

Course Proposal for WGS/SL 3100: Feminist Theory and Praxis

Rationale:

As the academic arm of the feminist movement, women's studies sees teaching, scholarship, and activism as part of an inseparable whole. With this in mind, this course will examine feminist theory and praxis through the lens of service learning. In partnering with community programs that empower and address the needs of women, students will have the opportunity to enhance their understanding of course concepts as they put feminist thought into action. The weekly readings and classroom meetings will engage students in a critical examination of several influential and emerging works of feminist theory. The theories and methodologies discussed in class will then be practiced, tested, and analyzed through the work that students will be doing with their community partner.

This course will be an elective for students minoring in Women's and Gender Studies and will also add to the diversity of disciplines participating in the Service Learning Program at HPU. This course is unique in the sense that it will be the only course in Women's and Gender Studies that explicitly explores the relationship between feminist theory and praxis. While most universities with a program in Women's and Gender Studies offer a course on feminist theory, WGS/SL 3100 is distinctive in its use of service learning pedagogy to enhance the understanding of theory.

While this course will be added to the catalog of options for students minoring in Women's and Gender Studies, it will not alter the current requirements for the minor nor will it require any additional expenditure.

SL/WGS 3100:
Feminist Theory and Praxis
Spring Semester 2014
T/Th 3:15 – 4:45



Professor:

Dr. Jenn Brandt
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Office Hours:

M/W/F 1:00 – 2:30 PM
Tues./Thurs. 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM
And by appointment.

Course Description:

As the academic arm of the feminist movement, women's studies sees teaching, scholarship, and activism as part of an inseparable whole. With this in mind, this course will examine feminist theory and praxis through the lens of service learning. In partnering with community programs that empower and address the needs of women, students will have the opportunity to enhance their understanding of course concepts as they put feminist thought into action. The weekly readings and classroom meetings will engage students in a critical examination of several influential and emerging works of feminist theory. The theories and methodologies discussed in class will then be practiced, tested, and analyzed through the work that students will be doing with their community partner.

All students in the course are required to spend twenty-five hours over the course of the semester in service to the organization with which they are paired. Before beginning service hours, students will be introduced to representatives of the organizations, receive an orientation to service learning as a pedagogy, agree to the Service Learning Code of Professional and Ethical Behavior, and sign a Partnership Agreement. You must begin your service learning experience by January 21st, as it is necessary for your first reflection.

Service learning is not an internship or simply volunteering—it is a pedagogical model that deepens students' understanding of the course material by exposing them first-hand to the ethical issues discussed in class. Students will perform service work that aids women and the local community, and that service work will advance thinking about feminism, ethics, and education.

Course Goals:

After successful completion of the course, students will have developed the following skills:

- *Knowledge: Women's and Gender Studies, Feminist Theory and Service Learning*
 - Students will understand the history of feminist thought and divergent theories of feminism.
 - Students will understand key ethical issues that drive feminist thought and how these issues have been addressed over time.
 - Students will learn some of the many ways feminist theory invites us to understand gender, human behavior, political institutions, and oppression in a new light, as well as the role of these factors in our own lives.

- Students will embrace and perpetuate the feminist commitment to ground theory in real experience, through an examination and practice of how feminist theory and methodology do—and must—intersect.
- Students will understand the importance of service learning to the discipline of women’s and gender studies.
- *Intellectual and Analytical Skills: Articulation and Demonstration of Theory Across Formats*
 - Students will gain competence in analytical reading and writing through the study of and response to complex texts.
 - Students will inform written, personal reflection with theoretical understandings of differential access to power based on gender, class, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.
 - Students will demonstrate relevant use of theory to examine concrete issues that mobilize concepts of sex, gender, race, and nation.
 - Students will demonstrate the ways in which theory impacts the kinds of questions we might ask in social research.
 - Students will question the assumptions made by feminist theories and how these assumptions might affect what we think we know about the social world, *how* we know it, and what we think we are doing when we set out to study it.
- *Integrative and Applied Learning: Societal Institutions and Power Structures in the Community and Women’s Lives*
 - Students will understand feminist praxis through the application of theory and work with community partners.
 - Students will apply their theoretical understanding of feminism to practical and concrete situations that affect women’s daily lives.
 - Students will develop the civic skills necessary to mobilize theory in order to identify, aid, and be an active reformer in community organizations that promote gender equality.
 - Students will learn to identify societal institutions and power structures that occur within patriarchal cultures, and how the interlocking systems of gender, race, and class impact the material realities of men’s and women’s lives differently.
 - Students will understand how articulating theory can help shape policy and change.
 - Students will determine the “moves” theory enables us to make in our study of social phenomena.
- *Diversity: Feminist Theory as Global Phenomena*
 - Students will look at how feminist theory and methodology have local, national, and global applications and consequences.
 - Students will explore emerging global and transnational feminist theories.
 - Students will address the ethical implications of feminism in relation to working with diverse cultures and populations.
 - Students will learn to appreciate how feminists over the ages have articulated concerns about the deep and not so deep ways patriarchal culture has limited the human race by excluding women and the “other” from productive spheres of life.
- *Personal and Social Responsibility: Improving Lives Through Service Learning*
 - Students will identify and evaluate feminist organizations and their effectiveness in producing change.

- Students will interrogate the notion of service learning as a form of academic activism.
- Students will empower themselves and others through leadership, social action, and citizenship.

Required Texts:

- hooks, bell. *Feminism is for Everyone*
- Kolmar, Wendy and Frances Bartkowski. *Feminist Theory: A Reader* (3rd Edition) (FT)
- Additional readings as noted on the class schedule are required and are posted on Blackboard.
- The readings will be discussed on the dates listed on the syllabus and, therefore, should be read before class.

Grading and Assignments:

Participation and In-Class Writing	15%
Service Learning Reflections	15%
Midterm Exam	15%
Theory Application Paper	20%
Final Paper and Presentations	20%
Final Exam	15%

Final grades will be given on an A-F scale as described below:

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	94 – 100
A-	90 – 93
B+	87 – 89
B	84 – 86
B-	80 – 83
C+	77 – 79
C	74 – 76
C-	70 – 73
D	60 – 69
F	0 – 59

Attendance Policy

Attendance is vital in a class such as this; one missed day affects class discussion, your comprehension of the material, and the effectiveness of the course as a whole. Although I *will* take attendance at the beginning of each class, it is not enough to just “show up.” Students will be expected to have read the required reading before class and be prepared to participate meaningfully in each class discussion. Serious lack of attendance (more than four absences) will result in a Probation Notice Form. After five absences you will be required to meet with me to discuss whether or not it is advisable for you to continue in the course. Assignments are due on the dates provided regardless of whether or not you physically attend class, and students are responsible for obtaining any and all information, lecture material, notes and assignments during their absence.

Participation and In-Class Writing (15%)

Students will be expected to have read the required reading(s) before class and be prepared to participate meaningfully in each class discussion. We will start each class with a 15-minute

writing assignment that relates to the assigned reading for the day. These prompts will then be used to start class discussion. I encourage students to feel free and open to discuss a wide range of topics. That being said, please remember to be mindful and respectful of the opinions of your fellow classmates. As part of this respect I expect each of you to show, please turn off all electronic devices upon entering class. Any interruptions, such as a ringing cell phone, will be considered a breach of this contract, and will reflect negatively in your participation grade.

Service Learning Reflections (15%)

Throughout the semester you are required to keep a journal on Blackboard where you reflect on your experiences with your community partner. Each week, please respond to the following writing prompts. You should use these prompts to guide your response in a reflective **essay**. Do not just go down the list answering the questions below. To that end, you can feel free to rearrange the order of required information if needed, but in order for you to receive full credit, each component should be included:

1. Observation
 - a. Describe something significant that occurred during your visit to the site.
 - i. In this section of your response, be as detailed as possible so that those of us who were not there can visualize the experience.
 1. For example, describe what occurred. Situate your reader in the room. Describe the setting, the individuals involved, the time of day, the mood, etc.
 2. Discuss sights, sounds, and smells if they will help evoke the scene.
 3. Provide dialogue if it is important.
2. Reflection
 - a. Explain why you consider this moment significant.
 - b. Reflect on the experience. Explain how to “read” and understand what occurred.
 - c. Did something bother you? Surprise you? Delight you? Why?
 - d. Is there an issue you need to resolve?
 - e. What can you learn from the experience?
3. Connection
 - a. Put this experience in the context of the course.
 - i. Use the course readings, for example, to shed some insight on the experience.
 - ii. Use class discussions to frame the experience.
 - b. Make connections between the course content and your service-learning experiences.
 - c. We will be spending a significant portion of the course discussing the intersections of race, class, and gender. What do your observations of the service-learning site teach us about the complexities of these components of our identity?

Midterm Exam (15%)

The midterm exam will cover the material and readings from the first half of the semester. Questions will include multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, definitions, and essays.

Theory Application Paper (20%)

Each student will be required to write a 5 – 7 page paper in which s/he describes an *application* of one or more particular theoretical texts to a topic or issue that is apparently unrelated to the topics taken up by the text(s). This assignment will likely be most useful to you if you can apply a given theoretical text(s) to a topic of particular interest to you (e.g. your academic major and/or desired career path). The goal of your paper should not be to summarize or to merely illustrate your grasp of the chosen theory, but to extend your understanding of that theory by demonstrating how it affects your consideration of a seemingly unrelated topic.

Your paper should be appropriately documented in the MLA or APA style (please choose one and be consistent). All quotations, statistics, and researched information requires an in-text citation and each paper should ALWAYS have a works cited list that is consistent to the style used throughout the paper.

Research Paper and Presentation (20%)

For this final paper, you must apply your knowledge of feminist theory to your Service Learning experiences. The paper should be 10 – 12 pages in length and must include the following:

1. Introduction:
 - a. What was your service-learning project, and what did you do with that particular project?
2. Feminist Theory:
 - a. In what ways did you use your knowledge of feminist theory to do your Service Learning?
 - b. How was the work you did related to specific concepts discussed in the course?
3. Connections:
 - a. Based on the assigned readings and class discussions, what clear connections can you draw between themes from the course and the service you did?
 - b. Consider the topics discussed in this class, as well as the readings: how did feminism relate to the work you did with your community partner?
4. Women's and Studies and Social Change:
 - a. How does your particular Service Learning work relate to the larger goals of social change related to feminism and Women's and Gender Studies?
5. Feminist Critique:
 - a. Through the lens of feminism, how would you constructively critique the structure and organization of the community partnership with which you worked?
 - b. What are its strengths and what are some suggestions for positive growth/change?

In addition to final papers, each group will present on their work to an open audience to include our community partners, the Service Learning Program, and the Women's and Gender Studies Program.

Presentation Guidelines:

1. Presentations should be 15 - 20 minutes. (We will allow 5 minutes for questions after each presentation.)
 - a. Each group should rehearse their presentation with a timer to be sure you are not too short or long.

- b. These are professional presentations to a public audience and, therefore, your content, presentation style, dress, etc, should reflect this.
2. Presentations should be organized as follows:
- a. Introduction (3-5 minutes):
 - i. Students should introduce themselves by name and academic major(s) and minor(s).
 - ii. Briefly describe your worksite giving appropriate background and explaining the need at your site (relative to individuals and/or the community).
 - b. Body (10-14 minutes):
 - i. Give an overview of your work site including initial service and project plans
 - ii. Describe a “typical” day at your site
 - iii. If applicable, please explain how your group adapted and/or expanded upon the original plans.
 - iv. Describe any unforeseen circumstances and/or problems you may have encountered and discuss how you solved them
 - v. Address how your group worked together and the skills that you developed
 - vi. Explain how the classroom work and course material prepared you for your service
 - vii. Evaluate your accomplishments individually and as a group
 - c. Conclusion (3-5 minutes):
 - i. Your group should address how the service work you did affected your group and how your work affected others
 - ii. Address how the work you did and how your experience in the community helped you to understand what you learned in class

Presentations should include visuals: photos, video, scrapbook, poster, PPT, etc., but these should not overtake your presentations. Visuals should illustrate and compliment the things you are telling the audience; they should not become the total focus of the presentation.

Final Exam (15%)

The final exam will follow the same basic format as the midterm. Although it will focus heavily on materials covered during the second half of the semester, it is a cumulative exam in the sense that it will build on knowledge from the first half of the course.

****NOTE:** Assignments are due at the beginning of each class. Late assignments will be accepted, but are subject to a late penalty of 10% per day, including Saturdays and Sundays.

Service Learning Code of Professional and Ethical Behavior

All students in the course will be required to abide by the policies set forth by the HPU Service Learning Program in its Service Learning Code of Professional and Ethical Behavior and Partnership Agreement. Failure to abide by these policies will be treated as a breach of the University’s Honor Code and you may be referred to the Honor Council for punishment. You are

expected to take the initiative to complete your required service hours and you are responsible for the penalties to your grade if you do not complete the hours.

Accommodation for Disabilities

Any students with documented disabilities should speak with the professor to arrange any necessary accommodations to help insure their optimal performance in the class. Students who require classroom accommodations due to a diagnosed disability must submit the appropriate documentation to Disability Support in the Office of Academic Development, 4th Floor Smith Library. Requests for accommodations should be made at the beginning of a course and are not retroactive. Contact Rita Sullivant, Coordinator of Disability Support, rsulliva@highpoint.edu, 336-841-9061 for additional information.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center, with locations on the first floor of Smith Library and in the University Center Learning Commons, provides writing assistance for students at any level of study—from freshman to graduate—with any stage in the writing process, from invention through revision. The Center's staff of student writing consultants will be available for appointments Monday through Thursday from 5 to 10 p.m., beginning Tuesday, August 28th. Appointments may be made by emailing writingcenter@highpoint.edu and listing three times when you are available to meet during the Center's regular hours. Alternatively, students may request appointments outside these hours to review their writing with consultants online or at an authorized campus location, and the Center will provide a list of times when individual consultants are available. Writing consultants do not proofread or edit students' papers for them, but they do work with students to help them develop strategies for improving their writing in light of their respective assignments, instructors, and writing styles. For more information, visit the Writing Center itself, or contact the Center's Faculty Coordinator, Dr. Joe Goeke, at jgoeke0@highpoint.edu or (336) 841-9633.

Academic Integrity

HPU has strict policies against cheating and plagiarism. Students are expected to hand in their own, original work for all assignments in this class. Any breaches in academic honesty will be treated seriously. I reserve the right to fail a student for ANY (this includes rough drafts) assignment that is not properly cited, is the work of another student, or violates any form of academic integrity. For a full listing of the University's policies and procedures regarding this, please refer to the Honor Code (<http://www.highpoint.edu/campuslife/sga/index.cfm?DeptCategory=19&PageID=1705>).

SACS Accreditation:

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools requires that you work two hours outside of class for every one hour inside of class. This class meets for 90 minutes twice a week for a total of 180 minutes, so expect for your outside workload to be about 360 minutes per week. The service learning portion of this course accounts for 48 hours through direct service work (25 hours) and time spent on service learning specific assignments (the reflections and final presentation = 23 hours). The daily/weekly work coupled with the long-term projects fulfills accreditation requirements.

Class Schedule

Week One

T Jan. 7: *Introductions*

Th Jan. 9: *Introductions, cont.*

- Read: Donna M. Bickford and Nedra Reynolds “Activism and Service-Learning: Reframing Volunteerism as Acts of Dissent” (Blackboard)
- Representatives from our partnering agencies will be in class.
- Students will select the organization they will work with during the semester.

Week Two

T Jan. 14: *What is Feminism? What is Theory?*

- Read: *FT* readings 1 – 6

Th Jan. 16: *What is Feminism? What is Theory?, cont.*

- Read: hooks, “Come Closer to Feminism” and “Feminist Politics”

Week Three

T Jan. 21: *Lexicon of the Debates*

- Read: *FT* “Introduction” – “Essentialism/Social Construction/Difference”

Th Jan. 23: *Lexicon of the Debates, cont.*

- Read: *FT* “Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender” – “‘Third World’/Global/Transnational Feminism”
- **DUE: Service Learning Reflection #1**

Week Four

T Jan. 28: *First Wave Feminism*

- Read: *FT* readings 7 – 13

Th Jan. 30: *First Wave Feminism, cont.*

- Read: *FT* readings 16, 17, 18, 21, 22
- **DUE: Service Learning Reflection #2**

Week Five

T Feb. 4: *First Wave Feminism, cont.*

- Read: *FT* readings 20, 23, 24

Th Feb. 6: *First Wave Feminism, cont.*

- Read: *FT* readings 25 – 28
- **DUE: Service Learning Reflection #3**

Week Six

T Feb. 11: *Pre-Second Wave*

- Read: *FT* readings 29, 31, 33, 34

Th Feb. 13: *The Second Sex*

- Read: *FT* reading 35
- **DUE: Service Learning Reflection #4**

Week Seven

T Feb. 18: *Second Wave Feminism*

- Read: *FT* readings 36, 37, 38, 46, 56

Th Feb. 20: *Second Wave Feminism, cont.*

- Read: *FT* readings 39, 40, 41, 43, 45, 48
- **DUE: Service Learning Reflection #5**

Week Eight

T Feb. 25: *Second Wave Feminism, cont.*

- Read: *FT* readings 42, 44, 47, 50

Th Feb. 27: **Midterm Exam**

Week Nine: Spring Break; CLASSES CANCELLED

Week Ten

T Mar. 11: *French Feminist Thought*

- *FT* readings 49 and 55

Th Mar. 13: *Feminisms*

- *FT* reading 52, 54, 59, 63, 64, 71, 79
- **DUE: Service Learning Reflection #6**

Week Eleven

T Mar. 18: *Feminist Sexual Politics*

- Read: *FT* 60, 61, 65, 67

Th Mar. 20: *Third Wave Feminism*

- Read: *FT* 60, 66
- **DUE: Theory Application Papers**

Week Twelve

T Mar. 25: *Third Wave Feminism, cont.*

- Read: *FT* 68, 78, 80, 84

Th Mar. 27: *Post-structuralism and Feminism*

- Read: *FT* 72 – 74
- **DUE: Service Learning Reflection #7**

Week Thirteen

T Apr. 1: *Intersectionality*

- Read: *FT* 81, 82, 89, 97

Th Apr. 3: *Global Feminism*

- Read: *FT* 85, 86, 90, 96
- **Due: Service Learning Reflection #8**

Week Fourteen

T Apr. 8: *Contemporary Feminist Thought*

- Read: *FT* 92, 94, 96, 99

Th Apr. 10: *Contemporary Feminist Thought*, cont.

- Read: hooks, bell. *Feminism is For Everyone*
- **Due: Service Learning Reflection #9**
 - **For this reflection, students are to read over all their previous reflections and in-class writing assignments and write a reflection on the changes they see in themselves over the course of the semester.**

Week Fifteen

T Apr. 15:

- Read: hooks, bell. *Feminism is For Everyone*

Th Apr. 17:

- Read: hooks, bell. *Feminism is For Everyone*

Week Sixteen

Final Exam – TBA