SYLLABUS

1. **Course Number:** WMST 5980/6980 (temporary course number)
   **Course Title:** Feminist Theories
   **Credit Hours:** 3 Semester hours (Lecture 3)
   **Prerequisites:** WMST 2100 (Senior Standing) or Graduate Standing with intent to pursue a Graduate Minor in Women’s Studies
   **Corequisite:** None
   **Instructor:** TBA
   **Office Hours:** TBA
   **Course Meetings:** TBA

2. **Date Syllabus Prepared:** July 18, 2008

3. **Text or Major Resources:**

   **Required:**

4. **Course Description:**
Feminist theory is writing that describes and analyzes women's situation historically and in contemporary society. Feminist theorists:
- analyze gender asymmetry, that is, the subordination and inequality of the sexes
- propose strategies to improve women's lives

What is feminist theory and what role does it play in Women's Studies as a discipline? The Women's Studies capstone course approaches feminism as a multiplicity of perspectives and approaches to the understanding of women's position in culture. Readings then will be as diverse as feminism itself and should give you a broad and deep understanding of the diversity of feminist thought and the historical and critical role feminist thought has played in a variety of disciplinary approaches to the study of women and culture. Readings will focus on intersections between race, class, sexual orientation, and gender in feminist thought and will include an investigation of paradigms such as the technology of gender, gender as performance, domestic ideology, gendered discourses in commodity culture, the environment as a feminist issue, and the racing of feminism in English and American feminist theory. After a semester of reading a variety of feminist theories, you should understand how such issues as essentialism, globalization, exclusivism, and classism have piqued feminist debates. In class you will become comfortable applying feminist paradigms to culture, allowing us to explore representations of current or historical events.

5. **Course Objectives:**
Undergraduate Students will:
1. Read and discuss writings by intellectuals that describe and analyze the conditions of women’s lives and work.
2. Familiarize themselves with contemporary theories about women’s lives including feminist epistemologies; essentialism; theories of the body; and intersections of race, class, and gender.
3. Read and analyze a contemporary feminist novel.
4. Become acquainted with a variety of theorists; become comfortable reading, discussing, and critiquing theoretical work; and find ways to apply the theories studied.
Graduate Students will:
1. Read and discuss writings by intellectuals that describe and analyze the conditions of women’s lives and work.
2. Familiarize themselves with contemporary theories about women’s lives including feminist epistemologies; essentialism; theories of the body; and intersections of race, class, and gender.
3. Read and analyze a contemporary feminist novel.
4. Become acquainted with a variety of theorists; become comfortable reading, discussing, and critiquing theoretical work; and find ways to apply the theories studied.
5. Integrate the theories and history of women’s issues with other fields of study such that the student is able to place women’s studies within the larger context of other disciplines of study.
6. Students will produce original written work in which they reflect upon and integrate feminist theories, relevant literature, and their own perspectives.

6. Course Content and Schedule:

THIS SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE TO ACCOMMODATE LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE COURSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activity/Focus and Assignments for All Students (exceptions noted)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td><strong>Class Orientation: The Sex/Gender System</strong>&lt;br&gt;Read: A. Ortner, “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?”&lt;br&gt;B. “So, Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td><strong>The Sex/Gender System</strong>&lt;br&gt;Read: A. de Beauvoir, <em>The Second Sex</em> (Part I and II)&lt;br&gt;B. <em>The Second Sex</em> (Part III and IV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td><strong>Feminine Personality and Female Sexuality</strong>&lt;br&gt;Read: A. Freud, “Female Sexuality”</td>
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Week 5  TEST #1: Essay and identifications.
Feminine Personality and Female Sexuality
Read:
   A.  Riviere, “Womanliness as a Masquerade”
   B.  Chodorow, “Family Structure and Feminine Personality”.

Week 6  Feminine Personality and Female Sexuality/ Engendering the State,
Engendering Science
Read:
   A.  Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence”

Week 7  Engendering the State, Engendering Science
Read:
   A.  MacKinnon, Toward a Feminist Theory of the State (Part I and II)
   B.  Toward a Feminist Theory of the State (Part III)

Week 8  6980 Mid-term Paper Due (Graduate Students)
Engendering the State, Engendering Science
Read: A. Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century”
   B.  Harding, The Science Question in Feminism (selections)

Week 9  TEST #2: Essay and identification
Performing Gender, Performances of Gender
A.  Butler, Gender Trouble (Prefaces and Part I and II)

Week 10  Performing Gender, Performances of Gender
Read:
   A.  Gender Trouble (Part III and Conclusion)

Week 11  Feminist Theory in Racial and Transnational Contexts
Read:
   A.  Rich, “Notes toward a Politics of Location”
   B.  Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”
Week 12  Feminist Theory in Racial and Transnational Contexts
         Read:
         A. Mohanty, “‘Under Western Eyes Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles”
         B. Rich, “Toward a More Feminist Criticism”

Week 13  Partnered Library Writing Assignment Due

Week 14  Feminist Theory in Racial and Transnational Contexts
         Read:
         A. hooks, *Ain’t I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*

Week 15  Feminist Theory in Racial and Transnational Contexts
         Read:
         A. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*

Week 15  Wrap Up; 6980 Final-paper due *(Graduate Students)*

COMPREHENSIVE FINAL EXAM as scheduled: Essay and identification

7. Course Requirements:

1. Reading of assigned texts and handouts.

2. Class attendance. Because this course covers extensive amounts of material, class attendance is *very important*. You are allotted two excused absences (i.e., you notify me before you are gone). If you plan to be gone one week, save your absences for that week. Additional absences will result in a 10 pt. deduction from your overall grade, thus dropping you one letter grade per extra absence. This policy will only be altered under emergency medical circumstances (as permitted by the current Auburn University Bulletin).

3. Students will participate in exercises and discussions in class in order to familiarize themselves with the material. This course emphasizes the various foci of feminist theory and class participation is required in this course as feminist theory poses all individuals have and bring knowledge and that the student is responsible for her/his own learning.

4. Students will complete two book tests and a comprehensive final exam. In addition, students enrolled in the course at the 6980 level will complete two written assignments: a Mid-term paper and a Final paper. The Mid-term paper will address content from the first 6 weeks of the course. The Final-paper will be on a question selected from those supplied by the professor.

   a. The Mid-term paper will specifically address some issue of the Sex/Gender System. Students are encouraged to utilize the understandings of their own discipline (the Graduate Program in which the student is enrolled) to help
guide the focus of the paper such that they will integrate the materials from
class, readings on feminist theory, and research related to their specific
Sex/Gender System topic and incorporate the traditional approach within their
field for comparison. Although there is no page limit for this paper, one would
expect a quality paper to be around 10 pages (though the exact length will
vary depending upon your topic).

b. For the Final paper the student will select a topic that fits with either
contemporary or historical theories of women’s lives and identify a novel on
that topic. Students will prepare a critical analysis of the novel through both
the lens of history and contemporary feminist thought. Obviously, if the topic
is more contemporary, historical theories of women may not have directly
addressed the topic and the student will need to draw the connection or links
through critical analysis. Alternatively, contemporary theories may address
historical topics and the student should include a critique of how the historical
and current feminist schools of thought fit together to enhance our knowledge
of the topic. Although there is no page limit for this paper, one would expect a
quality paper to be around 20 pages (though exact length will vary depending
upon your topic).

As an alternative for the Final-paper, those whose graduate focus is more
quantitative could complete a research project for the Final-paper. The student
must be aware of time constraints that may limit the scope of the research.
The student must adhere to all Auburn University policies involve research
and will need to document evidence of their strict adherence to such policies.
Students unfamiliar with the research policies who wish to do a research paper
should immediately make arrangements to meet with the instructor so that the
suitability of their intended project can be evaluated. The student along with
the instructor (and outside faculty as necessary) will create a plan for the
research project no later than the 4th week of class to allow sufficient time for
the student to complete the research. Thus, all students intending to complete
a research project for the Final paper should notify the course instructor no
later than the 4th week of class of their intent to do so and their selected topic
and intended methodology.

5. Occasional unannounced quizzes will be given over reading assignments. These
quizzes are not meant to be tests of your memory, but rather to assess that you have
remained current on the reading.

6. Partnered Library Writing Assignment: Students will undertake, with a partner, a
research project in the history of feminist activism, using the database, “Women and
Social Movements, 1620-2000” http://womhist@bighamton.edu/ Projects will be
posted to the class website for discussion and critique. We will plan to discuss these
during the last two regular class meetings.
The final grade for the course will be based in the following for 5980 Students:

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<td>10pts total</td>
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<td>Library Research Assignment</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
<td>15pts</td>
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<td>Final-paper</td>
<td>25pts</td>
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The following scale will be used for all students:

- A  90 - 100%
- B  80 - 89%
- C  70 - 79%
- D  60 - 69%
- F  0 - 59%

8. **Class Policy Statements:**

Students are expected to attend all class meetings on time and participate in all assigned activities (Tiger Club, p. 73). Should students need to be absent for any reason, please contact the course instructor before missing that class meeting. Two class absences will be permitted (with notification), class absences beyond that will result in a 10% reduction in overall grade. Changes in this policy will only be considered in instances of personal or medical emergencies.

**Late papers are not accepted and will result in a grade of 0.** All papers are due at the start of class on the date assigned. Students will submit papers electronically (via email) unless otherwise specified. Thus, even if you are not able to be in class, your assignment is still due on time since you can turn this in early and while away from campus. If you are unable to attend class it is recommended that you either email the paper to your instructor (so the time is noted and as described for all papers) and ask for a reply to insure the instructor received it or have a friend turn in the assignment for you at the designated time.
Poor grammar, lack of clarity in writing, etc, will reduce your grade on an assignment, especially if it makes your points difficult to understand or detracts from the line of your argument. Similarly, you are expected to use APA or MLA style for all papers (the style used within the paper must be consistent). If you are unfamiliar with both formats, it is recommended that you obtain a resource to assist you.

Classroom civility is expected. *Please turn off* cell-phones or pagers before entering class.

Incompletes will only be granted in cases of medical or personal emergencies.

**Accommodations:** Students who need accommodations are asked to arrange a meeting during office hours the first week of classes, or as soon as possible if accommodations are needed immediately. If you have a conflict with my office hours, an alternative time can be arranged. To set up this meeting, please contact me by e-mail. Bring a copy of your Accommodation Memo and an Instructor Verification Form to the meeting. If you do not have an Accommodation Memo but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Program for Students with Disabilities at 1244 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT).

**Honesty Code:** The University Academic Honesty Code and the Tiger Cub Rules and Regulations pertaining to Cheating will apply to this class.

**Professionalism:** As faculty, staff, and students interact in professional settings, they are expected to demonstrate professional behaviors.

i. Engage in responsible and ethical professional practices
ii. Contribute to collaborative learning communities
iii. Demonstrate a commitment to diversity
iv. Model and nurture intellectual vitality

9. **Justification for Graduate Credit for the 6980 Students:**

Graduate courses “should be progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs” and should “foster independent learning” (SACS guidelines 3.6.1 and 3.6.2). Further, the guidelines presented in the Statement of Clarification of the Definition and Use of 6000-level courses as approved by the Graduate Council, May 21 1997 apply. This course is designed to prepare students for proposal of dissertation and expectations for the course are that the student is able to perform basics of research in order to develop skills necessary to be independent researchers.