Course Description & Requirements:

The objective of this graduate seminar is to engage critically with the foundational concepts of feminist theory and some of its most historically contentious conversations. We will examine feminism as an evolving set of intellectual and activist movements, grounding its theories in social and historical contexts. This will aid in our efforts to understand the paradigm shifts in feminist theory that have taken place in modernity, and to consider the ways in which discourses of “Western” and “non-Western” philosophies have come to influence feminist debate.

Weekly coursework (readings, presentations, discussion) will be organized around keywords. These keywords are central to feminist theory’s history, but also evoke some of the most spirited and longstanding debates within the field. Readings for this class are drawn from the work of prominent theorists such as Judith Butler, Donna Harraway, Patricia Hill Collins, Luce Irigaray, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Paula Gunn Allen, Gloria Anzaldua, Saskia Sassen and Leslie Feinberg. Most of these readings are available in the course reader, Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives (Routledge/2013, 3rd ed), edited by Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim (available for purchase from NJ Books); some will be made available through the Blackboard course management system. These readings are organized as conversations and debates between these prominent theorists around the keyword; they also highlight feminist theory’s reciprocal and at times problematic relationship with other theoretical practices, including psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, Marxism, postcolonial theory, queer theory and posthumanism.

The seminar format for this course means each class meeting is student-centered. Each student will be required to participate in weekly pre-class Blackboard activities and to contribute actively to class discussion. Each student will also lead the class in critical discussion of our primary readings at least once during the term. Written requirements include one short reflective/critical paper, and one independent research project drawing from course themes and materials (due at the end of the term – see Blackboard “Assignments” tab for more information on each assignment).

Course Learning Objectives:

Participants in this seminar will encounter critical debates, “conversations” and historical shifts within feminist theory, particularly from the mid-20th Century forward. Specifically, students will:

- be introduced to various applications of theory emerging through feminist (re)examinations of the academy and knowledge construction.
- consider the positioning of feminist theory within the academy as a venue for social transformation.
• examine tensions between feminist/women's activism and its academic representations.
• examine relations between feminist theories and other major Western social and critical theories.
• examine the global and cultural tensions emerging around feminist theory and praxis, particularly in the later 20th Century.

Participants will also utilize coursework and assessment in order to sharpen skills of debate, analysis, rhetoric, and research. Specifically, students will

• post reading questions and observations regularly to the Blackboard discussion forum in preparation for class
• lead a seminar discussion at least once during the term
• submit a short paper (mid-semester) that engages critically with one of the readings
• submit an end-of-semester project grounded in feminist theory but reflecting their own disciplinary interests or programs

Assessment:

Class Participation, Presentation & Summaries 30
Presentation on Primary Reading 10
Short Paper 20
Independent Research Project 40

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Readings in bold will constitute our primary focus on the date listed. The other readings are secondary. Your assignment each week is to read the titles in bold, as well as one secondary reading. For eight of these weeks, you should prepare a brief (3-5 minute) summary of this secondary reading, covering its main points and raising questions about its connections to the keyword and/or primary reading. Your summary should reflect your own perspective. You should not conduct outside research or additional sources for this exercise, but instead develop your own critical observations and questions. Summaries should be posted to Blackboard (in narrative or bulleted form – questions included) 24 hours prior to our class meeting. Do also be prepared to verbally share your summary/questions about this secondary reading during the class meeting.

9/5  Introduction & Overview;
Recommended:
Review Blackboard notes on movements & theories (Liberal/Radical/Marxist/Poststructuralist feminisms); Review Bartkowski & Kolmar’s “Lexicon of Debates”
9/12: GENDER
In Reader:
Beauvoir, “The Second Sex: Introduction” (p.40)
Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” (p.462)
Oyewumi, “Visualizing the Body: Western Theory and African Subjects”
On Blackboard:
Lorber, “Night to His Day”
Fuss, “The Risk of Essence”

9/19: OPPRESSION / “LIBERATION”
In Reader:
Kandiyoti, “Bargaining with Patriarchy” (p.98)
Wittig, “One is Not Born a Woman” (p.246)
Connell, “The Social Organization of Masculinity” (p.252)
Bunch, “Lesbians in Revolt” (p.129)
On Blackboard:
Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”
Feinberg, “Transgender Liberation” (p.148)

9/26: MOVEMENTS
In Reader:
Pateman, “Introducing the Subversiveness of Feminism” (p. 107)
Collins, “Defining Black Feminist Thought” (p.379)
Basu, “Globalization of the Local/Localization of the Global” (p.68)
Nicholson, “Feminism in ‘Waves’: Useful Metaphor or Not?” (p.49)
Hewitt, “Re-Rooting American Women’s Activism: Global Perspectives on 1848” (p.31)
Nnaemeka, “Forward: Locating Feminisms/Feminists” (p.317)
On Blackboard:

10/3: DIFFERENCE
In Reader:
Martinez, “La Chicana” (p.113)
On Blackboard:
Lugones and Spelman, “Have We Got a Theory for You!”
Kyosuke, “Trans Women, Male Privilege, Socialisation and Feminism”
Taylor and Rupp, “Forging Feminist Identity in an International Movement”
Firestone, “The Dialectic of Sex” (excerpt)
Radicalesbians, “Woman Identified Woman”
10/10: INTERSECTIONALITY
*Independent Research Project Proposals Due*
In Reader:
Dill and Zambrana, “Critical Thinking About Inequality” (p.176)
Anzaldua, “The New Mestiza Nation” (p. 227)
Lorde, “I Am Your Sister: Black Women Organizing Across Sexualities” (p.292)
Hartmann, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism” (p.187)
On Blackboard:
Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins”

10/17: GAZE
On Blackboard:
Kaplan, “Is the Gaze Male?”
Sturken and Cartwright, “Spectatorship, Power and Knowledge”
Butler, “Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions” (excerpted from *Gender Trouble*, p.128)
Film Screening: *Paris is Burning* (excerpts)

10/24: POWER
In Reader:
Bartky, “Foucault, Feminism and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power” (p.447)
On Blackboard:
hooks, “Is Paris Burning?”
Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes”
Young, “Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility and Spatiality”
Said, *Orientalism* (excerpts)

10/31: TBD

11/7: EPISTEMOLOGIES
In Reader:
Harraway, “Situated Knowledges” (p.412)
Narayan, “The Project of Feminist Epistemology” (p.370)
Abu-Lughod, “Orientalism and Middle East Feminist Studies” (p.218)
On Blackboard:
Harraway, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy”
Allen, “The Patriarchalization of Native American Tribes”

11/14: SEX / SEXUALITIES
In Reader:
Irigaray, “This Sex Which is Not One” (p.426)
On Blackboard:
Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body* (excerpts: Read ch 1-3)
Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Existence”  
Cohen, “The Kohti Wars: AIDS Cosmopolitanism and the Morality of Classification”  

11/21: NATIONS AND (TRANS)NATIONALISM  
In Reader:  
Sinha, “Gender and Nation” (p.227)  
Parrenas, “Servants of Globalization” (p. 202)  

On Blackboard:  
Tickner, “You Just Don’t Understand”  
Sassen, “Toward a Feminist Analytics of the Global Economy”  
Elshtain, “On Beautiful Souls, Just Warriors, and Feminist Consciousness”  

12/5: Dangaremba’s Nervous Conditions OR Condé’s I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem OR One of the Guys: Women as Aggressors in Torturers  

Final Drafts of Independent Research Project are due no later than December 12th (upload/email by 5 PM)