

**POLSC 209 – Spring 2014**  
John McMahon  
M/W, 20:25-21:40, Room HW 1729

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## **WOMEN AND GENDER IN WESTERN POLITICAL THOUGHT**

### **Course Syllabus**

**Course Description:** The purpose of this course is to look critically at several historical junctures in the history of “Western” political thought in order to discern the role that gender, race, slavery, colonialism and empire play in configuring the meanings of power, legitimacy, citizenship and the state. Our historical focal points will include the Renaissance and early modern period in Europe, 18th & 19th century Europe and America, and contemporary debates about nations, citizenship, ethnic/racial divisions, war, and gender. But throughout the course we will be questioning what we even mean by “the West” or “western” and the degree to which this construct was always part of a global story of imperial aims and local resistances.

In each of the periods, three themes recur and inform our analytical framework:

- (1) Socially constructed and racialized conceptions of women and their bodies
- (2) Women's (culture- and class-shaped) resistance against such conceptions
- (3) Reconstructions and deconstructions of masculinity.

Within this framework, we will be posing a number of critical questions: How do norms of gender behavior and authority in the family affect notions of political power in the state? In what ways do ideas about sexuality and sexual conquest intersect with racisms and other ideologies justifying slavery, colonialism and war? How have male fantasies of colonized, African American, Middle Eastern and immigrant women as “the other” shaped images of European women, including images internalized by white feminists? Finally, to what extent have contests over the meanings and hegemony of manhood been the hidden stakes of modern political theorizing and practice, across diverse times and geographies?

This is a writing-intensive course, and it fulfills the GE requirement for Pluralism & Diversity. This class will primarily be a discussion format, with the occasional short lecture. Therefore regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. You must prepare for every class by doing **all** the reading, reflecting upon the course texts, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion. **Bring the relevant text to class, always!**

**Learning Objectives:** In addition to improving skills in reading and comprehending theoretical and historical texts; writing clear, lucid expository analysis; and thinking critically and inquisitively, students should develop a sense of the political theory “canon” as a terrain of contested interpretation. You should become interested in controversy over ideas, in different historical and cultural contexts, as worthy of serious and deep exploration in its own right but also acutely relevant to the political controversies (over gender, nation, ethnic and racial conflict) of today. Finally, you should try to improve your ability to engage in dialogue and debate through discussions in class and various modes of writing for class.

**Grading:** Your grade in the course will be based on the following forms of work:

1. **Attendance and Participation (20%):** consisting of regular attendance (after two unexcused absences, your participation grade drops by one letter for each absence), conscientious reading of all assignments, and informed participation in class discussion; visiting my office hours also counts as participation.
2. **Class Blog (on WordPress.com) (25%):** You must submit one short post responding to the readings for the day (minimum 250-300 words) and one to two discussion questions for one class session per week. Responding to/commenting on/discussing your colleagues' posts is encouraged (and may result in a bit of extra credit!), but is not required. You do not need write a response for the weeks when a take-home essay is due, but you may do so for extra credit. See course policies for more information regarding the content of your blog posts.
3. **Take-Home Essays (2 essays; 15% each, 30%total):** two five-page take-home essays in response to questions handed out in advance.
4. **Final Project (25%):** the primary form of the final project is an 8-10 page paper on a topic you will choose in consultation with me – this can take the form of a more thorough exploration of an issue from class, an independent question, etc. Alternatively, I am open to different forms of final projects – performance, short film, documentary, creative writing, artwork, etc. related to themes and questions from the class, if you receive my approval. If you choose an alternative project, you will be still be required to write a short paper connecting your work to course themes and objectives. I will work with all students on developing a topic/project, and we will use the semester to build up to the final assignment.

### **Course Policies**

- **Classroom philosophy and discussion:** I proceed from the belief that all of us come to this class as learners and thinkers. None of us, myself included, have the singular correct answer for any of the complex, important problems we will be discussing. Instead, we all have valuable claims, arguments, thoughts, questions, and experiences to bring to our efforts together. We seek, thus, to work collaboratively through these questions and issues in a critical, dialogical manner. This means that our course will be focused on discussion and debate; this course is a speaking-intensive class. If this is to work, physical presence in the classroom is not an end in itself. Students should be in class to interact with their fellow students in a community of learning. Most importantly, this also means that our classroom will be an **open and respectful space for all**. Some of the issues covered in this course may be closely intertwined with deep-seated beliefs. I expect, enjoy and encourage a lively classroom discussion, but it must always be conducted in a respectful manner, free of invective, and conscious of what may be profound differences of opinion and experience.
- **Class blog:** You are required to submit a short post responding to the readings for the day (minimum 250-300 words) + 1-2 discussion questions for the class **once per week**. You may choose which class session you submit for each week. You may also choose which reading or readings to investigate. The response can involve a critique of the reading and/or its argument, putting the reading(s) in conversation with previous reading(s), applying texts to contemporary situations, personal reflections, and much more. The discussion question(s) should include critical questions, broader thematic questions, questions relating the day's

readings and previous readings, etc. – ask yourself, what would you like to talk about in class that day? **Both the response and the question(s)** are due by **7:00 a.m. of the morning of the class session** for which you are writing, on that day's readings. This will require you to get a free WordPress.com account and follow the instructions on BB for posting and commenting

- Office Hours: I strongly encourage everyone to meet with me during my office hours. If you're having difficulty with the class; if you don't understand the concepts and need help; if you want to clarify my expectations for an assignment; if you want to discuss the results of an assignment or an exam; if you want to express a concern of any kind; if you want to talk politics or just talk about life, meet with me.
- Email and Blackboard: I will be sending out updates and information via email and Blackboard. Furthermore, you are responsible for all information and material on the course Blackboard site. Thus it is very important for you to (a) check Blackboard regularly and (b) make sure that the email address that Blackboard has registered for you is an email address you check regularly. If it isn't, change your email address on Blackboard by clicking "Update Email" on the tools menu. **Check the email associated with your BB account at least once or twice per day.**
- We will be using TurnItIn.com for both the exam and the final project. You will receive instructions on accessing our course TurnItIn page. *Note that for both take-home essays and for the final project, you must turn in BOTH a paper copy in class and an electronic copy to TurnItIn.*
- You may provide documentation to excuse an absence. In all other cases, absences will be unexcused and negatively affect your grade (after two unexcused absences).
- Even if you are absent on the days that a written assignment is due, you are still responsible for turning in the assignment on-time.
- It is your right to expect that your work be thoughtfully and fairly graded. I am happy to answer questions regarding grading and discuss your work with you.
- Credit/No-Credit Grading: College rules specify that to be eligible for credit/no credit, students must complete all course requirements.

### **Office of AccessABILITY**

In compliance with the ADA and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational access and accommodations for all its registered students. Hunter College's students with disabilities and medical conditions are encouraged to register with the Office of AccessABILITY for assistance and accommodation. For information and appointment contact the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1214 or call (212) 772-4857 or TTY (212) 650-3230

If needed, please be sure to make any necessary academic arrangements in advance of due dates so that I can best assist you.

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious

offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

If online submissions, exams, or the paper is found to have been plagiarized, disciplinary action will result. A grade of F for the assignment and/or course will be given, and, if necessary, the case will be submitted for further action at the level of the Department Chair and/or the Dean of Students.

For the take-home essay exams, in-text citations (Author, Page number) can be used to reference class texts. For the final project, you are required to use Chicago-style citations; I will circulate information and guidelines with the paper assignment. For a guide to what constitutes plagiarism, please consult <http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/plagiarismtutorial.php>; of course, discuss with me any questions you may have.

### **Course Materials**

You should purchase the following paperback books available at Shakespeare's Bookstore on Lexington Ave. or online, where you can find used copies for a few dollars.

- Alice Rossi, ed., *The Feminist Papers* (ISBN: 978-0553206036)
- *The Portable Machiavelli* (P. Bondanella & M. Musa, eds.) (ISBN: 978-0140150926)

All readings not in these texts will be available freely online or on the course E-Reserve page through the library. While not required, it is suggested that you bring printed copies of electronic readings to class. **We will be directly engaging with the day's readings in class, so do be sure to have it with you in some form.**

### **Reading Schedule**

When there is more than one reading for a given day, please read in the order listed on the syllabus.

January 27: Introduction – Welcome, Introduction, Brainstorming

#### **I. Introduction: Theory and Patriarchy, Old and New**

January 29: Positioning: Gender, Race, and Theory

- Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex" (E-Res)
- Wendy Brown, "Where is the Sex in Political Theory?" *Women and Politics* 7, no. 1 (1987) (E-Res)

February 3: Feminist Perspectives on Patriarchy and its Intersections

- Virginia Woolf, "A Room of One's Own," in Rossi, pp. 627-652
- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, in Rossi, *The Feminist Papers*, read 674-89
- bell hooks, "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression" (E-Res)

February 5: Further into the Historical and Social Construction of Patriarchy

- Joan Kelly, *Women, History and Theory*, Ch.1
- Zillah Eisenstein, “The Historical Continuity of Patriarchy,” excerpts, from *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, Ch. 2 (E-Res)
- Ruth Dixon-Mueller, *Population Policy & Women’s Rights*, pp. 23-27 (E-Res)

February 10: The Aristotelian Legacy

- Aristotle, excerpts from *The Politics* and *De Generatione Animalium* (E-Res)
- Wendy Brown, “Aristotle: The Highest Good for Man” from *Manhood and Politics* – read from p. 32- top of p. 48 (E-Res)

February 12: **NO CLASS (Lincoln’s Birthday)**

February 17: **NO CLASS (President’s Day)**

## **II. Femininity and Masculinity in Early Modern European Thought**

February 19: The Lady and the Witch?

- Kelly, “Did Women Have a Renaissance?” (Ch. 2), pp. 19-30 and 36-47
- Jacobs and Sprenger, “The *Malleus Maleficarum*” (E-Res)
- Ian MacLean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, excerpts from Introduction & Ch. 3, (E-Res)

February 20: Defending Women Against Attack: The *Querelle des Femmes* (**Thursday; classes follow Monday schedule**)

- “The Women’s Sharp Revenge” - readings from early 17th century England (E-Res)
- Kelly, excerpts from the “Early Feminist Theory and the *Querelle des Femmes*” (Ch. 4, pp. 65-79 and 83-95) and “Family and Society,” (Ch. 5, pp. 119-125)

February 24: Defending Masculinity Against *Fortuna*: Machiavelli

- Machiavelli, *The Prince*: Dedication and Chs. 6, 8-9, 15, 17-18 & 25-26
- Machiavelli (in *The Portable Machiavelli*), “The Mandrake Root,” “A Fable: Belfagor;” Letter to Luigi Cuicciardini (p. 58)

February 26: Deconstructing Gender in Machiavelli I

- Hanna Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, selections TBA

**March 3: TAKE-HOME ESSAY I DUE**

- In-class: TBD

## **III. Reconstructing Woman and Patriarchy for Modernity**

March 5: Liberalism and John Locke

- John Locke, *First Treatise of Government*, Ch. 5 all and Ch. 6 § 54-55, 61-67, 72 (E-Res)
- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chs. 4-7 (E-Res)

March 10: The Sexual Contract

- Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Ch. 1 all and Ch. 4 pp. 85-103 (E-Res)

- Get started on March 12 reading

March 12: The State of Nature and Reconstructing a Masculinized Republic: Rousseau

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Letter (all), Preface (all), Part I (pp. 37-48; bottom of 51-60), and Notes (note 9 all, note 10 p. 99, notes 11 and 12 all) (E-Res)

March 17: Rousseau and the Domestication of Women

- Rousseau, excerpt from *Emile* Ch. 5 (E-Res)
- Else Wiestad, "Empowerment Inside Patriarchy: Rousseau and the Masculine Construction of Femininity," from *Feminist Interpretations of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. Lynda Lange (E-Res)
- TBA blog post(s)

March 19: Defending and Challenging Women: Mary Wollstonecraft

- Wollstonecraft, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," in Rossi, pp. 44-85

March 24: Liberal Feminism? – John Stuart Mill

- Mill, "The Subjection of Women" (Rossi, skim 183-196; close read 196-238) and "Letter to Kansas Legislature" (Rossi, pp. 450-1)

**March 26: TAKE-HOME ESSAY II DUE**

- In-class: workshop

March 31: Early Colonial Male Fantasies of "the Other"

- Winthrop Jordan, "First Impressions," from *White Over Black* (E-Res)
- Rayna Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex," excerpts (E-Res)
- Londa Schiebinger, "Theories of Gender and Race" from *Nature's Body* (E-Res)

April 2: Feminist Orientalism and Tokenism? Intersections of Race/Gender/Colonialism

- Joyce Zonana, "The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of *Jane Eyre*" (E-Res)
- Zillah Eisenstein, *Against Empire*, Ch. 4 (E-Res)

April 7: True Women, Enslaved Women

- Alexis de Tocqueville, "American Women and American Wives" (E-Res)
- Mrs. A. J. Graves, "Woman in America" (E-Res)
- "Narratives of Escaped Slaves" (E-Res)
- Angelina Grimke, "Appeal to the Christian Women of the South" (in Rossi, pp. 296-306)

April 9: Constructing Liberal Feminism in the US: The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Women's Rights Movement

- In Rossi: The Grimke Sisters pp. 306-322 (pp. 282-296 optional); "Along the Suffrage Trail" & Seneca Falls Convention, pp. 407-421; the Kansas Campaign, pp. 453-470, Akron Convention and Sojourner Truth, pp. 426-29

April 14-April 22: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

April 23: Socialist Critiques of Liberal Feminism: Friedrich Engels and Emma Goldman

- Friedrich Engels, “Marriage and Property” from *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (in Rossi)
- Goldman, “The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation” (in Rossi)
- Goldman, “The Traffic in Women” (E-Res)

April 28: Traffic in Sex/Gender

- Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” pp. 157-183 and 188-end (E-Res)

#### **IV. Gender, Race, Empire, and Resistance**

April 30: Feminisms within and Against 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Century Colonialisms

- R. Hossain, *Sultana’s Dream* (E-Res)
- TBA reading on Rokeya Hossain

May 5: “Women,” Empire, and Feminisms: The Politics of Location and the War on Terror

- Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes” (E-Res)
- Minoo Moallem, “Whose Fundamentalism?” - from *Meridians* 2002 (E-Res)
- Transnational Feminist Practices, Statement Against War (E-Res)

May 7: Veiling and the “New Others” – Imperial Feminism and Its Opponents

- Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Need Saving?” (E-Res)
- Eisenstein, *Against Empire*, Ch. 7 (E-Res)

May 12: The Body, Transversal/Polyversal Feminisms in a Globalized World

- Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, pp. 122-133 (E-Res)
- Madhavi Sunder, “A Culture of One’s Own: Learning from Women Living Under Muslim Laws” (E-Res)
- Eisenstein, *Against Empire*, Ch. 1 pp. 1-8 and 16-19; Ch. 3 pp. 53-57 and 59-62 and 65-70 (E-Res)

May 14: Endings

- Concluding discussion
- **IN-CLASS PEER REVIEW for final project**

**Final Project due date TBA**