

WGST 3500: Feminist Foundations

Fall 2025

Mondays/Wednesdays 2-3:20 pm

LANG 210

Instructor Information

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Course Description, Structure, and Objectives

Course catalog description: This course explores the women's movement in the United States from the 1960s to the present. Issues of gender equity, reproductive rights, economic disparity, work and the family, and political participation are discussed within the contexts of second and third wave feminism*.

*We will spend time in this course discussing critiques of conceptualizing feminist movements as discrete "waves."

This particular iteration of this course will emphasize the contributions of queer of color critique, women of color feminisms, intersectionality, and other multi-pronged theoretical approaches to understanding oppression in shaping feminist movements in the United States from the 1960s to the present. Throughout the course, we will engage with scholarly and artistic interventions, multimedia explorations of power and oppression, and philosophical meditations on feminisms.

Course structure: students will meet in person twice a week, and will come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that class date (see course schedule in syllabus). Students should expect class to be driven by discussion, which they are expected to engage robustly and consistently in.

By the end of this course, students should successfully be able to:

1. Describe the continuity and diversity of feminist/womanist movements in the 20th century U.S.
2. Describe the impact of women of colors and queer persons upon the feminist/womanist movements in the 20th and 21st centuries in the U.S.
3. Develop a critical eye towards the social meaning and image of feminism(s).
4. Explain multiracial feminism, intersectionality, theory in the flesh, womanism, and other theories that the field of women's and gender studies uses to discuss and analyze women's lives in relation to race, sex, sexuality, and class.
5. Critically discern how socially constructed categories of identity have impacted the development of feminist/womanist movements in the U.S.
6. Explore the variety of philosophical frameworks and social contexts underlying feminist/womanist activism.
7. Improve their skills of critical thinking, observation, analysis, communication, and self-awareness.

How to Succeed in this Course

The main components required for success in this course are curiosity, respect, and communication. **The single most significant factor contributing to your academic success in this course is your active and consistent participation. This means showing up consistently, contributing, and coming to class prepared to discuss readings. I understand that many students may feel difficulty or shyness in participating in group discussions. I would encourage you to push yourself to contribute even when it feels difficult or scary; this is a really good indicator that you are growing in your academic journey and as a scholar. *Your voice matters* and we need to hear it.** I am always open and available to meet with you to discuss any issues or concerns that may come up over the course of our class. On that note, I find students are more likely to take advantage of office hours if I keep my availability for them flexible, rather than having a fixed office hours, so office hours are by appointment. Simply email me if you have a question or concern you would like to meet to discuss and we will find a time to meet that is convenient.

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](http://www.unt.edu/oda) website (<http://www.unt.edu/oda>). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Communication Practices:

Connect with me through email and/or by scheduling to meet with me over office hours. During busy times, my inbox becomes rather full, so if you contact me and do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated.

Academic Success Resources:

UNT endeavors to offer you a high-quality education and to provide a supportive environment to help you learn and grow. And, as a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. Here's how to succeed at UNT: Show up. Find support. Get advised. Be prepared. Get involved. Stay focused. Get hired. To learn more about convenient campus resources and information on how you can prioritize wellness and achieve success with the support of UNT's caring community, go to succeed.unt.edu (<https://succeed.unt.edu/>) and explore wellness.unt.edu (https://wellness.unt.edu).

Supporting Your Success and Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and belonging. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable.

Hostilities, specifically in the form of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, classism, and any other ad hominem attacks will not be tolerated. Together, we can ensure a welcoming classroom for all. We will at times be dealing with difficult subject matter; I ask that we create a brave, open space together where everyone feels comfortable sharing. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.

Every student in this class should have the right to learn and engage within an environment of respect and courtesy from others. We will discuss our classroom's habits of engagement and I also encourage you to review UNT's student code of conduct so that we can all start with the same baseline civility understanding ([Code of Student Conduct](#)) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012>).

AI (Artificial Intelligence) Considerations and Responsibilities

Here are some things to consider as AI programs develop and their use rises. Natural language processing (NLP) applications like ChatGPT or Sudowrite can be tools for helping us improve our writing, communication, and stimulate our thinking. However, they should never serve as a substitute for our own thinking, writing, and communication. And, in our course, they cannot. If you must use one of these apps, think of the help you get from NLP apps as a much less sophisticated version of the assistance you can receive (for free!) from the UNT Writing Center tutor. UNT tutors and coaches might ask questions to jump-start your imagination, steer you away from the passive voice, or identify a poorly organized paragraph, but should never do the writing or thinking for you. Also, important to realize: an NLP app is not a person. It is a machine that is trained to recognize patterns, reorganize them and regurgitate “data” back. It cannot think for itself. And it cannot think for you. With that analogy in mind, we will adhere to the following guidelines in our class. Appropriate use of AI:

- You are free to use spell check, grammar check, and synonym identification tools (e.g., Grammarly)
- You are free to use app recommendations for rephrasing sentences or reorganizing paragraphs you have already drafted:
- Using sentences or paragraphs suggested by an app without providing quotation marks and a citation, just as you would to any other source, is plagiarism. If you use ChatGPT to *generate knowledge*, you must cite the information given to you.
- You may not have an app write a draft of an entire post or assignment for you. In our class, your insights, and the connections you make are what we need to hear. **ANY** use of AI to generate entire paragraphs or stretches of writing, or to formulate arguments that you then pass off as your own, will be flagged as plagiarism and treated as such.

ALSO ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO NOTE: the devastating environmental impacts related to the development of AI, especially generative AI, cannot be overstated. This is especially pertinent to the themes of our course and will be something we will discuss in class.

Required/Recommended Materials

- All readings will be provided on Canvas under “Files.”
- Technology requirements for courses with digital materials:
:This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at [Learn Anywhere](#) (<https://online.unt.edu/learn>).

Course Requirements/Schedule

ALL DATES/ASSIGNMENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Points Possible</i>	<i>% of Final Grade</i>
<i>Ongoing</i>	Participation	This portion of your grade is determined by a combination of attendance, consistent and informed participation in class discussion that makes it clear you have attended class prepared and having read that week's readings, and any in-class writing assignments or responses that may be assigned. For every class, you will be expected to bring in 3-4 discussion questions that you are prepared to pose to the larger class based on the readings. Students are allowed two "no questions asked" absences that will not impact your grade. The success of our class hinges on your showing up and participating in class discussion every class that you attend. It is vitally important that you show up. Beyond those two absences, students can expect to see their participation grade impacted if they miss class. If extenuating circumstances arise, please contact me as soon as possible.	100	30%

<i>Due by 11:59 Monday October 2nd on Canvas</i>	Midsemester writing assignment	More information about this paper is forthcoming, but generally you will be asked to respond to a prompt that I will provide well in advance that will require you to engage with two texts from our course, putting them in conversation with one another, synthesizing their contributions, and making a unique argument about what you understand their contributions to feminist and womanist movements and thought to be.	100	20%
<i>See syllabus schedule for dates</i>	Class Presentations	<i>Manifesto Presentations:</i> More information is forthcoming.	100	20%
<i>Due by 11:59 PM December 10th On Canvas</i>	Final assignment	We will collaborate together about the form that the final project/assignment will take. I am open to having the final paper/project be a creative interpretation of the themes of the course, including art pieces or a collection of poetry, etc, as well as the option of a traditional final paper. We will discuss this during our first class meeting.	100	30%

Students will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing that will impact a class. The calendar is subject to change. Please refer to: [Emergency Notifications and Procedures Policy \(https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-049\)](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-049).

Assessing Your Work

Please refer to UNT's Academic Integrity Policy and familiarize yourself with the parameters of this policy and follow them diligently for every assignment:
[Academic Integrity Policy \(PDF\) \(https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-049\)](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-049).

You will be provided with individual rubrics outlining the grading parameters of the midsemester and final assignments as well as the class presentations. Refer to the syllabus for what constitutes your participation grade for this class.

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 0-59

Every student in my class can improve by doing their own work and trying their hardest with access to appropriate resources. Students who use other people's work without citations will be violating UNT's Academic Integrity Policy. Please read and follow this important set of [guidelines for your academic success \(https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003\)](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003). If you have questions about this, or any UNT policy, please email me or come discuss this with me during my office hours.

Honor Code: "I commit myself to honor, integrity, and responsibility as a student representing the University of North Texas community. I understand and pledge to uphold academic integrity as set forth by [UNT Student Academic Integrity Policy, 06.003 \(https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003\)](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003). I affirm that the work I submit will always be my own, and the support I provide and receive will always be honorable."

Attendance and Participation

*I have great respect for students who are balancing the demands of their coursework with the responsibilities of caring for family members. If you run into challenges that require you to miss a class, please contact me. Students are allowed two "no questions asked" absences that will not impact your grade. **The success of our class hinges on your showing up and contributing consistently and robustly.** It is vitally important that you attend consistently and come to class prepared. Students should expect to push themselves to participate and contribute to our class discussions every class that they attend. If students miss more classes beyond those two absences, students can expect to see their participation grade impacted.*

Because this course involves collaboration, participation is essential to learning, our project-based activities require you to be actively engaged in discussions and group work. I understand tardiness and absences may occur. If you are late to class, please drop me an email to let me know the circumstances. If you must miss class, please let me know prior to your absence when possible.

Class Schedule – Subject to change

Monday August 18th– **Class Introductions / Syllabus Overview**

Wednesday August 20th – **Definitions of Feminisms and Laying Feminist Foundations**

Readings:

"The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" - Audre Lorde, 1979.

"Womanist" - Alice Walker, from *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, 1983.

Monday August 25th – **Historicizing Women's and Womanist Movements: 1960s-1980s**

Readings:

“Learning from the 60s” – Audre Lorde

“Transformation of Silence Into Language and Action” – Audre Lorde

“Arts of the Possible” – Adrienne Rich

Wednesday August 27th – **SCHEDULE TBA**

Monday September 1st - *LABOR DAY NO CLASSES*

Wednesday September 3rd – **Intersectionality and its Impacts on Feminism(s)**

Readings:

“Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”

Monday September 8th: **Women Beyond a Monolith: Framing Difference**

Reading:

“Gender & Race: The Ampersand Problem in Feminist Thought” by Elizabeth V. Spelman

“Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” by Audre Lorde

“Traffic at the Crossroads: Multiple Oppressions” by Kimberlé Crenshaw

Wednesday September 10th – **Feminisms and Sexuality / The Erotic**

Reading:

“The Straight Mind” - Monique Wittig, 1992

“Uses of the Erotic” - Audre Lorde, 1978

“Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance” – Cheryl Clarke

Monday September 15th – **Interrogating the Natural: Science and Feminisms**

Reading:

“The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles” - Martin, 1991.

“Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body” - Somerville, 1994

Discussion questions due by start of class on Canvas.

Wednesday September 17th – **Ecofeminist Thought**

Reading: Excerpts from *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*

Monday September 22nd– **Ecofeminist Thought, continued**

Reading: “Ecofeminism: An Overview and Discussion of Positions and Arguments”

Watch: Mad Max: Fury Road (2015 film)

Wednesday September 24th – **GIRL POWER: 90s Feminisms**

Readings:

“Riot Grrrl: Revolutions from Within”

“Riot Grrrl, Race, and Revival”

Discussion questions due by start of class on Canvas.

Monday September 29th – **GIRL POWER continued**

Watch The Punk Singer (Documentary)

Listen <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOCWma5vOiQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69lhDIqeHcI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOM107PIxV8>

Mid semester assignment due on Canvas.

Wednesday October 1st – **Producing Feminist Knowledge**

Readings:

“Situated Knowledges” – Haraway

“Theory in the Flesh: Toward an endarkened epistemology”

“The U.S.- Mexico Border Crossing Chicana Researcher: Theory in the Flesh and the Politics of Identity in Critical Ethnography”

Monday October 6th – **Naming a Struggle: Rethinking “Feminist Waves”**

Readings:

“Rethinking Feminist Waves”

“Is it Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Wave Metaphor”

“Feminist Frequencies: Regenerating the Wave Metaphor”

Wednesday October 8th – **Queer Liberation and Feminist Movements-**

Readings:

“Lesbians, second-wave feminism, and gay liberation”

“Queer anti-capitalism: What’s left of lesbian and gay liberation?”

Introduction to “Feminism is Queer: The Intimate Connection between Feminism and Queer Theory”

Monday October 13th- **Indigenous Peoples’ Day, no class**

Wednesday October 15th – **Trans Feminisms**

Readings:

“Introduction: trans/feminisms”

“Where Black feminist thought and trans* feminisms meet: A Conversation”

“My Words to Victor Frankenstein”

Monday October 20th– **Trans Feminisms, continued**

“Becoming Lesbian: Monique Wittig’s queer-trans-feminism”

“Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come”

They’re So Normal I Can’t Stand It”: I Am Jazz, I Am Cait, Transnormativity, and Trans Feminism

Wednesday October 22nd– **Feminist Food Movements**

Readings:

Taking Back Taste: Feminism, Food and visceral politics

When Food Becomes a Feminist Issue: popular feminism and subaltern agency in the World March of Women

Liberating the Recipe: A study of the relationship between Food and Feminism in the 1970s

Monday October 27th – **Return to *This Bridge Called My Back***

Readings:

Excerpts from *This Bridge Called my Back*

Wednesday October 29th – **Feminism and Horror: A Complicated History**

Readings TBD

Monday November 3rd – **CLASS PRESENTATIONS**

Wednesday November 5th – **CLASS PRESENTATIONS**

Monday November 10th– **Feminist Movements and Pop Culture: Critically Engaging Media**

Readings:

Feminism and Media in the Post-Feminist Era

Facebook Feminism: Social Media, Blogs, and New Technologies of Contemporary US Feminism

What can feminism learn from new media?

Wednesday November 12th– **Feminist Movements and Pop Culture: Critically Engaging Media, continued**

Readings TBD

Monday November 17th - TBD, based on class survey

Wednesday November 29th - TBD, based on class survey

Monday November 24th – **FALL BREAK: No classes**

Wednesday November 26th – **FALL BREAK: No classes**

Monday December 1st – **Feminist Foundations for a Feminist Future**

Readings:

“Caretaking Relations, Not American Dreaming” - Kim TallBear, 2019

Excerpts from *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* – Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

Listen: *Theory of Ice*, 2018 album by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

Discussion questions due by start of class on Canvas.

Wednesday December 3rd- **Feminist Foundations for a Feminist Future**

Watch: Janelle Monae’s Dirty Computer: An Emotion Picture (available on Vimeo)

Readings: “Gestural Refusals, Embodied Flights: Janelle Monae’s Vision of Black Queer Futurity” - Szaniawska, 2019

FINAL EXAMS / PROJECTS DUE BY 11:59 PM DECEMBER 10th ON CANVAS