



COURSE DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION TO FEMINIST THEORIES

Author Name: **Cherki Karkaba**

Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Faculty of Arts an Humanities, Beni Mellal
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Gender Studies Curriculum: A Step For Democracy and Peace
in EU-Neighbouring Countries with Different Traditions (GeSt)

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MA TITLE: Gender Studies

Instructor:

Name: Cherki Karkaba

Email: c.karkaba@usms.ma

Course code	Course title	Number of hours or number of credits	Study Form (face-to-face or online)	Course valid from*	Course valid to*	Course type (Obligatory /Optional)	Semester
Module 3	INTRODUCTION TO FEMINIST THEORIES	2hours/week	Face to face	October 2017	January 2018	Obligatory	1

1. A brief description of the course

The main focus of the course is to address the issue of theory and its relationship with lived social experience. In approaching the complex issue of theory, it is necessary to relate the different theories to the social and historical circumstances within which theories emerge. This point of departure is essential in introducing the students to Feminist theory (theories) which has (have) played a vital role in theorizing gender. An introduction to feminist theories is, in this way, also an introduction to gender theories, while admitting that gender studies is considered as an umbrella term for fields such as feminism, masculinity studies and sexuality studies.

2. Objective of the course

This course aims to attain the following objectives :

To enable the students to be familiar with the main ideas, concepts, and concerns of feminist theory.

To offer the students the academic tools to study feminist theories and acquire the skills to discuss these theories, raise questions about them, and contextualize them within larger historical, social and cultural contexts.

To teach the students how to analyze these theories in conversation as well as in connection to a variety of texts.

To enable the students to deal with the different ways in which feminist theories have contributed to the theorizing of gender. The course is also meant to introduce the students to Gender theories.

To teach the students the relevant skills allowing them to acquire the ability to synthesize the ideas from the course and present their own analytical arguments in writing.

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3. Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the module, a student should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify the key concepts in gender studies.
- Contextualize the different feminist theories they will be introduced to within larger historical, social and cultural contexts.
- Use feminist theories in demonstrating arguments.
- Develop reflexive skills in gender studies.
- Deal with feminist criticism and form critical perspectives.

***Asterisks means optional here**

4. Teaching method

The teaching method adopted in this course is hybrid and rests on both lectures and in-class discussions supported by precise assigned home readings. Students are required to read a number of assigned texts to be discussed in class in support of the lectures which constitute 50% of the overall time devoted to the course.

Students are also required to prepare oral presentations dealing with particular issues in theory.

5. Distribution of workload for students (i.e. lectures, seminars, individual work in hours, and total)

Attendance and active participation in class.

- Attendance will be taken to “participation” grade. 15%
- Reading assignments, on schedule. 15%
- Discussion 15%
- Mid-term Exam 20 %
- Final Exam 35%

6. Assessment

a. Methods of assessment

- Oral presentations
 - A final written exam
 - Percentages allocated to each method of assessment
- Attendance: 15%
- Reading assignments, on schedule. 15%
 - Discussion 15%
 - Mid-term Exam 20 %
 - Final Exam 35%

7. Course schedule

Week 1: Introduction to the course objectives and contents

The session will start with an introduction to the course description content and the selected texts to be studied.

- Presentation of the course objectives.
- Presentation of the course schedule.
- Presentation of the list of required readings.
- Discussion of students' expectations.
- General preliminary discussion about the issue of gender in society.

Week 2: General introduction to theory

- What is theory? Why should theories be elaborated at all?
- Discussion of the relationship between theory and social lived experience.
- Before Theory : Liberal Humanism. This point is a discussion of Peter Barry's first chapter in his book *Beginning Theory*.

Required reading:

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, Second edition, 2002 (1995)

Week 3: Gender and cultural studies

- The connection between Gender studies and Cultural Studies
- Difference as a central key concept in both fields.
- Discussion : demonstrate how difference « has become an indispensable conceptual category for contemporary gender theorists » (Cranny-Francis et al, *Gender Studies : Terms and Debates*, 2003, p.59)

This session aims to offer a smooth introduction to cultural studies and its central concern which is « difference ». The focus is then laid on difference as a key concept in gender studies. The session ends by warning the students about how gender has become a key concern in cultural studies and contemporary thought.

Week 4: Gender Studies as an umbrella multidisciplinary field including 3 subfields:

Feminism (women), **Masculinity studies** (men), **Sexuality studies** (hetero, homo)

After discussing the connection between Gender studies and cultural studies, this session focuses on the relationship between Gender studies, as an academic discipline, and feminism, considered by critics as a subfield. This session sheds light on the feminism and its definition in relation to the other subfields within Gender Studies: masculinity studies and sexuality studies.

Week 5: Sex and Gender, Masculinity and Femininity

- Sex as nature, biology, body
- Sex is traditionally divided into male and female, forming a hierarchical binary opposition.
- Masculinity and femininity as social, cultural and psychological constructions rather than biological.
- Masculinity and femininity as cultural constructs.

Week 6 : Feminist Theory and the theorizing of gender

This session attempts to offer a historical account of how feminist thought developed throughout the 18th and 19th centuries up to the beginning of the 20th century.

- **Gender in early and first wave feminisms:**
- **The political activism instigated by Mary Wollstonecraft** , *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) has remained at the core of Western feminist thought.
- Feminist's concern with women's **political and economic equality** with men.
- The **suffrage** groups such as the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) (founded in **1903**).
- **Civil rights movements in the 20th century** ► **economic equality**
- Women's **emancipation** goes through **equality between the sexes**.
- **Modernist liberationist / emancipatory humanist feminism.**

Week 7 : Gender from the second to the third wave of feminism

- The second wave feminism marked a shift from the political to the cultural.
- The second wave feminism played an important role in placing the focus on culture, cultural manipulation by cultural institutions in perpetuating the system of patriarchy with its ideology of domination.
- Gender developed into a more sophisticated process of theorising with the third wave.
- In 1990s 'third wave' feminism played an important role in **the theorising of gender** : it aimed at overcoming the difficulties surrounding the question of « woman » as a category as apposed to « man » as a domineering category.
- In common with **poststructuralism, third-wave feminism** abandons the concept of « woman » as a single collective identity. Instead it acknowledges **ambiguity** and difference for the sake of understanding the unique **issues and interests of each woman**.

Week 8&9: The contribution of Postmodern thought to the theorizing of gender

- The postmodern focus on language and discourse as a source of inspiration for gender theorists.
- Postmodern and poststructuralist insights into the complexity of slippery concepts of sex and gender.

- Foucault liberates the concept of discourse from the conventional departure from a fixed point of reference existing prior to the act of enunciation. The focus is rather laid on the effects of the communication processes which become a necessary medium for the production of meaning.
- Discourse as the producer of differences between things, people and cultures = gender as a discursive construct.
- The influence of postmodernism and post-structuralism has certainly contributed to the development of gender theories through the rejection of all forms of binary thinking. Post-modernism (or post-structuralism) implements a skeptical and inquisitive critical tool based on constant interrogation of concepts, which plays a decisive role in making the enterprise of theorizing gender an open construction site.

Week 9: The performative theory of gender : Gender as embodied performance

- Gender performativity as being linguistic and citational in nature.
- Performative pronouncements are part of a normative discourse, imposing on the body the imperative of behaving as masculine or feminine.
- Judith Butler's denial of the existence of a pre-given essential sex and her claim that the body goes through a process of continuous gender performance.
- The gender theory of performativity illustrates the complexity of theorizing gender. It corroborates the postmodern blurring of boundaries between the concepts related to gender. It demonstrates that gender is to be taken more seriously as a challenging concern in cultural theory.

Week 10: Gender in Postcolonial theory

- Brief introduction to postcolonial theory.
- The contribution of postcolonial feminism to the theorizing of gender.

Week 11: Written exam

Week 12: Oral exam

Recommended reading

Alsop, R., Fitzsimons, A. & Lennon, K. (2002). *Theorising gender*. Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press.

Barker, C. (2004). *The Sage dictionary of cultural studies*. London: Sage.

Beasley, C. (2005). *Gender and sexuality*. London: Sage Publication.

Butler, J. (1990, 1999) *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York and London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1993, 2011). *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of « sex »*. London and New York: Routledge Classics.

Cranny-Francis, A., Waring W., Stavropoulos P.& Kirkby J. (2003) *Gender studies: terms and debates*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Delphy, C. (1993) 'Rethinking Sex and Gender'. *Women's Studies Intl. Forum*, 16 (1): 1-9.

During, S. (1994). *The cultural studies reader*. London and New York: Routledge.

During, S. (2005). *Cultural studies: a critical introduction*. New York: Routledge.

Fausto-Sterling, A. (1993). The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough. *The Sciences*, March/April.

Fausto-Sterling, A. (2012). *Sex/Gender biology in a social world*. New York and London: Routledge.

- Fausto-Sterling, A. (2000). *Sexing the body: gender politics and the construction of sexuality*. New York: Basic Books.
- Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile bodies: toward a corporeal feminism*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Hartley, J. (2016). (Ed) *A dictionary of postmodernism*. Oxford, UK, Malden, USA: Wiley & Blackwell.
- Jackson, S. & Jones, J. (1998). *Contemporary feminist theories*. Edingburgh: Edingburgh University Press.
- Hutcheon, L. (1988). *The Canadian postmodern: a study of contemporary English- Canadian fiction*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Irigary, L. (1985, 1977). *This sex which is not one*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Laqueur, T.W. (1990) *Making sex: body from Greeks to Freud*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Lupton, G., Patricia M. S., Rosemary W. (1992). *Society and Gender: An Introduction to Sociology*. Macmillan Education Australia Pty Ltd.
- Milner, A. (1995). *Contemporary Cultural Theory: An Introduction*. London: UCL Press.
- Moi, T. (1985). *Textual / Sexual Politics*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Oakley, A. (1972) *Sex, gender and society*. London: Temple-Smith.
- Salih, S. (2002). *Judith Butler*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Showalter, E. (1990) (Ed). *Speaking of Gender*. London: Routledge.
- Stoller, R. (1968). *Sex and gender: on the development of masculinity and femininity*. New York: Science House, London: Hogarth Press.



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Storey, J. (1997, 2015). *Cultural theory and popular culture: an introduction*. New York :
Routledge.