

HONORS 301: JUNIOR SEMINAR IN MULTICULTURALISM

Exploding Binaries: Sex-Gender, Body-Culture



DePaul University: Lincoln Park Campus
Spring Quarter 2018
Meets: M/W 9:40-11:10am
Arts & Letters, Room 307

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Hours: M 2:00-4:00pm (or by
appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Feminist scholar, poet, and activist Audre Lorde, in her seminal work, *Sister Outsider*, acutely observed, "Much of Western European history conditions us to see human differences in simplistic opposition to each other: dominant/subordinate, good/bad, up/down, superior/inferior" (114). In this course, focusing specifically on sexual difference in identity construction, we will first explore the way in which sexual difference is theorized in the West in binary terms. This means, of course, learning to understand what is called *sexual dimorphism*, or the cleaving of the sexes into two: male and female. From there, gender is constructed, or so the story goes, as the social fabric sewn according the pattern indicated by anatomical sex. Gender is thus an expression of how we are meant to behave or perform the sex that we are taught to believe is innate to us, and therein do the problems lie. Feminist scholars, for one,

have taken great strides in combatting the assignation of certain gender traits to (biological) women, but even this work still operates on the assumption of the distinction between sex and gender. The problematization of this binary shall serve as our point of departure.

Once our theoretical groundwork has been laid, we will strategically deploy narratives and theories from varying social cultural perspectives not simply to include what is otherwise excluded, but to *transform* the landscape altogether. Our work together will therefore take the shape of *both*: the sustained effort to understand sex and gender through various lenses, locations, and social positions, and the deliberate effort to explode the binary, thereby changing the shape of the conversation.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This means working collectively through intensive discussion of texts and related media to investigate the liberatory possibilities that may entail when we succeed in exploding binary constructions. Students should expect to develop a critical perspective on the meaning of multiculturalism and to conduct research on a complex of issues, as disruption of binary taxonomies means engaging the intersection of multiple vectors of oppression and forces of identity construction. That is, in an increasingly interconnected yet conflict ridden world with new contours of social and economic disparities, it is important to analyze how structural changes and global processes result in and are mediated through multiple axes of difference (like gender, sexuality, class, and race) in various local communities and groups. By learning to examine the particularity of differing lives, histories, and social locations, how people make sense of these specificities and harness them to alter their daily lives and fight multiple hierarchies of oppression, we will challenge colonial and racialized constructs and clarify our understanding as to how a multitude of different experiences remain connected—albeit in different ways—to systemic forces like colonialism, capitalism, nationalism, and patriarchy, which structure the lives and experiences of many people globally.

The burden of understanding will therefore be on our nascent community, which is to say that we shall do a good deal of reading, writing, and discussing collectively the provocations raised by the authors selected for the course. Students are advised to be aware that this is a course in which **evaluation of your written work will comprise the majority of your overall grade**. Thus we shall make significant use of interdisciplinary investigative tools and discourse toward the goal of improving written expression of idea complexes.

To meet these objectives, students will be encouraged to perfect their critical reading practice. In order to ensure fidelity to the text, the readings will rarely exceed twenty pages, but will be dense and complex, and will demand that the student not only read but also reread for further depth of understanding. While lectures and in-class discussions serve to situate, explicate, and clarify the readings, raising questions and provoking discussion, they cannot be substituted for the critical reading practice students are expected to cultivate in this course.

COURSE TEXTS

The following texts will be made available to you on Desire2Learn. You are expected to print each text and bring it to class on the date for which it is assigned (see Course Schedule, below):

- Anzaldúa, Gloria. "The New Mestiza Nation: A Multicultural Movement." In *The Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, edited by Carole R. McCann and Seung-Yeung Kim, 277-284. New York: Routledge Taylor Francis, 2013.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. "To Live in the Borderlands." <http://www.powerpoetry.org/content/live-borderlands>
- Basu, Amrita. "Globalization of the Local/Localization of the Global: Mapping Transnational Women's Movements." In *The Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, edited by Carole R. McCann and Seung-Yeung Kim, 68-76. New York: Routledge Taylor Francis, 2013.
- Butler, Judith. "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*". *Yale French Studies* 72 (1986): 35-49.
- Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory". *Theatre Journal* 40, No. 4 (Dec 1988): 519-531.
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne. "Dueling Dualisms". *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.
- hooks, bell. "Understanding Patriarchy". No Borders: Louisville Radical Lending Library. <http://imagineborders.org>.
- Jordan, June. "Report from the Bahamas." In *The Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, edited by Carole R. McCann and Seung-Yeung Kim, 268-276. New York: Routledge Taylor Francis, 2013.
- Lorde, Audre. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference". In *Sister Outsider*. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984.
- Lugones, María. "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System". *Hypatia* 22, No. 1 (Winter 2007): 186-209.
- Lugones, María. "'World'-Travelling and Loving Perception." *Hypatia* Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer 1987): 3-19.
- Martinez, Elizabeth. "La Chicana." In *The Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, edited by Carole R. McCann and Seung-Yeung Kim, 113-115. New York: Routledge Taylor Francis, 2013.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses". *Feminist Review*. No. 30 (Autumn 1988): 61-88.
- Moraga, Cherrie. "La Guera" (1979). <http://borderlandsnarratives.utep.edu/images/Readings/Moraga-CL-La-Guera-091979.pdf>
- Narayan, Uma. "Cross Cultural Connections, Border Crossings, and 'Death by Culture.'" In *Dislocating Cultures/Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism*, 83-117. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Prosser, Jay. "Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex". In *The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
- Shohat, Ella. "Area Studies, Gender Studies, and the Cartographies of Knowledge". *Social Text* 72, Vol. 20, No. 3, (Fall 2002): 67-78.

Note.1: Please see me if you anticipate or encounter any issues acquiring these texts. You are otherwise expected to have the text in class for reference on the day(s) it is assigned. Furthermore, I do not allow laptops or any other electronic devices in the classroom. Feel free to come speak with me about this if it is a problem.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I. Attendance, Attentiveness, Participation (15%)

A. Attendance: Attendance is determined based on the following criteria: whether you are here, on time, with the assigned reading. A sign-in sheet will be circulated at the start of class. If you arrive late to class you will be offered the opportunity to sign in at its conclusion. In addition, I will occasionally take reading attendance. If you do not have your text in class, you will be marked late. Be aware that two instances of tardiness, whether from arriving late, leaving early, or failing to bring your copy of the assigned text to class, will count as one absence. Two absences are permitted, excused or unexcused, for whatever reason. Absences in excess of two without a documented, legitimate excuse (emergency, medical, family, athletic, etc.) will negatively affect your overall grade. Absences in excess of four insure that the best you can do is pass the course. Please do not test me on this policy.

B. Attentiveness: While attendance is crucial to your success in the course, attentiveness is equally so. It is not enough to show up and shut down. This means arriving well rested, ready to contribute to the discussion, and in the proper mindset to absorb and respectfully respond to the contributions of your fellow classmates. Following along in the text, actively listening to what others are saying, and taking notes during lectures and discussion are visible aspects of attentiveness that I will record to determine this component of your grade.

C. Participation: Having arrived on time, with your text, attentive and ready to contribute, you are now in a position to participate. You should plan to participate in every class session. Note that participation is not the same thing as vocalization. I expect the classroom to be an atmosphere where the free and vital exchange of ideas is encouraged through active contribution. Active contribution means:

1) Thoughtful and respectful vocalization (for example: responding thoughtfully to a peer, requesting clarification, or offering insight into a problem under discussion). If you feel uncomfortable speaking up in class or would like to discuss strategies for participating, please approach me. At any time throughout the quarter, you may write a one-page reading response in order to make up points for participation. This may be especially helpful in making up participation points lost to absence or tardiness.

2) Making space for others to speak by taking a step back. While we often assume that everyone shares the same ability to vocalize, each of us comes to the table with different levels of comfort, readiness, and even urgency. Take a moment to assess yourself and consider where you stand in this respect.

Note.2: The issues that we are gathered in this course to discuss and explore are not without gravity. They, perhaps more than many others we could study dispassionately, implicate us—our bodies, our identities, and our socio-cultural realities. That being said, students should be advised that they may at turns feel uncomfortable or anxious, but this should be a spur to engagement rather than a detraction. If you are aware that these uncomfortable feelings will hinder your ability to succeed in this course, I strongly suggest you withdraw and choose another that will better suit your needs.

II. Protocol/Presentation (20%)

A. Group Protocol (worth 7% of Final Grade): The group protocol affords students the opportunity to collaborate with peers to generate an account of what occurred of note in our previous session(s). Therefore, the session **before** your presentation will be delivered, all members of a protocol group will take especially careful and attentive notes during class, meet together outside of class (in person or otherwise, as you see fit) and generate a collective account. This account should not exceed two standard, double spaced pages—so think more of a well-informed highlight reel than a painstaking reconstruction of every detail.

B. Presentation (worth 13% of Final Grade): The individual presentation is, above all, a critical response to the text **due in class on the day of your presentation**. As *critical*, it is expected to be more than a mere summary of a text in question or mere enumeration of the ethical issues it happens to raise (although summaries and enumerations are welcome where necessary to the accomplishment of a larger purpose). Nor is it sufficient to merely to state personal or subjective feelings about a text, such as “I liked it,” or “I thought it was bad,” etc. As *responses*, they are expected to reflect your *own* critical engagement with the text, by raising **three** questions that are opened up by your reflection on the text. Your response must include: a reference to the passage that provoked the question (and page number), and a brief explanation as to how/why the question came up. Please bear in mind that your individual response should be coordinated with those of the other members of your group to avoid redundancies and insure the maximum engagement possible on the part of your peers. Power Points, posters, and other forms of creative expression designed to enhance the group’s impact on discussion are welcome. Any sources utilized external to the course reading must be cited appropriately.

Finally, you **must** submit your protocol/presentation 24 hours in advance, so I can make copies to share with all members of the class. This way, by the end of the quarter, we will have a collective record or archive of our work together.

III. Short Reflection Essay (15%)

One short, 3 page exegetical paper reflecting on our first unit will be due at the end of Week Four. On the day the paper is assigned, I will distribute a handout detailing the prompt, guidelines for the completion of the assignment, and the rubric I utilize to grade your papers so that you are well informed of my expectations.

IV. Positional Short Paper (20%)

One short, 3 page, positional paper will be due at the end of Week Six. On the day the paper is assigned, I will distribute a handout detailing the prompt, guidelines for the completion of the assignment, and the rubric I utilize to grade your papers so that you are well informed of my expectations.

V. Final Research Paper (30%)

Your final paper should be a thoughtfully constructed essay that ranges from 10-12 pages, but does not exceed twelve. You will be expected to integrate the skills you gain over the course of the quarter, so the final product should be the polished, grammatically and syntactically accurate draft of your writing *process*. To insure that this is the case, we will have one in-Library session dedicated to research techniques and strategies (Week Seven), the Final Paper will be assigned that day, the Annotated Bibliography justifying your selection of source materials will be due early week Nine, and the optional first draft is due at the end of Week Nine. That way, as we proceed past the mid-term, we are building steadily toward the completion of the final paper. Please note that the Annotated Bibliography will count for 5% of your final grade, and the essay itself for 25%.

Note: All papers must be typed in twelve-point Times New Roman font, 1.25" margin, double-spaced, and stapled. Students are expected to use a standard method for source citation in order to effectively aid in the communication of their ideas. My preference is that you cite according to the Chicago Manual of Style, but any standard style is acceptable for this course provided you use it consistently. The DePaul University Library offers useful information and helpful links for citation:

<http://libguides.depaul.edu/content.php?pid=270356&sid=2604070>

All papers must employ gender-neutral language. Academics no longer use the pronoun 'he' to apply indiscriminately to everyone, nor do we use the term 'man,' when we are referring to humanity or people in general. In our writing, when we are making generalizations, we should use gender-neutral pronouns, for example, one, s/he, them. Further, when referring to a specific person or group of people, we should use the language and pronouns that they prefer. Also, we should be attentive to the spelling and accents of authors' names. Finally all authors must be referred to either by their entire names or only their last names, but never by their first names.

A digital copy of each of your papers *must be submitted to Dropbox on D2L to verify the time of submission, but only hard copies will be graded.* (Specific instructions for the submission of the final paper during Final Exam Week will be included in the handout.) Papers must be handed in on time, or your grade will suffer. To be fair to those who turn their papers in on time, late papers will be graded down by one half of a letter grade (5 percentage points) for each late day.

FINAL GRADE SUMMARY

1. Attendance/Attentiveness/Participation:	15%
2. Protocol (Group)/Presentation:	20%
3. Reflection Paper (Unit I):	15%
4. Positional Short Paper:	20%
5. Final Paper:	30%

CLOSING NOTES

- Technology has become a second skin in the 21st century; whether to our benefit or to our detriment is a whole other question for a whole other course. Critical thinking above all requires dedicated focus, so dialing down distractions is a must. Please turn off and stow away all cell phones at the start of class. If you are visibly on your cell phone while class is in session, you will be marked absent for the day. No excuses; no exceptions.
- If you have any questions or concerns about a grade received, feel free to bring it up. If you think the assignment requires re-evaluation, I will ask that you type up a brief explanation and re-submit the assignment for reassessment. You will never be penalized in this process. Keep in mind that you have up to one week after the assignment has been returned to appeal, and that it is ultimately your responsibility to take the initiative in this regard.
- No prior experience with philosophy is expected or required for this course. I do, however, assume that you have taken or are taking a college level composition course, know how to write an essay in English, and can read comfortably at the college level in English. If this is not the case, please see me.
- If you need English language assistance, help with writing, handling college, or dealing with personal or family issues, feel free to ask for help and/or consult the following resources:
 - DePaul Writing Center:
<http://condor.depaul.edu/writing/what/Writing%20Center/wc.html>
 - Office of Students with Disabilities:
<http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/studentswithdisabilities/highcontrast/>
 - PLuS (provides services for students diagnosed with learning disabilities or attention deficit disorders): <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/csd/>
 - University Counseling Services (UCS, offers affordable individual, group, and couples counseling to enrolled students): <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/ucs/>
- If you plan to communicate with me via email, please do so professionally, i.e. in complete sentences, with a proper salutation and conclusion. Include a comprehensible subject heading, identify what class you are in (as instructors often teach more than one class at a time), and explain clearly what it is you are inquiring about. If you fail to comply with these guidelines, I reserve the right to not respond.
- Please do make use of my office hours to approach me with any questions, concerns, or just to drop in and talk shop. Naturally your feedback is welcome, and your questions and thoughts serve to deepen our exchange and advance the learning process. Let me reiterate that if you need clarification of or help with any of the texts or assignments, do not hesitate to ask. Please do not wait until the end of the quarter to worry about your

performance in the course. I expect that everyone in the class will talk with me during office hours or by appointment at least once this quarter.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

****Subject to Revision At Any Time****

I. Sex and Gender: A Binary to End all Binaries

Week One: Mar 26/28

(M): Syllabus and Introduction

(W): Fausto-Sterling, "Dueling Dualisms"

Week Two: April 2/4

(M): Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*"

(W): Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution"

Week Three: April 9/11

(M): *Paris Is Burning*; Reflection Essay Assigned

(W): hooks, "Is Paris Burning?"; Prosser, "Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex" (excerpts)

II. Armed at the Intersection: The Fight Against (Mutual) Exclusion

Week Four: April 16/18

(M): Kimberlé Crenshaw, "The Urgency of Intersectionality" (TED Talk); Lorde, "Age, Race, Sex & Class"; **Presentation Group One**

(W): Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," Part One (186-top 194); Reflection Essay Due

Week Five: April 23/25

(M): Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," Part Two (bottom 194- 207); **Presentation Group Two**; Positional Paper Assigned

(W): Cherrie Moraga, "La Guera" & June Jordan, "Report from the Bahamas"

Week Six: April 30/May 2

(M): Anzaldúa, "The New Mestiza Nation: A Multicultural Movement"; Poem, "To Live in the Borderlands"; Elizabeth Martinez, "La Chicana"; **Presentation Group Three**

III. Exploding Binaries: Border Crossings and Transnational Perspectives

(W): Narayan, "Cross Cultural Connections, Border Crossings, and 'Death by Culture,'" 83-100;
Positional Paper Due

Week Seven: May 7/9

(M): Narayan, "Cross Cultural Connections, Border Crossings, and 'Death by Culture,'" 83-100;

Presentation Group Four

(W): Research Tutorial; Final Paper Assigned

Week Eight: May 14/16

(M): Basu, "Globalization of the Local/Localization of the Global: Mapping Transnational Women's Movements"; **Presentation Group Five**

(W): Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes

Week Nine: May 21/23

(M): Shohat, "Area Studies, Gender Studies, and the Cartographies of Knowledge"; Annotated Bibliography Due

(W): Lugones, "World Travel and Loving Perception"; Optional Final Paper First Draft Due

Week Ten: May 28/30

(M): Memorial Day: No Class.

(W): Last Day of Class; Course in Review

Final Exam Week: (F) June 1-(F) June 8

------(Wednesday) June 6: Final Paper Due -----

HONOR CODE PLEDGE¹

Academic and intellectual integrity are paramount virtues of higher education. They assure our ability to research, think, write, and speak freely in a world of widely diverse viewpoints, and they protect the products of our scholarly work from misappropriation. In the contemporary “digital age,” the widespread availability of information has been a tremendous democratizing force, opening up the world of scholarly productions to many who previously did not possess the means or privilege to access them. However, the digitization of information has also made it easier to reproduce the words and/or ideas of others without proper attribution.

Students in this class should think of themselves as members of a community of scholars committed to upholding and protecting the virtues of academic and intellectual integrity. The values of that community are only as strong as its community members’ promise to honor them. Consequently, students should sign the following “pledge” as their promise to their instructor, their classmates, and the larger academic community to act honorably.

As a member of this class, I pledge that I will not lie, cheat, or indulge intellectual laziness. I will afford to my fellow classmates the most generous interpretation of their arguments and positions. When there are disagreements and I become convinced that my own view is in error, I will concede as much. When I am able to demonstrate that my classmates’ positions are erroneous or wanting, I will endeavor to always allow them a graceful exit from their argument.

I furthermore pledge to do my part to create and maintain an environment in which diversity of both PERSONS and IDEAS is valued and protected. I understand that disagreement alone does not constitute disrespect, but I also pledge that I will not engage in, nor will I enable or excuse, discrimination or harassment based on (real or perceived) race, gender, age, color, sexual orientation, ability, national or ethnic origin, religious belief or socioeconomic class.

*Finally, I pledge to **actively** encourage personal, intellectual, and academic integrity in my peers and, as I am able, I pledge to intervene when it becomes evident to me that the principles of this class are being violated.*

Print Name

Signature

¹ I owe both the inspiration for and the template of this pledge to my colleague, Dr. Leigh M. Johnson.