

WS 223 Women: Self and Society**Winter 2008**

Professor Janet Lee

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Course Description

Welcome to WS 223! This course focuses on the lives and unequal status of women in contemporary U.S. society. We will examine what it means to be female today, and explore the images and messages we receive from our culture – specifically around the issues of gender, race, class and other differences. Attention will be on understanding our everyday lives in such a way that we can critically understand ourselves in relation to others and social institutions. It is hoped that you will learn new information about women in society that will help raise your consciousness of the realities, choices, and strategies for change. In addition, I hope you will gain skill and confidence in writing and speaking.

Course Objectives

As a result of taking this class it is hoped that students will be able to:

- Evaluate the status of women in the US
- Acquire skills to help improve the status of women in US society
- Articulate issues associated with the social construction of gender and the intersection of systems of oppression on women's lives in the US
- Articulate how institutions in society affect individual lives
- Think critically about the role of patterns of privilege and discrimination in their own lives
- Develop elements of critical thinking, i.e. identify main arguments and assumptions of texts and be able to evaluate them in the context of concepts learned in the course
- Improve writing and speaking skills

This course provides credit for the Difference, Power and Discrimination (DPD) and Synthesis: Social Processes and Institutions categories of OSU's baccalaureate core. The DPD requirement "engages students in the intellectual examination of the complexity of the structures, systems, and ideologies that sustain discrimination and the unequal distribution of power and resources in society. Such examination will enhance meaningful democratic participation in our diverse university community and our increasingly multicultural society." The Social Processes and Institutions aspect of the Synthesis requirement "ascertains human beings are inevitably social – influencing and being influenced by social groups. The social sciences study social institutions and processes and deal with the human behaviors and values that form and change them, and are essential for an understanding of contemporary society."

Please note that course announcements, syllabus, homework, study guides, overheads, etc. can be located through the web on the OSU Blackboard system. Access it through <http://my.oregonstate.edu>

Required Readings

Shaw, Susan M. and Lee, Janet. *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (NY: McGraw Hill, 2006 [3rd Edition]), on sale at the bookstore. There are also two copies of the book on 2-hour reserve in Valley Library and at least one copy at the Women's Center (Benton annex, grey house by the clock

tower, near library). Be sure to get the third edition. **Please bring your textbook to class since we will refer to it in lecture and discussion and work on some of the listed learning activities.**

Course Expectations

Classroom Behaviour: The goal of OSU is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and wisdom they need to contribute to society. OSU has community rules and expectations that are formulated to guarantee each student's freedom to learn and to protect the fundamental rights of others. We must treat each other with dignity and respect in order for teaching, learning, and scholarship to thrive. Behaviors that create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating environment based upon gender, race, ethnicity, color, religion, age, disability, socio-economic status, marital status, or sexual orientation will be referred to the Office of Affirmative Action. It is expected that all the work turned in for evaluation be your individual work unless you are given instructions for joint projects, and that you understand how to cite and reference others' work (from journals, books, and web sites) in order to avoid plagiarism. Anyone who cheats on exams or assignments will be immediately referred to the OSU Student Conduct Program for disciplinary action and will receive an automatic F for this class.

Academic dishonesty:

- (a) Academic dishonesty is defined as an intentional act of deception in which a student seeks to claim credit for the work or effort of another person or uses unauthorized information in any academic work;
- (b) Academic dishonesty includes "cheating" (intentional use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information, or study aid); fabrication (intentional falsification or invention of any information); "assisting in dishonesty" (intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty); "tampering" (altering or interfering with evaluation instruments or documents); and "plagiarism" (intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another person as one's own);
- (c) Academic dishonesty cases are handled initially by the academic units, but will also be referred to the Student Conduct Coordinator for action under these rules.

Please remember that you are under no obligation to agree with the authors of the readings or with us as your instructors. Your obligation is to engage with the material of the course and be able to demonstrate your understanding. Whether you like or agree with this (often controversial!) material will not affect your grade in this class; the extent of your understanding and integration of class material will. You are asked to agree on a commitment to encounter and engage course readings, course goals, and each other with openness, careful and attentive listening, honesty, and mutual respect.

Please **do not use laptops in this class**. It is unfortunate that they have been found to be distracting and on balance appear to distract from student learning. Listen and write notes by hand. No cell phones or text messaging also, please. Turn your phone to silent and do not answer it during class.

Accommodations: Students with documented disabilities who need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information that the instructor should be aware of, or who need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible, and no later than the first week of the term, in order to ensure positive learning outcomes.

OSU diversity/discrimination statement: "OSU is dedicated to establishing a learning environment that promotes diversity of the student's race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and physical disability. Anyone noticing discriminatory behavior in this class, or if you feel discriminated against, please bring it to the instructor's attention." **This class fulfills the Difference, Power, and Discrimination (DPD) requirement of the baccalaureate core and intentionally educates about power and inequality in its fulfillment of this requirement. It also fulfills the "Social Processes and Institutions" category of the Perspectives requirement of the baccalaureate core in its focus on the social organization of contemporary US society.**

Participation: In the feminist classroom we understand knowledge as a product constructed by the knowers of knowledge. This means that your participation and input into our collective knowledge-making is valuable. As a student in a feminist classroom, you are responsible to your classmates and yourself for the success of our joint teaching and learning. As a result, your attendance and participation in this class is expected. You demonstrate your commitment by arriving on time ready to engage with the theme of the day and to discuss course readings, listening actively, contributing to discussion, and engaging enthusiastically in learning activities. **In-class participation is expected and activities make up 5% of your final grade.** Students who do not attend class tend to do poorly in this course since they miss knowledge associated with lectures, discussion, guest speakers and videos tested on exams.

Course Requirements

*** News reports (5 points or 5% of your grade)**

First, each student will prepare a short presentation of a news item and share it with a small group on the assigned day. Some students will be chosen at random to summarize the report with the whole class. Choose a news item from the newspaper, internet, news magazine, or from a TV or radio news show. Do not choose something from a fashion or women's/men's magazine. Note that it is not necessary that the issue be about women, but you do need to be able to discuss the news items using a gender lens. How does this event/item affect women and/or other oppressed groups? What concepts from class themes and readings does this news item illustrate? Be prepared to talk with your small group for about 5 minutes, and share briefly with the large group if called upon.

Second, either: write an analysis of the news article you presented in class. This involves a brief description of the news item with reference information (name of source, date, time, etc.) and an analysis that applies readings and concepts learned in class to this issue. In addition, **please include an overview of your small group discussion with discussion of comments and questions raised and addressed.** This is due **within one week after you present in class** (approx. 2 typed pages, double-spaced, 12 point font, one-inch margins), **submitted as a file attachment through blackboard.** Please note that the bulk of this short paper is your analysis (not description) of the news article.

Or: create an **artistic response** to the news article and the discussion your presentation prompts. The art piece can be poetry, short story, sculpture, photography, painting, drawing, dance, monologue, performance piece, song, or music you create. **Write an artist statement describing the piece.** This involves discussing why you chose this particular medium, what the images represent, and how the process of gender analysis through an artistic medium will affect future art you create. For inspiration, think about how a visual artist discusses her/his work in a museum/gallery write-up, how a director writes notes for a performance program, or how an author writes the preface to a story. Approximate length: about a page, single-spaced, 12 point font. Turn in the art response in class or through blackboard, as appropriate. Turn in the artist statement through blackboard as a file attachment. Your art and the statement **is due 2 weeks after you present the news report in class.** If your artistic response involves performance, please contact one of us to make arrangements.

*** Homework assignments (each worth 2 points [2%] for a total of 20 points or 20% of your grade)**

Homework questions requiring application of class themes and readings will be available on blackboard under "assignments" (then click on "homework") every Monday morning, and **are due (unless otherwise specified) on the following Thursday, by 2pm.** To complete homework, click on the appropriate week and follow assignment guidelines, writing in the box provided (do not attach a file). Unless instructions indicate otherwise, responses to each question require approximately 300-500 words (equivalent to about a page double-spaced). **The key to getting full credit for homework is to apply course themes and readings in answering the question(s).** When you are finished and have proofed your homework carefully, use the "submit" button to send

it to gradebook for evaluation. If you click “save,” it will be available to you for modification, but will appear “locked” and we will not be able to open it. Be sure to click “submit” to send homework for evaluation. Do not send homework to us in an email. Please note that the blackboard site will close at due date and you will not be able to view or complete the assignment after this time. **No late assignments are accepted** except in emergency situations. **It is your responsibility to check blackboard for your homework assignment every week and to make sure your assignments have been submitted properly.** If we do not receive an assignment, or it is locked and unable to be evaluated, we will assume you have decided not to complete the homework assignment that week. Your homework responses are central in encouraging engaging class dialogue and will help you study for the quizzes. There will be one homework assignment per week with a total of 10 homework assignments for the term.

*** Community Event paper (10 points or 10% of your final grade)**

Events of interest to this class occur on campus and in the community on a regular basis. Some of these will be listed on blackboard and you can access the OSU calendar on-line for more information. You need to **attend one event during the term, write an approximately 4-5 double-spaced, 12 pt. font pages report that summarizes and analyzes the event and discusses how it relates to class material.** Please reference at least 2 readings (**not chapter introductions**) from *Women’s Voices, Feminist Visions* to help analyze this event, explaining how they provide insight. Specific quotations from the readings are helpful in applying these sources for analysis of your event. Reread these articles and explain fully how they guide your interpretations and analysis. Be sure to reference these sources using any format (APA, Chicago style, MLA), including a page number if you use quotations, and include a “works cited” or “references” section at the end of your paper. If you are unsure about referencing, please use our office hours for help or seek assistance at the Writing Center in Waldo Hall or their desk in the library. Complete assignments any time during the term, although **within two weeks of the event’s occurrence.** Send as an attached file through blackboard. **No papers will be accepted after 4pm, Thursday, March 13.** The community event project is worth **10 points or 10% of your final grade.**

*** Quizzes (each worth 15 points [15%] for a total of 60 points or 60% of your final grade)**

There will be 4 quizzes during the term as listed on the schedule, each worth 15 points or 15% of your final grade. **You are required to take all quizzes and make-ups are only be given in emergency situations.** Please note that minor illnesses such as colds and headaches do not constitute an emergency. You have been warned! Please also note the final exam time for quiz 4 and do not make plans to leave campus before that date. Exams will include multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and true-false questions as well as short answer (couple of sentences response), and will cover all the material presented in class as listed on the syllabus plus lecture, discussion, videos, and guest speakers. While the quizzes are not comprehensive, it is expected that you will carry forward your understanding of basic concepts throughout the term.

There are extensive study guides available on blackboard (look under course documents, click on study guides and choose the chapter you need). Each chapter and reading has an overview, key terms, and a list of study questions. **Students who use the study guides tend to do better on the quizzes.** It is a good idea to download the study guides before class and then use them to organize your reading and your notes. Please note that the study guides have many questions and are quite extensive. **It is not a requirement of the class that you complete these study guides.** We mention this because some students in the past have interpreted this generous study aid as negative extra work. The study guides are available to you to use as you feel works best for you.

Extra-Credit option: You are invited to complete a second community event for a **maximum of 5 points** as an extra-credit opportunity. Please follow the **exact same instructions above**, making sure that you send your paper through blackboard (under “assignments”) within two weeks of its occurrence, include your references to the text and another outside source, and indicate on your paper that this is an extra-credit assignment. Again, **no**

extra credit projects will be accepted after 4pm, Thursday, March 13, and only one extra-credit assignment is allowed.

Evaluation = Participation (5%) + News Event (5%) + Homework (20%) + Quizzes (60%) + Community Event Paper (10%) = total of 100%. **Grades will be issued as follows:**

A = 93%+; A- = 90-92%; B+ = 87-89%; B = 83-86%; B- = 80-82%; C+ = 77-79%; C = 73-76%; C- = 70-72%; D+ = 67-69%; D = 63-66%; D- = 60-62%; Below 60% = F. OSU does not offer the A+ grade.

Schedule

Week 1

1/8 **Introduction to course and each other**
Introduction to women's issues
Syllabus

1/10 **Women's Studies: Perspectives and Practices**
Chapter 1 (this means the narrative in the introduction to the chapter before the readings);
Reading 1 Rich; Reading 8 Quindlen

Week 2

1/15 **Systems of Privilege and Inequality**
Chapter 2

1/17 Reading 9 Hill Collins; Reading 10 Frye; Reading 13 McIntosh

Week 3

1/22 **Learning Gender in a Diverse Society**
Chapter 3; Reading 22 [poem] Wong

1/24 Reading 19 Fausto-Sterling; Reading 20 Lorber; Reading 23 Wajcman
News Reports Last names beginning A-B

Week 4

1/29 **Sex, Power, and Intimacy**
Quiz 1 (covers Chapters 1, 2, and 3 and assigned readings)
Chapter 4

1/31 **Interpersonal communication**
Reading 27 hooks; Reading 34 Meengleshi
News Reports: C-D

Week 5

2/5 **Inscribing Gender on the Body**
Chapter 5; Reading 36 Brumberg; Reading 37 Steinem; Reading 39 Weitz

2/7 **Women Confronting and Creating Culture**
Chapter 9; Reading 75 Morgan; Reading 78 Pollet and Hurwitz
News Reports: E-G

Week 6

2/12 **Health and Reproductive Rights**
Chapter 6; Reading 46 Dickerson
News Reports: H-K

2/14 **Quiz 2** (covers chapters 4, 5, 6, and 9 and assigned readings)
Family Systems, Family Lives
Chapter 7; Reading 55 Warner; Reading 58 Elder

Week 7

2/19 **Women's Paid Labour**
Chapter 8; Reading 67 Burk

2/21 **State, Law, and Social Policy**
Chapter 11, Reading 90 Hays
News Reports: L-M

Week 8

2/26 **Quiz 3** (covers chapters 7, 8, and 11 and assigned readings)
Religion and Spirituality
Chapter 12; Reading 95 [poem] Haught; Reading 102 Peay

2/28 **Resisting Violence Against Women**
Chapter 10; Reading 80 Leuchtag
News Reports: N-R

Week 9

3/4 **Resisting Violence Against Women (continued)**
Reading 81 Katzarova; Reading 84 Nason-Clark; Reading 85 [poem] Bridges; Reading 86 Stoltenberg (Reading 82 Davis is heavily recommended – very powerful, easy read)

3/6 **Globalization and Resistance**
Reading 18 Jordan; Reading 43 Watts; Reading 65 Hu-Dehart

Week 10

3/11 **Activism and Change (continued)**
Chapter 13
News Reports: S

3/13 **Activism and Change (continued)**
Reading 103 Hogeland; Reading 104 Kimmel; Reading 108 [poem] Joseph
News Reports: T-Z

Quiz 4: According to the scheduling desk, this exam will take place during finals week on Wednesday, March 19, at 2pm in our regular classroom. (Quiz 4 covers chapters 10, 12, and 13 and assigned readings, including the readings [Jordan, Watts, and Hu-Dehart] from week 9).