

Feminist Intersections: Advanced Feminist Theory (WS 475S)

Emory Department of Women's Studies, Spring 2008

W 4-6 p.m., Callaway S103

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Jazzman's Café (1st floor of Woodruff Library)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This seminar focuses on several life narratives in which the authorial voice identifies explicitly with multiple subject positions. The vectors of identity in the primary texts are gender, race, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, and class. Authors will range from Helen Keller, a person who self-identifies as a transgendered person with cerebral palsy, a black mother with depression, a young deaf French actress, a young white woman with psychiatric disabilities, an immigrant girl with facial anomalies, to an aging wheelchair user. Close reading and narrative analysis of these primary works will be guided by several fundamental feminist theoretical concepts: naming and the cultural work of language, representation, subjugated knowledges, positionality/standpoint, identity/identification, body/embodiment, sexuality, patriarchy, privilege, intersectionality, gender, normalcy, dependence/autonomy, and appearance. Our analyses will reveal how multiple identities intersect, conflict, and are negotiated through narrative and identity formation.

Prerequisite is WS 301 or 302 or the equivalent or permission of instructor.

The major questions we will bring to these narratives are:

- How does living through a disabled body affect the perspective and understanding of the author?
- How do the author's multiple identities intersect and work together?
- How are the author's gendered identity and sense of gender shaped by disability?
- How does the author use narrative, rhetoric, exposition, style, tone, and the other elements of writing to represent the author as a person with a disability?
- How does the author identify as disabled, gendered, and raced in a political or social sense?
- How does the author negotiate stereotypes of disability in forming a sense of self?
- How are the author's life choices affected by the functional informal aspects of disability and identification as disabled by self and others?
- How are the author's relationships with other people affected by the functional informal aspects of disability and identification as disabled by self and others?
- How does the writer's understanding of life experience as a disabled person change over

the course of the narrative?

- What does the writer want the story to tell the audience?

COURSE GOALS:

- form an intellectual community of women's studies scholars
- develop your skills of critical reading and analysis, research, writing, and oral expression
- broaden your exposure to and deepen your understanding of feminist theory and women's studies scholarship
- expand your knowledge of the experience and perspectives of women and persons with disabilities

PRIMARY REQUIRED READINGS

Clare, Eli. Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation. Cambridge, MA: SouthEnd Press, 1999.

Danquah, Meri Nana-Ama. Willow Weep for Me: A Black Woman's Journey through Depression, a Memoir. New York: Norton, 1998.

Grealy, Lucy. Autobiography of a Face. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

Johnson, Harriet McBryde. Too Late to Die Young: Nearly True Tales from a Life. 1st Ed. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2005.

Kaysen, Susanna. Girl, Interrupted. New York: Turtle Bay Books, 1993.

Keller, Helen, and Roger Shattuck. The World I Live In. New York Review Books Classics. New York; New York Review Books: 2003.

Kleege, Georgina. Sight Unseen. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999.

Laborit, Emmanuelle. The Cry of the Gull. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 1998.

These books are available in the Emory Bookstore or you can purchase them used or new from online booksellers. Secondary readings will be in an online reserve.

EVALUATION AND EXPECTATIONS

Every class day you will contribute to our on-going critical conversation. Your contribution will take the form of responses and interchanges with me and your peers as well as sharing your written critical responses. Our discussions should be at all times mutually respectful. You're encouraged to offer provisional opinions and responses, to explore and process your thoughts as part of the discussion. You are also expected to be respectful of discussion proportion so that everyone has the opportunity to participate equally.

1) WRITTEN CRITICAL RESPONSES (40%)

For any **8 of the 10 classes** (excluding first one and last three), you are to write a structured critical response to the reading that is due that day. Your response should be between one and two, double-spaced, typed pages, but **NO LONGER THAN 2 PAGES**. (Please put your **name, date, course number, and reading title** on this response paper.)

Organize your response around a **direct quote from your readings for the day**. Select a quote of one or two contiguous sentences, or a phrase, that strike you as incisive, important, compelling, or a summation of the ideas in the readings. This quote should act **as a point of entry** for you into the readings. Begin your response with that quote and explain the significance

of the idea in the quote to the day's readings and/or the issues we have discussed in class. Your response should not be limited to the one reading from which you selected the quote, but rather engage several of the readings.

Although the quote is a way to focus and generate your response, your analysis should address one or more of the **bulleted questions in the "course description"** above. Also consider the **discussion topics** listed in the course schedule for each meeting day.

These responses will allow you to synthesize your reading, reflect on the ongoing conversations, as well as place your readings in the larger context of the questions, issues, and discussions the course raises. Your responses will also help launch our class discussions, give you practice in critical writing, and allow me to get to know how and what you think. **You will be asked to share your quote and your analysis with our seminar community.**

Since many conversations are implicit or emergent from any reading, you should focus on one--or only a few--aspects of the reading or questions that interest you or pertain to your own intellectual projects. Your paper should have a focused topic and a thesis that is supported by specific ideas, quotes, or information from the reading. It should address or engage larger issues regarding gender and disability, but you should not simply summarize the reading. (This is not a free writing or a reading journal)

You will be graded on a hundred point scale for each response, depending on how well you demonstrate that you carefully read and thought about the material.

2) TERM RESEARCH PAPER (50%)

Each of you will do a **10-12 page final research project** on an aspect of gender and disability that has arisen from our conversation and reading. During the last few weeks of the course, students will produce an original research paper on a subject of their choice related to the themes of the class. Based on your interests and background, the papers can address gender and disability from the perspective of the humanities, social sciences, and/or sciences.

Your topic, selected in consultation with me, should be of interest to you and contribute to your larger intellectual project. You may define disability broadly and creatively. The process for completing this research project will be a carefully guided and structured research and writing process. Your research project will have three aspects:

- An interdisciplinary annotated bibliography of five secondary sources. Your sources should be taken from a wide range of scholarship, not just the internet.
- A 10-12 page written paper. Criteria for evaluation and suggestions for writing will follow. Your project must be both descriptive and analytical. **Final Papers due Wednesday, May 7, by 12:30**, which is our scheduled final examination time, when we will meet until 3:00 p.m.
- Oral mixed media presentation of your research to your peers. Your presentations should summarize the topic, methods of research, key arguments, and larger implications of the project. You may use notes, but do not read your presentation. Practice it in advance so that you can deliver it within the 10 minute time limit.

4) PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE (10%)

Since our class is a seminar, everyone is expected to attend, arrive on time, and participate in the discussions. You should be at all times respectful of one another's positions and opinions

and be attentive to the balance of conversation so that everyone has ample opportunity to speak. I will facilitate the discussion in a manner that accomplishes this. I encourage you to offer provisional comments, questions, and positions in order to create dynamic discussions in which we influence one another's ideas and opinions. Although personal and subjective responses to the issues and questions the course raises are welcome, we should use personal experiences and opinions as a way to critically examine the issues the readings raise.

You are expected to attend all classes in order to participate in the seminar. If you miss any classes without a documented excuse, your participation grade will be lowered. Documented excuses for absences are medical documentation (medical note, clinic record, or prescription medicine), Dean's letter, legal document, conference program indicating your participation, or funeral program.

EXTRA CREDIT

Extra credit is available for attending women's studies or disability studies events at Emory or other academic institutions. These events must have intellectual content; if that is in question, discuss this with me in advance for approval. Write up a one-page summary of the event and its intellectual significance; include your name, event, title, date, and location. You may submit up to **three extra credit reports**. These will affect your participation grade.

GRADING

Your final grade is based on the following scale:

| | |
|------------|--------------|
| 100-93 = A | 77-73 = C |
| 92-90 = A- | 72-70 = C- |
| 89-88 = B+ | 69-68 = D+ |
| 87-83 = B | 67-63 = D |
| 82-80 = B- | 62-60 = D- |
| 79-78 = C+ | Below 60 = F |

CONFERENCES

I am available for informal conversations or conferences about the class, your work, your larger interests or concerns, or whatever you might like to talk over. Consider me an available mentor. Although my formal office hours are limited to give me flexibility, I am available for scheduled telephone conversations at my home or at my Emory office.

POLICIES

Emory University complies with the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you need a classroom accommodation, please make an appointment with me to discuss this as soon as possible.

Strict adherence to the Emory College Honor Code is required in this course you are expected to be scrupulous about proper citation, quotations, and unintentional plagiarism.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Below are the topics for each week and the readings that are to be carefully and completely prepared for the class date indicated. Be sure to bring the book or articles to class as well as your response papers. You are required to print out all digital articles for highlighting and notetaking.

WEEK 1, Jan. 16: Introduction

Introductions; discuss syllabus, goals and requirements of course

Readings:

Mairs, Nancy. "On Being a Cripple." Plaintext: Essays. (Tucson, AZ: U of Arizona Press) 1986: 9-20. (Handout in class)

"Queers Read This," associated with the birth of Queer Nation
<http://www.qrd.org/qrd/misc/text/queers.read.this> (Handout in class)

Feminist Theory Keyword and Discussion Topic:

The politics of self naming

The cultural work of language

WEEK 2, Jan. 23

Readings:

Kleege, Georgina. Sight Unseen (Selections: Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, and 8)

Urla, Jacqueline and Alan C. Swedlund, "The Anthropometry of Barbie" in Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla, eds. *Deviant Bodies: Cultural Perspectives in Science and Popular Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana UP. pp. 277-313.

Martin, Emily. "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles." *Signs* 16/3 (1991): pp. 485-501.

Film clips: disability in mainstream movies

Feminist Theory Keyword and Discussion Topics:

Representation

The cultural work of metaphor

WEEK 3, Jan. 30

Readings:

Keller, Helen, and Roger Shattuck. The World I Live In. (Selections: Ch. 1-12, pp. 9-84 and My Story, pp. 161-179)

Collins, Patricia Hill. Chs. 1 and 2, *Black Feminist Thought*, 2nd Ed. NY: Routledge, 2000. pp. 1-43; notes 291-294.

Nielsen, Kim. "Helen Keller and the Politics of Civic Fitness." Paul Longmore and Lauri Umansky, eds., The New Disability History: American Perspectives (New York: New York University Press, 2001): 268-290.

Feminist Theory Keyword and Discussion Topics:

Subjugated knowledges

Standpoint theory

WEEK 4, Feb. 6

Readings:

Laborit, Emmanuelle. The Cry of the Gull.

Rich, Adrienne. "Notes Toward a Politics of Location" in *Blood, Bread, and Poetry*. New York: Norton, 1986. Pp. 210-232.

Young, Iris Marion. "Postmodernist Critique of the Logic of Identity" in *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. pp. 98-99.

Brueggeman, Brenda Jo. "Interlude 1," Lend Me Your Ear: Rhetorical Constructions of Deafness (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press), 1999: 81-99.

Film: Sound and Fury

Feminist Theory Keyword and Discussion Topics:

Identity and identification

Positionality

WEEK 5, Feb. 13

Readings:

Mairs, Nancy. "Body in Trouble." Waist-High in the World: A Life among the Nondisabled. (Boston: Beacon) 1996: 40-63.

Linton, Simi. "Conscripts to the Cavalry" and "Brave New World," My Body Politic: A Memoir. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Of Michigan Press) 2006:1-37.

Wendell, Susan. "Disability as Difference," Rejected Bodies (NY: Routledge) 1996: 57-84.

Thomas, Carol. "Defining Disability: The Social Model," Female Forms: Experiencing and Understanding Disability. (Buckingham England: Open UP) 1999: 13-32.

Feminist Theory Keyword and Discussion Topics:

Body

Embodiment

WEEK 6, Feb. 20

Readings:

Cooper, C. interviews with Ellen Stohl and with Hugh Hefner. *Ability Magazine*

Kleege, Georgina. "Helen Keller's Love Life," Gendering Disability, Eds. Bonnie G. Smith and Beth Hutchinson (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press) 2004: 181-191.

Storrs, B., "Devotees of Disability," *New Mobility* 6, pp. 50-53, 1997

Storrs, B., "Amputees, Inc.: Amputees pitching Products and Themselves to Devotees of Disability," *New Mobility* 7, pp. 26-31, 1997

Film: Untold Desires (54 minutes)
Want

Feminist Theory Keyword and Discussion Topics:

Sexuality

WEEK 7, Feb. 27

Readings:

Kaysen, Susanna. Girl, Interrupted

Chesler, Phyllis. "Introduction," Women and Madness. (New York: Palgrave MacMillian) 2005. (Original 1972). pp. TBD

Lerner, Gerda. "The Creation of Patriarchy" in *The Creation of Patriarchy*. (NY: Oxford, 1986) pp.212-244, notes 229-244.

McIntosh, Peggy. "White Privilege and Male Privilege" (orig. 1988) in *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*. eds. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins. Belmont CA: Wadsworth, 1992. pp. 70-81.

Feminist Theory Keyword and Discussion Topics:

Patriarchy

Privilege

Psychiatric disability

WEEK 8, Mar. 5

Readings:

Willow Weep for Me: A Black Woman's Journey through Depression, a Memoir

Wallace Sanders, Kimberly. *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007. pp. TBD

Baynton, Douglas, C. "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History" in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*. Eds. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky. NY: New York UP, 2001. pp. 33-57.

Cole, Johnetta Betsch and Beverly Guy-Sheftall. *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women's Equal in African-American Communities* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003. Chapter 3, "Collisions," pp. 71 -- 101. Notes, pp. 237-243.

Feminist Theory Keyword and Discussion Topics:

Intersectionality

Mar. 12- Spring Recess

WEEK 9, Mar. 19

Readings:

Clare, Eli. Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation

Butler, Judith. "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions," and "From Parody to Politics," in *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge: 1990. pp. 128-149, notes 168-9.

Colligan, Sumi. "Why the Intersexed Shouldn't Be Fixed: Insights from Queer Theory and Disability Studies," Gendering Disability, Eds. Bonnie G. Smith and Beth Hutchinson (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press) 2004: 45-60.

Stryker, Susan. "Transgender Feminism: Queering The Woman Question" in *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration*. Eds. Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford. New York: Palgrave, 2004: 59-70.

Feminist Theory Keywords and Discussion Topics:

Gender

WEEK 10, Mar. 26

Readings:

Johnson, Harriet McBryde. Too Late to Die Young: Nearly True Tales from a Life (Selections: Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11)

Kittay, Eva Feder. "Introduction" in *Love's Labor : Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency*. New York : Routledge, 1999. pp. 1-19; notes 189-98.

Patterson, Annette and Martha Satz. "Genetic Counseling and the Disabled: Feminism Examines the Stance of Those Who Stand at the Gate." Hypatia 17.3 (2002): 118-142.

Saxton, Marsha. "Disability Rights and Selective Abortion," Ricky Solinger, Abortion Wars: a Half Century of Struggle (1950-2000). (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1998: 374-393.

Film clip: Jerry Lewis's Telethon

Image of Harriet McBride Johnson on New York Times Magazine cover

Feminist Theory Keywords and Discussion Topics:

Dependence

Autonomy

Normalcy

WEEK 11, Apr. 2

Readings:

Grealy, Lucy. Autobiography of a Face.

Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1991. pp. 9-19, 265-291.

Featherstone, Mike. "The Body in Consumer Culture," in eds. Mike Featherstone, et. al. *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, London: Sage, 1991. pp. 170-196.

Bauer, Dale M. "'In the blood:?' Sentiment, Sex, and the Ugly Girl" in *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11.3 (1990) 57-75.

Film: Dwarfs, Not a Fairytale (54 minutes)

Feminist Theory Keywords and Discussion Topics:

The Politics of Appearance

WEEK 12, Apr. 9

Annotated Bibliography due in class

Working Thesis Statement; peer review and group discussion.

WEEK 13, Apr. 16

Working Thesis Statement due in class

Peer review and group discussion

WEEK 14, Apr. 23:

Student presentations

Final Examination period, Wednesday, May 7, 12:30-3:00

Final Papers Due

Student presentations during final examination period

INTERNET RESOURCES

In addition to the internet resources listed below, each of you might subscribe to DS-HUM, the standard chatlist for disability students and scholars in the humanities. You can subscribe using traditional commands by sending a message with nothing in the subject line to listserv@listserv.umd.edu. Your message should read “subscribe DS-HUM [Your Name]” (no brackets or quotes). Once you are subscribed to DS-HUM you can post messages by sending them to DS-HUM@listserv.umd.edu. I will, from time to time, ask you about current discussion strands as they come up, and you may want to bring remarks about these strands into your own weekly writings.

Useful Internet Resources

Society for Disability Studies, links page with information about study of disability
<http://www.uic.edu/orgs/sds/links.html>

Disability Studies In Literature (contains syllabi, resources, professional organizations)
<http://www.mith.umd.edu/research/projectlist.html>

The Disability Social History Project (contains a fantastic page of links)
<http://www.disabilityhistory.org/dshp.html>

Disability World Web Page (International Disability Developments)
<http://www.disabilityworld.org/>

Films Involving Disabilities (lists films by disability or by title)
<http://www.caravan.demon.co.uk/index.htm>

The Visible Human Project
http://www.nlm.nih.gov/research/visible/visible_human.html

Not Dead Yet (disability rights organization opposed to legalized physician-assisted suicide)
<http://www.notdeadyet.org>