

# CMST 7971: Feminist Critique<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Ashley Mack

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**Meeting day and time:** T 3pm-5:50pm

**Office hours:** T 12pm-2pm / TH 9am-10am

**Sec.:** 1

**Term:** Spring 2019

**Meeting room:** Coates 153

## COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Examination of modern feminist theories and their deployment in the critique of communicative artifacts and texts.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will critically interrogate the commitments of various feminisms and examine the critiques of White Western feminisms made by Black, trans, Chicana, postcolonial, decolonial, transnational, and queer feminist scholars. We undertake the task of a theoretical survey of feminist political theories for the purpose of learning how to read rhetorical and cultural texts from feminist orientations. We will emphasize how one might use feminist political theories as the basis for productive and rigorous rhetorical or cultural criticism, discuss how to recognize implicit rhetorical theories in feminist discourses, and examine which feminist approaches are appropriate for analyzing various kinds of texts, objects, or data. The course assumes a basic sympathy but welcomes critical engagement with the feminist goals of gender equity, self-determination, and sex/gender freedom. We will also critically engage how these aims are complicated and challenged in the contexts of racism, colonialism, nationalism, and class-based exploitation.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course has several core objectives:

1. Understand the history of feminisms as a complex set of political and intellectual movements emerging from specific historical contexts
2. Understand the ways in which various debates within feminist theories critically assess what is to be considered the “canon” of feminist scholarship
3. Appreciate the role of intersectionality and feminisms in the historical development of rhetorical studies
4. Operationalize feminist theories in the service of critical analytical practice

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<sup>1</sup> I am thankful to all of the scholars whose tireless work has helped me reframe what a course on feminist critique should look like. Many of these scholars are included on this syllabus.

5. Produce high quality rhetorical and/or cultural scholarship suitable for publication

## COURSE MATERIALS

This course is made up primarily of books and additional journal length readings I will provide links to.

The following books are required and available at the bookstore or through Amazon:

bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 2014). ISBN-13: 978-1138821514

María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003). ISBN-13: 978-0742514591

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

Scott Lauria Morgenson, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). ISBN-13: 978-0816656332

Imani Perry, *Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018). ISBN: 9781478000815.

Raka Shome, *Diana and Beyond: White Femininity, National Identity and Contemporary Media Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 2014). ISBN-13: 9780252080302

Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and the Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Duke University Press, 2014). ISBN-13: 978-0822357018

The following book is recommended:

Karma R. Chavez and Cindy L. Griffin, eds., *Standing in the Intersection: Feminist Voices, Feminist Practices in Communication Studies* (New York: SUNY Press, 2012). ISBN-13: 9781438444901

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

**Short Papers (2 at 15 points each):** Two times during the semester you will turn in a short (4-6 pages) paper. This can be a short piece of cultural criticism or a theoretical essay engaging a specific theoretical conversation we have explored.

**Final Essay (40 points):** In this course, you will write a final seminar paper (15-20 pages) performing an original feminist critique of a cultural or communication artifact. Strong criticism is well-organized, thesis-driven, integrative of theory, convincing, provocative, driven by curiosity, provides exceptional analysis of cultural discourses and texts using examples and descriptive language, and suggestive of broader insights into the nature of rhetoric and/or cultural studies. A successful essay will be suitable for conference submission with zero or minimal revision and, ultimately, journal submission. Co-authorship is allowed as long as both partners confirm that they equally worked on the project.

The essay consists of several components:

**Topic Proposal** - This 2-3 page proposal should briefly describe your artifact for your final essay, make a case for its relevance as an object of criticism, and describe how your proposed project will contribute to theoretical conversations in feminist theory. This is due on March 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Draft 1** - You will submit an early draft of your essay on April 21<sup>st</sup>, which will be given to a peer to anonymously review. Include at the beginning of your essay a letter addressing me as the "editor" and you submitting your draft for anonymous review.

**Peer Review** - You will be assigned a peer's essay to review anonymously. Please see the peer review assignment document for guidance on completing this portion of the assignment. The review is due Monday, April 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Final Draft** - Submit a final draft of your essay that incorporates feedback on May 5<sup>th</sup>. Please include a cover letter with your submission that explains the edits and changes you made in response to the feedback. In your letter please identify a journal and a conference you will seek submission to. A list of rhetorical, feminist, and cultural studies journals can be found in the [RSA@LSU Publishing Resources](#).

**Minutes (5 points)** For the sake of continuity, one enrolled participant will provide a summary of the previous week's class at the beginning of every seminar (I will distribute a sign-up sheet on the first day of class). While this need not be an exhaustive regurgitation of all that was said and done, it should provide sufficient set-up for the proceeding discussion. A good minute-taker will take especially rigorous notes the week prior and describe highlights from the opening discussion/lecture, as well as the discussion.

**Participation (25 points)** The ideal seminar, in my view, entails robust discussion. We learn best when we play off of each other's ideas, challenge each other, and even think out loud in order to work out a difficult concept. That said, participation also includes work and communication outside the classroom. For example, at several points throughout the semester I might ask you to come to class with a "show and tell"—a communicative artifact example that illustrates a theoretical tension or concept(s) in the reading(s) for that week. It

is my hope that the expectation of strong participation goes without saying in a graduate seminar setting.

### Assignment Weights

ASSIGNMENT	Points	Due Date
Short Papers	15 points each x 2 = 30 points total	February 19 <sup>th</sup> and April 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Feminist Criticism Essay	40 points	Topic proposal is due March 19 <sup>th</sup> , first draft due April 21 <sup>st</sup> , final essay presentation and peer review due April 28 <sup>th</sup> , final essay due May 5 <sup>th</sup>
Participation	25 points	Ongoing
Minutes	5 Points	Once at assigned time
TOTAL	100	

### Grade Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage Needed
A+	97.5 – 100%
A	92.5 – 97.89%
A-	89.5 – 92.85%
B+	87.5 – 89.49%
B	82.5 – 87.49%
B-	79.5 – 82.49%
C+	77.5 – 79.49%
C	72.5 – 77.49%
C-	69.5 – 72.49%
D+	67.5 – 69.49%
D	62.5 – 67.49%
D-	59.5 – 62.49%
F	0 – 59.49%

## COURSE POLICIES

**Land Acknowledgement Statement:** Because of our shared commitment to principles of equity and justice, before we begin we should acknowledge that the land we are meeting on for

this course is the original homelands of the Chahta Yakni, part of the Choctaw nation of first peoples. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide, violent gendered imposition, and forced removal and displacement from this territory during the Choctaw trail of tears which began in 1831, and honor and respect the first peoples who are still connected to this land on which we gather.

**Preparation:** I expect you to arrive to class each week having completed all required readings and prepared to engage in thoughtful, mature discussion. If you are aware of readings, television clips, etc. that reflect the day's discussion, you should feel free to share them with the class (provided they are appropriate) via email or during the designated class session.

**Missed Assignments and Late Work:** All assignments must be completed on time. I will not accept assignments if they are turned in late. Please plan your schedule accordingly and allow extra time for unforeseen events. Emergency situations will be handled on an individual basis.

**Attendance:** Attendance is required.

**Technology and Electronics in the Classroom:** You are more than welcome to use technology in this classroom (Laptops, iPads, etc) as long as it does not serve as a distraction to you and other students, or keep you from engaging in class discussion. If you use a laptop to take notes or look up information in class, that is fine, but it should not be out during discussions unless it's additive or needed. If technology becomes a distraction rather than supportive to your learning and the learning of others, I will warn the class once, and if it happens again technology will be banned from the whole class.

**Classroom Environment:** The success of this course depends on the interactions generated between the instructor and the students (me and you). I do expect you to participate actively in class, share your ideas and opinions, comment on and assess those of your fellow classmates. However, I do demand that everyone treat each other with respect. Ridicule or disrespect of any sort will not be tolerated.

**University Cancellations:** In the event that classes are canceled by the university due to snow, severe weather, or other factors, students should assume that the assignments due on the day of the canceled class are due on the next class meeting. You are expected to attend your classes as scheduled if the University is not officially closed.

**Accessibility & Accommodations:** LSU is committed to ensuring that its websites, online courses, and all online materials are accessible to everyone. Please visit the [Louisiana State University Accessibility Hub](#) to read our policies and requirements for ensuring that our courses are accessible to everyone. Louisiana State University is also committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to register with Disability Services in 115 Johnston Hall. Their

phone number is 225-578-5919 and website is [www.lsu.edu/disability](http://www.lsu.edu/disability). To receive academic accommodations for this class, please obtain the proper Disability Services forms and meet with me at the beginning of the semester.

**Religious Observances:** It is University policy to respect the faith and religious obligations of students, faculty, and staff. Students with exams or classes that conflict with their religious observances should notify me well in advance so that we can work out a mutually agreeable alternative.

**Waiting Policy:** Class members should wait 15 minutes for me in the event I am late (which I do not at all foresee). After that period of time, you should consider class cancelled.

**Academic Quality, Integrity, & Misconduct:** Take pride in the quality of your work in this class. Written work must be spell-checked, grammar-checked, and proofread: The quality of your writing will affect your grade. All written work must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, with a clear heading up at the top. Your name must be included. You must include in-text citations and use an appropriate citation style for all sources used or engaged (MLA, APA, Chicago). If you submit an essay above or below page requirements you will receive a deduction.

For all of the assignments you will complete for this course, there is an expectation that everything you submit, either individually or as a group, will be your own original work. You can never submit an essay that you have previously written for or submitted to another class.

Scholarly procedure dictates that all information or material used from someone else's work (whether used through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary) must be properly cited and documented in written work. In this course, all major written work is submitted to TurnItIn which uses an advanced algorithm to detect significant matches. Any student found to have turned in material not their own (either downloaded from the internet or written by another student) will immediately be reported to the Dean of Students. You can find the official LSU policies on plagiarism the [dean of students website](#).

Your work would be considered as plagiarism in part or entirely if it involves any of the following:

- Submitting work that was written by someone other than you (an online source, a friend, etc.).
- Submitting work in which you use the ideas, metaphors or reasoning style of another, but do not cite that source and/or place that source in your list of references. Simply rewording a sentence does not make work your own.
- Submitting work in which you "cut and paste" or use the exact words of a source and you do not put the words within quotation marks, use footnotes or in-text citations, and place the source in your list of references.
- Submitting work that you have written together with a friend as if it was solely your own intellectual property.

- Submitting work that you wrote verbatim for another class.

Plagiarism can be both intentional and unintentional. Intentional plagiarism is when an individual claims sole authorship of a work that is primarily or entirely written and conceived by someone else. Unintentional plagiarism is plagiarism that results from the unintentional disregard for proper scholarly procedures. Examples of Unintentional Plagiarism may be:

- Failure to cite a source that is not common knowledge.
- Failure to "quote" or block quote author's exact words, even if documented.
- Failure to put a paraphrase in your own words, even if documented.
- Failure to put a summary in your own words, even if documented.
- Failure to be loyal to a source.

**Note:** Your acceptance of these conditions, as well as the policies outlined in this document, is implied by your continuance in the class. To maintain the integrity of everyone's grade, and ultimately, degree, all course policies are non-negotiable. Everything in this document, including the daily schedule, is subject to revision or modification due to unforeseen circumstances.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
T 1/15	Introduction to Feminist Critique	
T 1/22	The "Root"	
T 1/29	White Supremacy in Western Feminist Movements	
T 2/5	The Question of "Woman"	
T 2/12	Embodied Knowledges	
T 2/19	Reimagining Feminist Critical Methods	Short paper 1 due
T 2/26	Decolonial Feminist Critique	
T 3/5	No Class – Mardi Gras Holiday	
T 3/12	Strategic Whiteness & White Femininity	Raka Shome lecture 3/13
T 3/19	Feminisms & Settler Colonialism	Topic proposal (Final Essay) due
T 3/26	Reproductive Justice & Rhetorics of Choice	
T 4/2	Gendered Violence	Short paper 2 due
T 4/9	Humanness & Monstrosity	

T 4/16	No Class – Spring Break	
Su 4/21		Draft 1 (Final Essay) due
T 4/23	Coalitional Possibilities	
Su 4/28		Peer Reviews (Final Essay) due
Finals week		Final Essay Presentations
Su 5/5		Final Draft (Final Essay) due by 11:59pm

## COURSE READING SCHEDULE

### Unit 1: Introduction to Feminist Critique

*Tuesday, January 15, 2019*

- Calafell, [“The Future of Feminist Scholarship”](#)
- Griffin, [“Unassimilated Feminisms”](#)
- Chávez, [“Beyond Inclusion”](#)
- Bryson, [“Feminist Political Theory: An Introduction”](#)
- Kohrs-Campbell, [“Rhetoric of Women’s Liberation: An Oxymoron”](#)

### Unit 2: The “Root”

*Tuesday, January 22, 2019*

- Perry, *Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation*
- Pateman, Excerpt from [The Sexual Contract](#)
- Dworkin, [“Against the Male Flood: Censorship, Equality, and Pornography”](#)
- RadicalLesbians, [“The Woman Identified Woman”](#)
- Smith, [“Marxism and the Fight for Women's Liberation”](#)
- Gimenez, [“Marxist Feminism/Materialist Feminism”](#)
- Rubin, [“Thinking Sex”](#)

### Unit 3: White Supremacy in Western Feminist Movements

*Tuesday, January 29, 2019*

- hooks, *Aint I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*
- Davis, Excerpt from [Women, Race, & Class](#)
- Ortega, [“Being Lovingly, Knowingly Ignorant”](#)
- Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, p 1-52.
- Jonsson, [“White Feminist Stories”](#)
- Frye, [“On Being White”](#)
- Garcia-Rojas [“\(Un\)Disciplined futures”](#)



#### Unit 4: The Question of “Woman”

*Tuesday, February 5, 2019*

- Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, p. 52-166, 183-206.
- Lugones, [“Colonialidad y Género”](#) or [“The Coloniality of Gender”](#)
- Butler, [“‘Women’ as the Subject of Feminism”](#)
- Snyder, [“What is Third Wave Feminism”](#)
- Watson, [“The Woman Question”](#)
- Spivak, [“can the subaltern speak?”](#)
- Alcoff, [“The Problem of Speaking for Others”](#)

#### Unit 5: Embodied Knowledges

*Tuesday, February 12, 2019*

- Sandoval, [“US Third-World Feminism”](#)
- [The Combahee River Collective Statement](#)
- Harding, [“Standpoint Theory as a site of political, philosophical, and scientific debate”](#)
- Collins, [“Learning from the outsider within”](#)
- Flores, [“Creating Discursive Space through a Rhetoric of Difference”](#)
- Anzaldúa, excerpt from [Borderlands / La Frontera](#)

#### Unit 6: Reimagining Feminist Critical Methods

*Tuesday, February 19, 2019*

- Hegde, [Fragments and Interruptions: Sensory Regimes of Violence and the Limits of Feminist Ethnography](#)
- Davis, [“A Black Woman as Rhetorical Critic”](#)
- Calafell, [“Challenging the textual bias of rhetoric through theory of the flesh”](#)
- Calafell, [“Performance: Keeping Rhetoric Honest”](#)
- Griffin, [“I AM an angry black woman”](#)
- Sholock, [“Methodology of the Privileged”](#)
- Flores, [Reclaiming the “Other”](#)
- Green, [“Troubling the Waters”](#)

#### Unit 7: Decolonial Feminist Critique

*Tuesday, February 26, 2019*

- Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders*
- Lugones, [“Toward a Decolonial Feminism”](#)

#### Unit 8: Strategic Whiteness & White Femininity

*Tuesday, March 12, 2019*

- Shome, *Diana and Beyond*
- Shome, [“Global Motherhood”](#)
- Hegde, [“Global Makeovers and Maneuvers”](#)
- Martínez Guillem & Barnes, [“Am I a good \[white\] mother?”](#)
- Griffin, [“Problematic representations of strategic whiteness”](#)
- Ghabra, [“Through my own gaze”](#)

## Unit 9: Feminisms & Settler Colonialism

*Tuesday, March 19, 2019*

- Morgensen, *Spaces between Us*
- Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill, [“Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy”](#)
- Goeman and Denetdale, [“Native Feminisms”](#)
- Na’Puti and Rohrer, [“Pacific Moves Beyond Colonialism”](#)

## Unit 10: Reproductive Justice & Rhetorics of Choice

*Tuesday, March 26, 2019*

- de On’is, [“Lost in Translation”](#)
- Hernández & De Los Santos Upton, “Intersections of Culture, Gender, Religion, and Politics: Problematizing the Notion of Choice in Reproductive Femicides in Latin America”
- Hayden, [“Toward a collective rhetoric rooted in choice”](#)
- Hoerl & Kelly, [“The Post-Nuclear Family”](#)
- Kelsey Kearl, [“The Stolen Property of Whiteness”](#)
- Mack, [“The Self-Made Mom”](#)

## Unit 11: Gendered Violence

*Tuesday, April 2, 2019*

- Griffin, [“Gender violence and the Black female body”](#)
- Phillips & Griffin, [“Crystal Mangum as Hypervisible Object and Invisible Subject”](#)
- Hill, [“SlutWalk as perifeminist response to rape logic”](#)
- Mack & McCann, [“Critiquing State & Gendered Violence in the Age of #MeToo”](#)
- Harris & Hanchey, [“\(De\)stabilizing Sexual Violence Discourse”](#)
- Larson, [“Everything inside me was silenced”](#)
- Hahner & Varda, [“It Follows and Rape Culture”](#)

## Unit 12: Humanness & Monstrosity

*Tuesday, April 9, 2019*

- Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*

- Calafell, [“Monstrous Femininity”](#)
- Abdi & Calafell, [“Queer utopias and a \(Feminist\) Iranian vampire”](#)
- Griffin, [“Pushing into Precious”](#)

### Unit 13: Coalitional Possibilities

*Tuesday, April 23, 2019*

- Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, p. 207-236
- Ghabra & Calafell, [“From failure and allyship to feminist solidarities”](#)
- Valdivia, [“Amnesia and the Myth of Discovery”](#)
- Spalding, [“Airport Outings: The Coalitional Possibilities of Affective Rupture”](#)
- Chávez, [“Doing Intersectionality”](#)
- Tuck, Smith, Guess, Benjamin, Jones, [“Geotheorizing Black/Land”](#)