Women’s Studies 330: Women of Color in the U.S.

Fall 2009
TR 12:00-1:50
328 Cramer Hall

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Course Description:

This course examines the theoretical perspectives of women of color in the U.S. Emphasizing that women of color are complex subjects whose actions are constrained but not determined by intersecting structures of gender, sexuality, race, nation and global capitalism, this course draws on critical theory, history, legal analysis, ethnography, film, fiction, and poetry to illustrate the multifaceted dimensions of women of color’s lives. We will begin by interrogating the ways that white privilege has shaped women’s studies and analyzing the impacts that this phenomenon has had on women of color. Next, we will trace the historical and political emergence of the category, women of color, and explore what it means to call oneself a woman of color. Then, we will look at some of the key cultural, political, and economic issues facing women of color in the U.S. today including globalization, colonialism, war, and various forms of state violence. Finally, we will analyze contemporary possibilities for coalition building around the category, women of color.

Course Objectives:

• To develop an understanding of the category, women of color, as a political identity.
• To analyze the processes by which race, gender, sexuality, and class are socially constructed in relation to each other and to recognize the ways in which these inseparable categories of difference structure women of color’s lives.
• To examine issues such as cultural representation, globalization, colonialism, war, sexual violence, reproductive freedom, immigration control, and police violence from the perspectives of women of color.
• To center the experiences of women of color within feminist analysis and practice.

Required Reading:

The following books are required reading for the course:

1. Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*
2. Sarah Husain, *Voices of Resistance: Muslim Women on War, Faith and Sexuality*

These books are available for purchase at the PSU bookstore. In addition to the required books, articles will be made available to you electronically through Blackboard. To access these readings, go to psuonline.pdx.edu, and log in with your ODIN username and password. Please print out the articles so that you can more effectively take notes and so that you can have them to refer to during class discussions. Please do not use your laptops in class. These articles are required reading for the course. Therefore, it is important that you plan ahead to have regular internet access.

**Course Requirements:**

1. *Attendance and Participation (10%)*: Students are expected to attend all class meetings, be on time, finish all reading assignments prior to class, and be engaged in class discussions. Participation includes both speaking and listening. Therefore, students should come to class prepared to both express their own thoughts and questions on course material and to listen and learn from their classmates. Class discussions are an essential component of this course, and the success of the course depends upon your participation. You are allowed to miss two classes without it affecting your grade. For each class you miss after the two excused absences, your attendance grade will be reduced by the equivalent of one full letter grade. If you miss more than six classes, you will automatically fail the course. Exceptions to this policy may be made in cases of illness. However, it is your responsibility to contact me and make arrangements to make up missed work in a timely manner. Pop quizzes, in-class writing, and informal homework assignments will also be included as part of your attendance and participation grade.

2. *Weekly Online Discussion Posts (10%)*: You are required to post to the online discussion board once a week beginning the second week of class. We will divide the class into three groups as follows:
   - Group A- Students whose last names begin with the letters A-G
   - Group B- Students whose last names begin with the letters H-R
   - Group C- Students whose last names begin with the letters S-Z

   Each week individuals in one group will be responsible for posting two discussion questions about the week’s readings by Wednesday at midnight. These questions will form the basis of part of our discussion in Thursday’s class. Individuals in the other two groups are required to post a response to one or more of the questions by midnight the following Monday. These responses must be at least 250 words long and include at least one specific reference to class texts. The dates on which discussion posts are due are listed in the course schedule. Discussion posts will not be accepted late.

3. *Autobiography Project (20%)*: You are required to write a book review of an autobiography or memoir written by a woman of color. Your review should make
connections between the autobiography you choose and themes discussed in this course. The autobiography project is due on Tuesday, November 24. You will receive more specific details about the project later in the term.

4. *Take-Home Midterm Exam (25%):* Questions for the take-home midterm will be distributed on Tuesday, November 3. The midterm is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, November 5.

5. *Take-Home Final Exam (35%):* Questions for the take-home final will be distributed on Thursday, December 3. The final is due on Tuesday, December 8.

You are responsible for meeting the above deadlines, for information given in class about assignments and changes to the syllabus, and above all, for contacting me about any problems that you may encounter. The material covered in this course can be quite challenging. Therefore, if you have questions or are struggling with the material in any way, it is essential that you come talk to me as soon as possible. Additionally, if there are personal issues that make it difficult or impossible for you to complete assignments or come to class, it is your responsibility to let me know in a timely manner so that we can work together to make sure that you successfully complete the course.

**Class Schedule and Reading List**

Note: Essays in *The Color of Violence* Anthology are marked (COV). All other essays are available online through the class Blackboard page.

**I. Decentering Whiteness in Women’s Studies**

9/29: Introduction

10/1: Naming Whiteness
Readings: Peggy MacIntosh, “White Privilege”
         Patti Duncan, “Decentering Whiteness”
         María Lugones, “Hablando Cara a Cara/ Speaking Face to Face”

10/6: Racism and the Production of Knowledge
Readings: Audre Lorde, “Poetry is Not a Luxury,” “The Master’s Tools,” “An Open Letter to Mary Daly”
         Elsa Barkley Brown, “What Has Happened Here”

**II. Women of Color: Defining the Category and Key Concepts**

10/8: Historical Perspectives
Readings: Selections from *This Bridge Called My Back:*
         Cherrie Moraga, “Refugees of a World on Fire”
         Cherrie Moraga, “Preface”
         Donna Kate Rushin, “The Bridge Poem”
Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, “Introduction”
The Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement”

*Discussion posts on these readings:
Group A- post questions by 10/7
Groups B&C- post responses by 10/12

10/13: Theory in the Flesh
Readings: Selections from *This Bridge Called My Back*:
   Nelly Wong, “When I Was Growing Up”
   Cherrie Moraga, “La Guera”
   Barbara Cameron, “‘Gee, You Don’t Seem Like An Indian From the Reservation”
   Mirtha Quintanales, “I Paid Very Hard for My Immigrant Ignorance”

10/15: Borderlands
Readings: Gloria Anzaldúa, “The Homeland, Atzlán/El otro Mexico” and “La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness” from *Borderlands/La Frontera*
*Discussion posts on these readings:
Group A- post questions by 10/14
Groups B&C- post responses by 10/19

10/20: Representations and Controlling Images
Readings: Patricia Hill Collins, “Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images”
   Tricia Rose, “Two Inches or a Yard”

10/22: Redefining Culture
Readings: Leti Volpp, “Blaming Culture for Bad Behavior”
   Purvi Shah, “Redefining Home”
*Discussion posts on these readings:
Group B- post questions by 10/21
Groups A&C- post responses by 10/26

III. Contemporary Issues and Activism

10/27: Sexual Violence
Readings: Aishah Simmons, “The War Against Black Women, and the Making of NO!” (COV, pp. 170-8)
   Andrea Smith, *Conquest*, pp. 1-79.

10/29: Reproductive Freedom
Readings: Andrea Smith, *Conquest*, pp. 79-118.
   Dorothy Roberts, “Feminism, Race and Adoption Policy” (COV, pp. 42-52)
   Loretta Ross, “The Color of Choice: White Supremacy and Reproductive Justice” (COV, pp. 53-65)
*Discussion posts on these readings:
Group B- post questions by 10/28
Groups A&C- post responses by 11/2

11/3: Resisting Colonial Gender Violence
Haunani-Kay Trask, “The Color of Violence” (COV, pp. 81-7)

11/5: Midterm Due – No Class

11/10: Women of Color in the Global Economy
Miriam Ching-Yoon Louie, “La Mujer Luchando, El Mundo Transformando: Mexican Immigrant Women Workers”

11/12: Gender and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment
Readings: Syd Lindsley, “The Gendered Assault on Immigrants”
Sylvanna Falcón, “National Security and the Violation of Women” (COV, pp. 119-129)
Renee Saucedo, “INS Raids and How Immigrant Women are Fighting Back” (COV, pp.135-7)
*Discussion posts on these readings:
  Group C- post questions by 11/11
  Groups A&B- post responses by 11/16

11/17: Policing Women of Color
Patricia Allard, “Crime, Punishment, and Economic Violence” (COV, pp. 157-163)
Stormy Ogden, Pomo Woman, Ex-Prisoner, Speaks Out (COV, pp. 164-169)
Critical Resistance and Incite!, “Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex” (COV, pp. 223-226)

11/19: Women of Color and the War on Terrorism
S.R., “Don’t Liberate Me” (COV, p. 118)
Sarah Husain, ed., *Voices of Resistance*, Introduction
*Discussion posts on these readings:
  Group C- post questions by 11/18
  Groups A&B- post responses by 11/23

11/24: War on Terrorism (continued)
Readings: Sarah Husain, ed., *Voices of Resistance*, Part I and II.
*Autobiography Project Due
12/1: Unclaiming the Nation/Re-claiming Our Bodies and Sexualities
Readings: Sarah Husain, ed., *Voices of Resistance*, Part III and IV.

12/3: Building Coalitions
   Readings: Andrea Smith, “Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy” (COV, pp. 66-73)
   Sista II Sista, “Sistas Makin’ Moves” (COV, pp. 196-207)
   Bernice Johnson Reagon, “Coalition Politics”

*Final Exam Questions Distributed*

12/8: Final Exam Due