, and C, respectively). The prompts for the three microthemes and the Lock and Key assignments are already up on Carmen.

Please note that these assignments, together, are worth 20% of your final grade, which means that each assignment contributes significant points on its own. As a consequence, doing well on these assignments and not missing any of them will have a significant impact on your final grade.

These assignments need only be submitted on Canvas Dropbox, although you may want to have a hard copy for your reference and for use in class discussion.

### **RESPONSE PAPER**

A key ability I want you to work on in this course is the ability to write in a way that is both analytic and imaginative and to put forward original arguments relying on material external to the class assigned readings. I want you to be able to perform clear, thoughtful, and creative analyses of challenging problems and complex thinkers. The final product will be a 2-page essay on one of the substantive topics of the course (immigration, development, democratic transitions, and torture). You can find detailed instructions for this assignment on Appendix C, replicated on the prompt included on Carmen.

All written work in this course must represent original work not previously or simultaneously handed in for credit in another course, unless this is done with the prior approval of all involved.

**IMPORTANT NOTE** All assignments except for the Feminism bio and group work must be submitted *only* through *Canvas* Dropbox in PDF format.

### **ACADEMIC ETHICS/MISCONDUCT**

“It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487).

For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct ([http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info\\_for\\_students/csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp)).

**\*\* All assignments submitted will be analyzed by a plagiarism-detection software (turnitin)\*\***

**YOUR COURSE GRADE WILL BE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING WEIGHTS FOR EACH OF THE ASSIGNMENTS**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Lock & Key assignments                                | 10% |
| Microthemes   | 10% |
| Participation (includes ungraded writing assignments) | 10% |
| Group Work  | 10% |
| Midterm Exam  | 25% |
| Final Exam (non-cumulative)                           | 20% |
| Response Paper  | 15% |

**YOUR COURSE GRADE WILL BE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING DEFINITIONS AND APPROXIMATE NUMERICAL BREAKDOWN**

| Letter grade | Numerical equivalence           | Definition  |
|--------------|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>A</b>     | A 93-100<br>A- 90-92            | Highest level of attainment. The A grade states clearly that the student has shown outstanding promise in the topic under study.  |
| <b>B</b>     | B+ 87-89<br>B 83-86<br>B- 80-82 | Strong performance demonstrating a high level of attainment. The B grade states that the student has shown solid promise in the aspect of the discipline under study.   |
| <b>C</b>     | C+ 77-79<br>C 73-76<br>C- 70-72 | A totally acceptable performance demonstrating an adequate level of attainment. The C grade states that, while not yet showing unusual promise, the student may continue to study in the discipline with reasonable hope of intellectual development. |
| <b>D</b>     | D+ 67-69<br>D 60-66             | A marginal performance in the required exercises demonstrating a minimal passing level of attainment.   |
| <b>E</b>     | 0-59                            | Failed, unacceptable performance.   |

#### REQUIRED READING

**(1) Two course books are required:**

- (a) Catharine MacKinnon. 1991. *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (available at students stores)
- (b) Patricia Hill Collins. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge. (available online @ <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/ohiostatelaw/docDetail.action?docID=10054558>)

**(2) Readings available on Carmen:** All other readings are available on Carmen alphabetically.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Be sure to go through the readings with the help of the “Reading Questions” available on *Canvas*.

#### CLASS ETIQUETTE

- You are required to turn off your phone at the start of the class and put it in your backpack. Let me know if you are expecting an important call and need your phone with you.
- You are expected to always bring readings to class for reference.
- Laptops and tablets are allowed in class *only* for consulting the text, *but I strongly recommend you take notes by hand, which has been proven to enhance learning* (“[The Case for Banning Laptops](#)” and “[The Reading Brain in the Digital Age](#)”).
- Learning is also enhanced by not checking Instagram/Twitter/Facebook while in class
- To compensate your restraint, there’s a 5-minute break halfway through class.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

| Date           | Week       | Topic   | Readings  |
|----------------|------------|---|---|
| W, 8/24        | 1.1        | Introduction  | Syllabus  |
| F, 8/26        | 1.2        | Doing Theory<br><b>Group Work (GW)<sup>†</sup></b><br><b>Syll Statement Due</b> | Charlotte Bunch. 1987. “Not By Degrees.” In <i>Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action</i> . New York: St. Martin’s Press. pp. 240-253.<br>bell hooks. 1989. “feminist theory: a radical agenda.” In <i>Talking Back, thinking feminist, thinking black</i> . Boston: South End Press. pp. 35-41.  |
| W, 8/31        | 2.1        | Consciousness Raising   | Lynet Uttal. 1990. “Nods that Silence.” In Gloria Anzaldúa (ed.) <i>Making Face: Making Soul: Haciendo Caras</i> . San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation. pp. 317-20.<br>Lorde, Audre. "The Uses of Anger." <i>Women's Studies Quarterly</i> 9, no. 3 (1981): pp. 7-10.<br>Chow, Ngan-Lin. 1987. “The Development of Feminist Consciousness among Asian American Women.” In <i>Gender and Society</i> , Vol 1, No. 3. |
| F, 9/2         | 2.2        | Oppression<br><b>Fem Bio Due</b>  | Squires, Judith. 2000. <i>Gender in Political Theory</i> . Chapter 2, pp. 54-61.<br>Marilyn Frye. 1983. “Oppression.” In <i>The Politics of Reality</i> . Trumansburg: The Crossing Press. pp. 1-16.  |
| W, 9/7         | 3.1        | Knowledge & Experience  | Deborah L. Rhode. 1997. “The No Problem Problem” and “The Ideology and Biology of Gender Difference.” In <i>Speaking of Sex: The Denial of Gender Inequality</i> . Cambridge: Harvard University Press. pp. 1-42.   |
| F, 9/9         | 3.2        | Method<br><b>GW<sup>†</sup></b><br><b>Microtheme #1 Due</b>                     | Catharine MacKinnon, Ch. 5 pp. 83-105 and Ch. 6 pp. 106-125.<br>Kathie Sarachild. 1978. “Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon.” In <i>Feminist Revolution</i> . New York: Random House. pp. 144-149.   |
| W, 9/14        | 4.1        | Method  | Patricia Hill Collins, Preface and Ch. 1 pp. vi-ix and 1-19, ONLY pp. 21-39 of Ch. 2 and Ch. 11 pp. 251-271   |
| F, 9/16        | 4.2        | Public/Private<br><b>GW<sup>†</sup></b>   | Susan Okin. 1998. “Gender, the Public, and the Private.” In Anne Phillips (ed.) <i>Feminism and Politics</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 116-141.<br>MacKinnon, Ch. 10 pp. 184-194.  |
| W, 9/21        | 5.1        | Intersectionality<br><b>Microtheme #2 Due</b>                                   | Marilyn Frye. 1992. “The Possibility of Feminist Theory.” In <i>Willful Virgin</i> . Trumansburg: The Crossing Press. pp. 59-75.<br>Kimberle Crenshaw. 1989. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex.” In <i>The University of Chicago Legal Forum</i> . pp. 314-343.   |
| F, 9/23        | 5.2        | Difference & Voice  | Maria C. Lugones and Elizabeth V. Spelman. 1983. “Have we got a Theory for You!” In <i>Women’s Studies International Forum</i> . Vol. 6, No. 6: 573-581.  |
| W, 9/28        | 6.1        | Rights and ‘Culture’<br><b>GW<sup>†</sup></b>                                   | MacKinnon, Ch. 7 pp. 127-154.<br>Collins, Ch. 6 pp. 123-148.  |
| F, 9/30        | 6.2        | On Rape & Consent<br><b>Lock &amp; Key # 1 Due</b>                              | MacKinnon, Ch. 9 pp 171-183.  |
| W, 10/5        | 7.1        | Review Session  | Study guide distributed   We’ll go over group work answers  |
| <b>F, 10/7</b> | <b>7.2</b> | <b>Midterm Exam</b>   | *****   |
| W, 10/12       | 8.1        | Consent   | Rachel Kramer Bussel (2008) "Beyond Yes or No: Consent as a Sexual Process," in <i>Yes Means Yes</i> . New York: Seal Press   |

|                |             |   |   |
|----------------|-------------|---|---|
|                |             | <b>GW†</b>  | Brad Perry (2008) "Hooking Up with Healthy Sexuality: The Lessons Boys Learn (and Don't Learn) about Sexuality, and Why a Sex-Positive Rape Prevention Paradigm can Benefit Everyone Involved," in <i>Yes Means Yes</i> .<br>Lee Jacobs Riggs (2008) "A Love Letter from an Anti-Rape Activist to Her Feminist Sex-Toy Store," in <i>Yes Means Yes</i> .  |
| F, 10/14       | 8.2         | Autumn Break  | No Class  |
| W, 10/19       | 9.1         | Rape Prevention<br>The Erotic   | Sharon Marcus. 1992. "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention." In Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (eds) <i>Feminists Theorize the Political</i> . New York: Routledge. pp. 385-403.<br>Audre Lorde. 1993. "Uses of the Erotic. The Erotic as Power." In <i>Sister Outsider</i> . Trumansburg: The Crossing Press. pp. 53-59.   |
| F, 10/21       | 9.2         | Chicana Feminism  | Gloria Anzaldúa. 1987. "La conciencia de la mestiza/Toward a New Consciousness." In <i>Borderlands/La Frontera</i> . SF: Aunt Lute. pp. 99-113.   |
| W, 10/26       | 10.1        | Black W's Oppression  | Collins, Chs. 3 and 4 pp. 45-67 and 69-96.  |
| F, 10/28       | 10.2        | White Privilege<br><br><b>GW†</b>   | Ann Russo. 1991. "We Cannot Live Without Our Lives." In Mohanty, Russo, and Torres <i>Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism</i> . Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. 297-313.<br>Bernice Johnson Reagon. 1983. "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century." In Barbara Smith (ed.) <i>Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology</i> . New York: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press. pp. 356-368.<br>Peggy McIntosh. 1992. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" |
| W, 11/2        | 11.1        | Global Feminisms  | Uma Narayan. "Global Gender Inequality and the Empowerment of Women." <i>Perspectives on Politics</i> 8, no. 01 (2010): 282-84.<br>----- 1997. "Cross-Cultural connections, Border-Crossings, and 'Death by Culture.'" In <i>Dislocating Cultures</i> . New York: Routledge. pp. 81-117.  |
| F, 11/4        | 11.2        | Compulsory<br>Heterosexuality   | Adrienne Rich. 1980. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." In <i>Signs</i> , Vol. 5, No. 4: 631-660.<br>Christine Overall. 1994. "Heterosexuality and Choice." In Jaggar <i>Living with Contradictions</i> . Boulder: Westview Press: 499-504.  |
| W, 11/9        | 12.1        | <b>CLASS CANCELLED</b>  |   |
| F, 11/11       | 12.2        | Veteran's Day   | No Class  |
| W, 11/16       | 13.1        | Undoing Gender<br><b>Lock &amp; Key # 2 Due</b><br><i>Study guide distributed</i>             | Judith Butler. 1999 [1990]. <i>Gender Trouble</i> . New York: Routledge. (see marked excerpts "a" and "b").   |
| F 11/18        | 13.2        | The Body<br><b>Microtheme #3 Due</b><br><br><b>No Class, meet with<br/>Your group for GW†</b> | Susan Bordo. 2003 [1993]. <i>Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body</i> . pp. 1-29.<br>Sandra Bartky. 1990. "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power." In Bartky <i>Femininity and Domination</i> . NY: Routledge. 63-82.<br>→ <b>Deposit Group Work in envelope by my door, Derby 2072 by 5pm</b>   |
| W, 11/23       | 14.1        | Thanksgiving Break  | No Class  |
| F, 11/25       | 14.2        | Thanksgiving Break  | No Class  |
| W, 11/30       | 15.1        | Feminist Politics<br>The State<br><br><i>We'll go over GW</i>                                 | Lisa Duggan. 1995. "Queering the State." In Duggan and Hunter <i>Sex Wars, Sexual Dissent and Political Culture</i> . New York: Routledge. 179-193.<br>Iris Marion Young. 1994. "Gender as Seriality: Thinking About Women as a Social Collective." In <i>Signs</i> Vol 19, no. 3: 713-738.   |
| <b>F, 12/2</b> | <b>15.2</b> | <b>Final Exam</b>   | *****   |
| W, 12/7        | 16.1        | Peer Review / In Class<br>Work / Assessment   | Peer Review (bring draft print out, upload edited version) & Assessment (bring laptop, ipad, etc.)  |
| F, 12/9        |             | <b>Response Paper Due</b>   | <b>Upload paper to Canvas by 2.20pm</b>   |

†If you missed this class you missed the group work. You need to complete the assignment and submit it up to a week later or you will receive null credit. The prompt is available on Carmen under Assignments.

## APPENDIX A: PARTICIPATORY LEARNING GROUP WORK<sup>3</sup>

Please note that group work is one objective part of your participation grade. If you miss a class and miss the group activity you need to complete the assignment and submit it a week later to receive credit.

The following instructions may seem formal, but these practices contribute to having a lively and engaged class, in which everyone is learning, thinking, and making complex intellectual judgments.

**Participatory learning** is the classroom use of structured small group interaction so that students solve problems together. Considerable research demonstrates that this method works better than traditional lecturing for developing students' higher-level reasoning capacities, increasing comprehension, and fostering positive relationships. Explaining answers, restating information, and formulating questions in your own words engage critical thinking faculties and embed information and insights in memory.

Participatory learning rests on two main principles: **(1) Group interdependence**, which means organizing tasks so that members must work together to succeed. We will achieve this by having role differentiation within the group and by having the "class participation" portion of the final grade include group work. **(2) Individual accountability**, which is achieved through individualized measures of participation and achievement (such as essays, quizzes, and individual participation in class discussion).

There are two kinds of participating learning strategies that we will employ in this class. The first is **paired note-taking**. When I lecture, we will break periodically for you to explain to each other the main points of the lecture thus far. During these short breaks (5 minutes or so) you will work in pairs to identify significant elements of the lecture, share insights, and clarify any confusion you might have.

The second kind of participatory learning strategy we will use quite frequently is **structured learning groups**. Learning groups will consist of 4-5 students, and last several class periods. At the beginning of a class period, each group will decide which member will be primarily responsible for each role. The required roles are the following. **(1) Reader**: This person will be responsible for reading aloud the question/project, and for helping the group stay on task (watch the time, etc.). **(2) Encourager**: This person is responsible for encouraging all members to participate, and making sure all participation is shared. **(3) Checker**: This involves checking to make sure that all members of the group can explain the group's analysis, or how the group arrived at a conclusion. Periodically asking members of the group to summarize or articulate the group's analysis or conclusion will lead to higher levels of comprehension for everyone. It also provides a pause for participants to ask further questions. **(4) Recorder**: This person is responsible for writing down the group's analysis in a clear and detailed manner, and for turning this report into me. Once I return the report, the recorder should share it with the other members.

The point of having these explicit roles is to ensure that all group members are contributing to the group's work. Each day that we meet in groups, you should think about helping with all of these roles. However, you will be primarily responsible for one. You must take a different primary role in each class meeting. You will feel silly and artificial at first, but I want you to make a sincere and consistent effort to perform these roles. When we have larger class discussions, I will call randomly on group members to explain their group's analysis, share insights, and respond to the reports of other groups. This practice is designed to encourage both group interdependence (you are responsible for one another's learning) and individual accountability.

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<sup>3</sup> The design of learning groups and other assignments is indebted to Susan Bickford's Feminist Theory course, who adapted them from *Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom* (1991), David W. Johnson, Roger T. Johnson, and Karl A. Smith. (Edina, MN: Interaction Book Co.).

## APPENDIX B: MICROTHEMES

Microthemes have two purposes. Like quizzes, they provide a way for me to assess for class preparation. But in addition (unlike quizzes) they help you clarify your thinking through analytic writing.

Microthemes must be turned in on a HALF SHEET of paper, using standard margins and a font size of 11 or larger, single-spaced. Prompts for each microtheme are posted on Canvas under the module “Assignments” and also pasted below the instructions. There are two kinds of microthemes: summary-writing and thesis-support/analytical microthemes. Be sure to read carefully the directions and the criteria of evaluation that follow.

### A. Summary-writing microthemes

A summary-writing microtheme has two objectives. One is for you to build analytic reading skills by concisely re-stating the argument of part of the readings. To do this successfully, you must be able to differentiate between the main ideas and less important points of a section of the argument. Then you must condense the argument by linking the main points and omitting the secondary ideas that you can leave behind without losing the sense of the argument. (In other words, make clear the relationship between the points.) The second objective is for you to learn how to follow and accurately give an account of arguments that you may not necessarily agree with. You have to "listen" to the authors you read and explain their arguments in your own words but without misrepresenting their points.

Write your summary as if it were for a reader who has not read the text, although she has heard of it. She has a pretty good vocabulary but will not understand overly technical terms. Make sure to provide page numbers in parentheses for all quotes and paraphrases.

The **criteria** for a summary are **(1)** accuracy of content, **(2)** comprehensiveness and balance (i.e., do you include the central points and omit secondary claims?) **(3)** clear sentence structure with good transitions, **(4)** adherence to usual rules of grammar, punctuation, and page citation.

\*\*Although this is not an essay, it should sound polished and the points should flow smoothly if read aloud (in fact, it is always a good idea to read this kind of assignment aloud to yourself as a way of checking your work).

**Table B1: Scoring for Summary-writing Microthemes (cont.)**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Outstanding<br>(20)   | Meets <b>criteria</b> of accuracy, comprehensiveness and balance, clear sentence structure and grammar. It is clear that you understand the text and can explain its main points to a reader who has not read it.   |
| Excellent<br>(18)     | Meets all <b>criteria</b> of above but is weaker than a 20 in one area. E.g., it may have excellent accuracy, comprehensiveness and balance but show occasional problems in sentence structure. Or it may be well written but have some difficulty balancing main points with secondary ones. |
| Above<br>Average (16) | It reveals a generally accurate understanding of the reading with a clear sense of the main points but is either noticeably weaker on one <b>criterion</b> than an 18 or 20 (did not provide page number citations, for example) or   |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | somewhat weaker on two <b>criteria</b> .  |
| Meets Basic Requirements (14) | Must have strength on at least two of the <b>criteria</b> and it should still be good enough to give a reader a fairly clear and accurate overview of the reading.<br><br>A summary rates a 14 because it overemphasizes secondary points at the expense of the main argument, is unclear and has problems with sentence structure. |
| Worthy of Credit (12)         | A summary rates 12 because it is weak in all <b>criteria</b> . It would not serve to explain the text to an unfamiliar reader, it may be inaccurate, and is disorganized.   |
| No Credit (0)                 | Fails to meet any of the <b>criteria</b> for an effective summary.  |

## B. Thesis-support Microthemes

In a "thesis-support" microtheme, I will ask you a question about the assigned reading and you will write a short composition that supports your answer to the question. To do this successfully, you must be able to support your answer with textual evidence, and guard against the tendency to ignore textual evidence that might undermine your thesis.

The main objectives of this assignment are to develop your skills at a) thinking through complex texts that do not always provide simple answers, and b) writing a focused argument.

**Criteria:** There will often be more than one persuasive answer to the question I ask. Thus the **criteria** for an analytical microtheme are **(1)** clarity: do you make your supporting points clear? **(2)** precision and accuracy: do you draw your supporting points from specific places in the text, using quotation marks and page numbers appropriately, and do you make correct assertions about the text? **(3)** comprehensiveness and balance: have you identified the textual passages important to this question? **(4)** organization: do you present your arguments in a coherent order with smooth transitions and grammatical sentences?

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Outstanding (20)   | Outstanding. Meets <b>criteria</b> of clarity, precision and accuracy, comprehensiveness and balance, and organization. You have considered the texts carefully and creatively and made a persuasive argument in support of your thesis.                 |
| Excellent (18)     | Meets all above <b>criteria</b> but is weaker than a 20 in one area. E.g., it may have excellent clarity, comprehensiveness, and precision and accuracy but show occasional problems in organization or may ignore a passage that needs to be explained. |
| Above Average (16) | It is generally persuasive and offers fairly specific evidence to support the argument but is either noticeably weaker on one <b>criterion</b> than a 20 or an 18 or somewhat weaker on two criteria.  |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Meets Basic Requirements (14) | Must have strength on at least two of the <b>criteria</b> and it should still be good enough to put forward a clear line of argument. It rates a 14 because it does not use specific examples from the text, or does not anticipate the objections of a rival view, and has problems with sentence structure. |
| Worthy of Credit (12)         | An analytical microtheme rates a 12 because it is weak in all <b>criteria</b> and would not serve to persuade an audience familiar with the text. It may also be inaccurate or disorganized.  |
| No Credit (0)                 | Fails to meet any of the <b>criteria</b> for effective support of an interpretive thesis.   |

### Prompts for Microthemes

#### Microtheme # 1

#### Catharine MacKinnon and Consciousness Raising

This is a *summary* microtheme about Chapter 5 of Catharine A. MacKinnon’s book, assigned for September 6. Please read carefully the instructions for summary microthemes (in APPENDIX B of the syllabus).

In your summary please be sure—in the context of the larger argument—to cover the following two questions: (a) How is consciousness raising as a method different from the social science method?; (b) What is the tension that emerges when women try to escape the self they become by “growing up female in a male-dominated society”? (pages 102-104).

#### Microtheme # 2

#### Voice and women’s story

This is an *analytical/thesis-support* microtheme of Marilyn Frye’s essay “The Possibility of Feminist Theory.” In addition to the brief text below, please read carefully the instructions for analytical microthemes (in APPENDIX B of the syllabus).

With this article we continue our critique of Western science, which started with MacKinnon’s methodological chapter. In this case, I would like you to focus on what Frye calls a “matter of voice.” (71) What kind of voice is embedded in men’s world story? How does this voice affect what we find out (or fail to find out)? What alternative voice does Frye provide, and why is it fundamental to the advancement of feminist knowledge? What strategies of pattern perception are conducive to pattern recognition?

#### Microtheme # 3

#### Feminine practices, bodies, and beauty

This is an *analytical* microtheme that you will write about Sandra Bartky’s essay. In addition to the brief text below, please read carefully the instructions for analytical microthemes (in APPENDIX B of the

syllabus).

In this article, the author critically analyzes feminine practices of production of appearance. Bartky illustrates the tension between the generalized adoption of feminine practices and the possibility of rebelling against these constricting models. Outline the components of this tension. Be sure to examine the costs of abiding and rebelling against standards of beauty. Does the author suggest a way out of this tension? Do you think it is necessary to envision ways to contest these imposed conceptions of beauty? Can you think of examples (not mentioned in the text)?

## APPENDIX C: LOCK AND KEY ASSIGNMENTS

### Evaluation criteria

The point of these assignments is for you to clarify some aspects of your understanding of MacKinnon/Butler, including what it is that you don't understand. Obviously, this is not the kind of assignment where there are "right" and "wrong" answers. I will not, then, be grading you on what you do and don't understand; I will just be evaluating the effort you put into the assignment. I'll use the following criteria to identify "effort":

- . Care with text: are you accurately quoting what MacKinnon/Butler said? This is a matter of careful reading and proofreading.
- . Clarity of form: in explaining your key and your lock, do you use correct grammar and syntax and avoid clichés?
- . Thoughtfulness: this is a more subjective criterion than the above two, and I intend to be very generous in attributing thoughtfulness to you! Any effort to explain why you selected the passages you did will count as thoughtfulness.

### **Lock & Key Assignment #1: MacKinnon and legal blindness to rape Due 09.30**

#### The general idea

As you do the MacKinnon reading, you should keep track of textual locks and keys. "Locks" are those parts of the text that somehow block your understanding; you can tell they're important, but you can't quite understand how or why. "Keys" are their counterparts – passages or incidents in a text that somehow help to explain or clarify what is going on in the writing. Factual questions like, "what the heck is 'epistemologically'?" don't count. You're trying instead to identify passages of significance to the themes of the work. You do NOT have to match "locks" with "keys"; the goal isn't to find the answer to every question, but to identify what it is you don't understand (and what you do).

#### The specific assignment:

For the MacKinnon piece assigned for September 30, type out one key ("this passage conveys something important to me") and one lock ("this bit seems significant but I don't get it"). (You may have many locks and keys, but for this assignment choose one of each.) For the key, explain what you learn from it. For the lock, say anything you can about why it's a lock for you. Again, your key and your lock do not have to have anything to do with one another.

- . As always, provide page numbers for the passages you use.
- . Make sure to identify which is your key and which is your lock.
- . Neither your lock nor your key should be something that MacKinnon says about other theorists unless you can say why you think this is significant. (I don't want us to get bogged down in trying to figure out theorists we haven't read.)

You can use a full sheet of paper. It's fine to single-space, with an extra line between paragraphs.

**Lock & Key Assignment #2: Butler and the troubles of Gender**  
**Due 11.11**

**The general idea:**

As you do the Butler reading, you should keep track of textual locks and keys. “Locks” are those parts of the text that somehow block your understanding; you can tell they’re important, but you can’t quite understand how or why. “Keys” are their counterparts – passages or incidents in a text that somehow help to explain or clarify what is going on in the writing. Factual questions like, “who the heck is Robespierre?” don’t count. You’re trying instead to identify passages of significance to the themes of the work. You do NOT have to match “locks” with “keys”; the goal isn’t to find the answer to every question, but to understand what it is you don’t understand (and what you do).

**The specific assignment:**

For the excerpts (‘a’ and ‘b’) of Judith Butler’s Gender Trouble assigned for November 11, type out one key (“this passage conveys something important to me”) and one lock (“this bit seems significant but I don’t get it”). (You may have many locks and keys, but for this assignment choose one of each.) For the key, explain what you learn from it. For the lock, say anything you can about why it’s a lock for you. Again, your key and your lock do not have to have anything to do with one another.

- . As always, provide page numbers for the passages you use.
- . Make sure to identify which is your key and which is your lock.
- . Neither your lock nor your key should be something that Butler says about other theorists (Nietzsche, Foucault), unless you can say why you think this is significant. (I don’t want us to get bogged down in trying to figure out theorists we haven’t read.)
- . You can use a full sheet of paper. It’s fine to single-space, with an extra line between paragraphs.

**APPENDIX D: RESPONSE PAPER**  
**(DUE ON DECEMBER 7 THROUGH CARMEN DROPBOX ONLY)**

As a final assignment, you will write a response paper on one of the human right case studies explored in this course. You will work on this during the last two weeks of the course. Read the whole prompt before starting work on the paper as you'll find important information about formatting, length, etc. Appendix D outlines the expectations and grading policy.

*1. PICK ONE QUESTION (USE SYLLABUS READINGS IN RESPECTIVE TOPIC AND 2 EXTERNAL SCHOLARLY SOURCES)*

- 1) Methodology (“the broad principles of how to conduct research and how interpretive principles are to be applied,” Collins 2000; 252) and epistemology (the processes whereby we determine what counts as “good knowledge” or truth) figure prominently in MacKinnon and Collins. Both agree that women’s experiences should be the starting place for theory, but each author has different views on how to determine these experiences and how they inform “feminist truth.” Contrast and explore their views. Probe, challenge, or defend what you see as their central methodological and epistemological claims and put forward your own argument about how interpretative method should look like.
- 2) The intersectionality critique, that is, the fact that legal analysis fragments identity in a way that is at odds with the concrete life of most women is the subject of the article by Kimberly Crenshaw. Use this article to develop an argument about how the essentialist conception of identities has been oppressive and sometimes reinforcing of the paradigms that women were trying to fight and how does intersectionality solve this. Further, evaluate the usefulness and sufficiency of the theorization of voice in Lugones and Spelman (1983) as a response to the problems described by Crenshaw.
- 3) Sharon Marcus and Catharine McKinnon engage with the topic of rape from different perspectives. While MacKinnon calls her approach one of “Sex Equality,” Marcus positions herself as a poststructuralist. Think through the theoretical assumptions in their work, and draw them out and contrast them in your paper. Do not simply recapitulate their arguments. Are their approaches compatible or contradictory? Make your own theoretical arguments and side with one theorist if contradictions are found. Finally, use your own judgment to put forward an argument that probes, challenges, or supports the central argument of these two theorists.
- 4) As we have seen in our readings, feminist theorists have problematized the way in which we act over our bodies. Using Bordo and Bartky, write an essay in which you carefully analyze the concept of the slender body. Be sure to clarify how does the pressure toward slenderness relate to the growing incidence of anorexia. Do these two authors coincide in their tracing of the source of this pressure? Are their approaches complementary or sometimes contradictory? Be sure to put forward your own theoretical arguments to back up your position on this issue.

*2. FORMATTING*

The essay should be two pages long (not including bibliography), 1.5-spaced, with 1-inch margins on both sides and a minimum font size of 11 points (Note: this is *not* the default setting for most programs). Be sure the pages are numbered in the lower right-hand corner and that your name is on every page.

You can find detailed instructions on how I will evaluate your work in the Appendix D. It is a good idea to read those before starting to write your paper.

Consider taking advantage of the resources at the Writing Center. Before submitting the final version of your paper, look at their proofreader checklist (<http://cstw.osu.edu/files/cstw/handouts/editing.pps>).

## APPENDIX E: GRADING POLICY FOR RESPONSE PAPERS

One of the biggest challenges you will face as a writer is uncertainty about the criteria and measures that will be used to judge the overall quality of your work. I grade essays along five dimensions:

### (1) Argument:

- After reading the first paragraph, is the argument clear?
- Is the thesis coherent and precise? Does it make an argument, or mostly summarize?
- Does the thesis suggest a structure for the paper? Is the paper organized according to the thesis?
- Is each paragraph relevant to the argument?
- How much evidence is provided in support of the argument? How good is the evidence?
- Does the argument offer a convincing reading of the texts? Is a counter-argument considered?

### (2) Comprehension:

- Is each theorist's position presented accurately?
- Are all relevant examples used? Do they need to be?
- Are quotations clearly linked to the argument?
- How well are quotations explained? Are quotations unpacked?
- Does the use of the quotation demonstrate understanding of the text?
- Are complexities within the theorist's arguments addressed? Are they mentioned?

### (3) Coherence:

- Does each paragraph develop a single point?
- Does each sentence communicate a complete thought?
- Are thoughts fully explained, or do they sit alone?
- How well is each quotation introduced? Is it placed in relevant context? Is it unpacked?
- Does each paragraph logically follow the preceding one?
- Is the writing choppy? That is, do sentences make sense next to one another?

### (4) Writing:

- Has spellchecker been used?
- How many sentences use active voice?
- Does each sentence follow relevant grammatical rules?
- Are there any run-ons or fragments?
- Are words missing from sentences? Does it look like the paper was proofread?
- Do indefinite articles and pronouns have clear antecedents?

### (5) Miscellaneous/Technical:

- Did the writer obviously try to fill space (large font, excessive space between lines, etc.)?
- Are the margins 1" on each side?
- Was the paper turned in on time? How many days late was the paper?
- Is the paper the appropriate length?

While I always strive for objectivity in my grading process and certainly take measures to ensure that my reading of your work is as objective as possible, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers when writing an essay. I am not, however, likely to be swayed by your personal position on a topic or the degree to which you "agree" with me, so do not waste time trying to figure out my own opinion or position on a topic. I look for *convincing arguments*, which may rely on a number of different strategies and kinds of evidence. This all means that grading essays is both an objective and a subjective process.

Please note that not complying with all required deadlines for the essay will result in a deduction, regardless of the quality of the essay.