

Sample Syllabus (200-level)

Decolonial Feminisms

When/Where: TBD

Instructor: Carmen De Schryver

Office Hours: TBD

Course Description:

What is gender? If gender is constructed, is it constructed similarly in different parts of the globe? How do colonialism and gender intersect? Is patriarchy a universal form of gendered oppression? Does Western feminism therefore apply in non-Western contexts? In this course, we will interrogate the intersections between colonialism and gender through an exploration of the tradition of decolonial feminism(s). We begin with a historical and philosophical treatment of the role of gender in European colonialism, exploring how the colonial project involved the imposition of Western notions of gender and gendered binaries onto non-European cultures. We then examine, from the perspective of what has been called “Third World Feminism”, the continued coloniality of Western feminism given its self-presumed universality. The final half of the course provides an overview of some of the key thinkers in African and Latinx feminist philosophies, before concluding with a consideration of the desirability of global feminist solidarity. Some of the figures we will be looking at include Anne McClintock, María Lugones, Oyèrónké Oyêwùmí and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

Learning Outcomes:

- Gain an understanding of the historical connection between colonialism and gender
 - Develop a critical perspective on the exclusions of Western feminist theory
 - Become familiar with some of the key figures and debates in African and Latinx feminism
 - Cultivate skills in the close reading and understanding of challenging philosophical material
-

Course Elements

- Participation (30%)
 - (i) Preparation for class.
 - Readings. Weekly discussions will be based largely on the assigned readings. All the assigned readings for this course are mandatory. You are expected to read closely and attentively (often, this will mean reading twice).
 - Post on the discussion *before class*. Depending on the week, you will be asked to either pose a question of your own based on the readings, or answer the question posted on the discussion board.
 - (ii) Contribution to the discussion.
 - A positive contribution can take on a variety of forms: asking a clarificatory question, raising a discussion point, weighing in on an interpretation, pointing to a significant passage in the

text, etc. At minimum, it requires that you be a respectful and engaged listener not just to what I say but to what your peers say. Speaking up in larger group settings will be more comfortable for some than for others. If you tend to be more talkative, an important component of your contributing to a healthy and respectful discussion will be making space for others to speak. If you tend to be less talkative, I encourage you to meet with me during office hours to determine how we can cultivate a welcoming dialogical environment that works for you.

- Reflection papers (20%)
 - **Two** submissions of a short (two paragraph) reflection on that week's reading *in advance* of the class meeting.
 - This can consist in a reconstruction of the views expressed in the readings, a comparison between that week's readings and some of the material encountered previously in the course, a personal reflection on the readings, a development of your own position vis-à-vis the arguments made in the readings... and so on. The key requirement is that you engage substantively with the readings.
- Final paper of no more than 7 pages (50% total)
 - This can build on one of your reflection papers or pick a new topic
 - We will use the last two sessions for presentations (15-20 minutes) of drafts and as an opportunity to receive peer feedback (15%)
 - Your assessment on the final paper will factor in your engagement with your peers (10%) Guidelines for respectful and constructive peer feedback will be circulated on mySLC.

Course Materials

All of the readings will be made available in PDF.

Note on the Readings

In order to get the most out of the course, it is necessary that you read the assigned texts closely *in advance* of the class meeting. As you will see, most of the readings are relatively short. Do not be discouraged if you find the readings difficult or even confusing. Our class discussion is designed to (i) collaboratively make sense of the text and (ii) equip you with the skills that you need to fully comprehend and critically interrogate the challenging philosophical material. I will not expect you to understand everything that you read. I do, however, expect you to make a good-faith effort to interpret the text on your own, to note down any questions, and to participate proactively in the class discussion on this basis. I would also like to emphasize that raising clarificatory questions is not just okay but very much encouraged; if you are confused about something, it is very likely your peers will be as well, and your questions will be welcomed!

Course Schedule

The following is a tentative schedule for the semester. Changes to the schedule will be announced in class.

Week 1: *No Reading* – discussion of the syllabus, pedagogy and mutual expectations

Historical Background

Week 2:

Linda McDowell, "Place and Gender" in *Gender, Identity and Place*, pp. 1-33

Ann Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusions in Colonial Southeast Asia", pp. 514-551

Week 3:

Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, pp. 21-51

Gender and Colonialism

Week 4:

Sylvia Tamale, "Challenging the Coloniality of Sex, Gender and Sexuality" in *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, pp. 92-131

Week 5:

María Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System", pp. 186-209

Western Feminist Exclusions

Week 6:

Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses", pp. 61-88

Week 7:

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", pp. 66-111

African Feminisms

Week 8:

Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, *The Invention of Women*, pp. 1-31

Week 9:

Nkiru Nzegwu, *Family Matters*, pp. 1-23

Latinx Feminisms

Week 10:

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, pages TBD

Week 11:

Chela Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I", pp. 41-65

Decolonial Feminist Futures

Week 12:

María Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism", pp. 742-759

Week 13:

Serene Khader, *Decolonizing Universalism*, pages TBD

Week 14:
Presentations

Week 15:
Presentations