Feminist Political Theory  Political Science 3140

Dr Kimberley Mullins
Fall 2011
Office Hours

Usually 1 hour prior to class, appointments are recommended

Course Description

Feminist Political Theory examines feminist scholarship that has challenged previously accepted notions in political theory, including definitions of politics itself, the distinctions between public and private, the nature of citizenship, and the roles of women in civil society. This course considers different ways of looking at power and political culture in modern societies, examining themes such as gender and democracy, race and class, representation and cultural symbols, popular media, poverty and welfare, sexuality and morality.

Attention will be given to feminist and other writings and their affect on both political thought and perceptions of feminism itself. This course will take a broad and critical approach to understanding what feminist political thought is, and how it has affected society.

The aim is to give the student the foundation to understand how feminist theory can be used to deconstruct, evaluate and question political thought in many contexts.

Possible readings

Bryson, Valerie. “Feminist Political Theory”

Truth, Sojourner. “Ain’t I a Woman” and “Keep Things Stirring” in Women at the Podium

hooks, bell. Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism

Green, Joyce. Making Space for Indigenous Feminism

Rowbotham, Sheila. A Century of Women

Myers, Dee Dee. Why Women Should Rule the World

Vallee, Brian. *War on Women*

Foster, G.A. *Troping the Body*

Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty/The Subjugation of Women*

Yalom, Marilyn. *A History of the Wife*

Diamant, Anita. *The Red Tent*

Gregory, Phillipa. *The Other Boleyn Girl*

Baum, L. Frank. *The Wizard of Oz*

Zimmer Bradley, Marion. *The Mists of Avalon*

Helgesen, Sally. *The Female Vision*

Meyer, Stephanie. *Twilight*

Bridson, Karen. *Stunned*

**Evaluation**

Class Participation – 10%
Class Presentation/ Discussion – 30%
Test – 20%
Final Exam – 40%

A) Class Participation will be graded with the following criteria in mind:
- Willingness to engage in discussion topics
- Ability to refer to reading material during discussions
- Willingness to learn
- Demonstrated effort to understand concepts, terms and theories
- Ability to compare and contrast concepts discussed in class with reading materials and personal experiences.

B) Each student will be asked to give a brief presentation and lead a class discussion on a relevant reading of their choice. Topics can include the following:

- Share your thoughts on the representation and demonstrated perspective of women in one of the fictional books from the reading list. What do you perceive to be the link between feminist political theory and the writing you have chosen? How has the feminist theory changed your interpretation or understanding of the literature?
• Select a documentary or biography about a woman in history. In your presentation to the class, discuss how the historical representation of women’s achievements differs from that of men. How does feminist theory address these differences?

• Research a feminist theorist whom you feel has “radical” views. Why do you feel these views are radical? What are the implications, both good and bad, of deconstructing theory in this way?

The discussion will be graded on the following criteria:

• Communication skills and ability to demonstrate critical thought
• Use of references
• Clarity and development of argument
• Quality of analysis and research

Students who are unprepared to present on the assigned day will be penalized 10% for each class day that they do not appear.

C) The in-class test will cover some of the major concepts of the first few weeks. Students are expected to be familiar with the "Instructions for Students Regarding the Conduct of Examinations" which are available on the university website.

D) The final exam will cover material from the full semester. It will draw specifically on assigned readings.

**Course Timeline**

Week 1: Course Introduction

Week 2: Feminist Theory and Feminisms.

Week 3: Liberal Feminism and Radical Feminism

Week 4: Minorities and Feminist Thought

Week 5: Global Feminism

Week 6: Feminism and Sexuality

Week 7: Communicating Feminism

Week 8: Feminism and the Political Representation of Gender

Week 9: Postmodern Feminism

Week 10: Feminist Politics in Popular Culture
Week 11: Mainstreaming Feminist Political Theory

Week 12: Conclusion and overview for exam

Additional Information

Supplementary instructions that constitute part of this syllabus are available online at http://www.mun.ca/posc/courses/policies.php. This includes information about campus support services, a statement about equity and instructions regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. Students are expected to review this online information and to be familiar with this course's policies surrounding academic honesty, classroom demeanour, the conduct of examinations, the requirement to use a university email account and the use of recording devices in classrooms.