

Feminism in Action (SP 2024)
WGST 3850.01/ WGST 3850.H01/ POLS 3850.01
Women's and Gender Studies
Saint Louis University
M/ W 3:10-4:25 pm
Beracha 216

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COURSE DESCRIPTION This course addresses feminist activism on a wide range of issues (including domestic violence, rape, education and health care), and in a variety of forms (including writing, theater, public protests and coalition building). It gives students the opportunity to study the scholarship of activism and to participate in feminist action.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By coming to class *prepared, curious, open-minded, and prepared to contribute to our classroom community*, you will, by the end of the semester, achieve the learning objectives:

- *Understand the range of issues feminists address through activism;*
- *Identify and draw from examples of feminist-friendly strategies for effecting change;*
- *Engage in an activist project, analyzing a problem well and developing appropriate, effective forms of activism, thinking both practically and creatively;*
- *Engage your classmates (and their knowledge and skills, of course) in devising and carrying out your project, and, in turn, contribute your feedback and skills to their projects;*
- *Read more thoughtfully, speak more confidently, and write more comfortably, in a variety of formats; and*
- *Better envision yourself as an empowered, effective feminist/ activist: one who knows their strengths and weaknesses, and can assess and use available resources to contribute to the building of a better, more just, more feminist world.*

REQUIRED MATERIALS & CANVAS

There is no required textbook for this class, but students are expected to print articles/ bring assigned materials to class.

This course has a Canvas site that is available through MySLU. Canvas will be used in the following ways:

- Required readings: Articles will be posted, usually as PDF files or web links. Students should print articles and bring them to class.
- All handouts and assignments, including a copy of this syllabus, are available on Canvas.
- Written assignments will be submitted through Canvas.
- Announcements and important links will be posted on Canvas.

GRADING

Attendance, Participation, & In-Class Assignments 15%

Personal Reflections 15%

Community Engagement Actions 30%

Activist Project (All 5 Stages + Peer Support) 40%

Attendance: Attendance is necessary in this class. Students can miss 3 classes throughout the course of the semester, without penalty. Additional absences will lower your participation grade. Students who are having difficulty with attendance are encouraged to contact the instructor as soon as possible and remain in active communication to determine reasonable accommodations.

Participation: Attendance is key, but participation goes beyond your presence in the room. Participation means reading materials in advance, bringing them to class, listening to your classmates, and making your own contributions to discussions. It means listening with curiosity and keeping an open mind, taking notes, and asking questions of your peers. Participation is about making this class different than it would be if you, specifically, were not a part of it.

Personal Reflections: Personal reflections are short written or creative reflections that invite you to reflect on your own experience as a feminist/ activist. These reflections ask you to consider your own experience in conversation with assigned sources and larger themes related to feminism in action. You are required to complete 3 of 4 personal reflections, one of which must be the Killjoy Survival Kit.

Community Engagement Actions (10 hours): Each student will be responsible for completing ten hours of off-campus and/ or online actions, utilizing at least three distinct tactics. Two of these hours will be completed as part of class assignments (the post-it action and the sidewalk chalk action). The additional eight hours need to be completed by March 27. More information about this assignment will be given in the first weeks of the semester.

Activist Project (10 hours): For your final project this semester, you are invited to take what you have learned in class, in previous courses, and through personal experiences, and use that knowledge to design a feminist action. The shape of your action is entirely up to you. You can stage a protest, create an art installation, curate an archival collection, write a social justice anthem, jumpstart a support group... or truly anything else you can imagine. The idea is to take your intellectual work—learning theory, history, etc—and put it into practice.

The project is divided into stages to scaffold your work and to give you maximum feedback on your project as it develops. A full assignment sheet with details on the project will be given out early in the semester. The stages and deadlines are as follows:

- **Stage 1: The Problem [~2 page paper] (Due Feb 26)**
- **Stage 2: Learning from Others [~2 page paper + 10 Community Engagement Hours] (Due March 27)**
- **Stage 3: The Action [10 hour individual action] (Due April 22)**
- **Stage 4: Presentation (Due Date TBD)**
 - Each student will present their project in a showcase of presentations that will be open to the WGS community and friends. Presentation times will vary based on the number of students but will be announced in advance.
- **Stage 5: Reflection Essay [6-8 pages] (Friday May 10)**

Peer Support (3 hours): In addition to completing your own action, you will earn credit for work you do in support of classmates' activism. This could include doing graphics or photography for someone, helping set up an event, participating in a brainstorming meeting, editing a brochure, etc. The total amount of peer support time should be at least 3 hours. You can support one person for three hours, or a number of people/ projects for three hours total. A form will be provided for you to log your hours. Reflection on your peer support hours will be incorporated into your final reflection essay.

COURSE POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS:

Late work: The personal reflections and first 3 stages for the activist project can be submitted within one week of the deadline, for credit minus a 10% late penalty. The last two stages of the activist project (action and paper/ presentation) need to be submitted by the deadline in order to earn credit. Students with concerns about submitting work on time are encouraged to contact the instructor in advance of the deadline.

Community Care Policies:

- Please prepare in advance of class. Review the assigned material, reflect on it, and bring specific thoughts and questions to create a fruitful discussion.
- Please learn and use the names of classmates.
- Keep in mind that this course covers a variety of topics, which may elicit strong opinions or personal feelings for you and/or your classmates. Please listen closely and display respect for everyone in our community, as we explore these ideas together.
- You have the right to request content warnings for specific subject matter, the use of an alternate name or personal pronouns, or other accommodations from the instructor, to improve your ability to participate in the course. You also have the right to remove yourself from class discussions when necessary and to follow-up with the instructor afterward.
- You are encouraged to use any necessary accommodations provided through Disability Services. If you have disability accommodations you plan to use, please bring them to the instructor's attention in advance.

- Please arrive prior to class start time and wait to “pack up” until class is completed.
- On certain occasions, we will use electronic devices (laptops, cell phones, tablets) as part of our course work. **For all other meetings, please silence and store electronic devices (laptops, cell phones, tablets, etc) outside of your work space for the duration of the class.**
- Whenever possible, students are asked to remain in class for the duration of the period.

WGS Portfolio: Portfolio entries of work from this course are required of WGS majors and encouraged for WGS minors. WGS has an online portfolio program that is easy to set up and use. Megan Barbeau (WGS Administrative Assistant) or I will provide you with all the information you need to do so. WGS majors (and minors, hopefully) will add their paper from this course to their portfolio. You may also want to use the portfolio at this time to organize material from your other courses, but that is optional.

Information on academic integrity and plagiarism, disability accommodations, Title IX (equity and sexual harassment protections), the Student Success Center, University Writing Services, COVID-19 policies, Basic Needs Security (help securing food, etc) and the University Counseling Center are available by scanning the QR code below. For additional information or help accessing these resources, please reach out to the instructor.



WHEN YOU HAVE QUESTIONS . . .

- You can bring them to class.
- You can ask me via email. (I check my email at least once a day Mon-Fri, and occasionally on weekends. If you have not received a response within 24 hours during the week, or within 48 hours over the weekend, please reach out again.)
- You can set up an appointment to meet.

. . . YOU DESERVE RESPONSES.

COURSE SCHEDULE

All readings/ assignments should be completed ahead of class for the day they are listed. This schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in-class and on Canvas.

Personal Reflections: 3 of 4 required, one of which must be the Killjoy Survival Kit. (In other words, you may skip the Defining Feminism/ Activism assignment, the Feminist Manifesto, *or* the Feminist Playlist.)

UNIT 1: FOUNDATIONS & DEBATES

W Jan 17 **Intro to Class/ Each Other/ Feminism(s)**
In-Class: “Bad Feminism” (Gay) [video]

W Jan 24 **Feminism(s): What is it? What “counts”?**
Readings: *Living a Feminist Life* [excerpts] (Ahmed)
• Assignments:

- Complete the introduction survey on Canvas.
- Bring something to class that you consider “feminist.” This can be literally anything—a meme, a song, a book, a pin, an item of clothing, etc—but it should be something that you can show to the class and connect to “feminism” as you understand it.

M Jan 29 **Feminism(s) and Feminist Principles (What do feminists believe?)**

- Readings: “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex” (Crenshaw)

W Jan 31 **Feminist Principles & Manifestos**

- Readings: A Killjoy Manifesto (Ahmed)
- Assignment: Personal Reflection 1: Your Definition of Feminism

M Feb 5 **Tactics (What do feminists/ activists do?)**

- Readings: *Beautiful Trouble* excerpts (Boyd)
- Assignment: Personal Reflection 2: Your Manifesto

W Feb 7 **When is Activism Performative? / Calling out & Calling In**

- Readings: TBD
- Assignments:
 - Post-It Activism Project Due

UNIT 2: CASE STUDIES: IDENTITY-BASED ACTIVISM

M Feb 12 **No Class – 1-on-1 Meetings**

W Feb 14 **No Class – 1-on-1 meetings**

- M Feb 19 Disability Activism: Camp Crip and the ADA**
- Video: *Camp Crip* [documentary, running time: ~1 hour, 45 minutes]
 - Please view the entire documentary prior to class.
 - **Sidewalk Chalk Action Due**
- W Feb 21 Lesbian Activism: Women’s Music Festivals**
- Readings: “By The Time I Got to Wombstock” (Morris)
 - Assignments: Personal Reflection 3: Feminist Playlist
- M Feb 26 Stage 1: The Problem**
- Assignments:
 - Stage 1: The Problem
- W Feb 28 Trans Self-Expression: Fashion and Poetry**
- Readings/ Video:
 - *Femme in Public* excerpts (Menon)
 - “Alok V Menon on Fashion’s Genderless Future” (Menon video)
- M Mar 4 LGBTQIA+ Activism: AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP)**
- Readings: *Let the Record Show* excerpt (Schulman)
- W Mar 6 Black Anti-Capitalist Activism: Rest is Resistance**
- *Rest is Resistance* excerpt (Hersey)
- M Mar 11 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**
- W Mar 13 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**
- M Mar 18 Fat Activism: The Fat Underground**
- Readings:
 - Life in the Fat Underground (Fishman)
 - Fat Liberation Manifesto (Fat Liberation)

UNIT 3: CASE STUDIES: VIOLENCE

- W Mar 20 Police Violence: Say Her Name**
- Video: “How the ‘Say Her Name’ Campaign Began” (~20 min)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFQLc-AANLY>
 - Explore the “Say Her Name” website
- M Mar 25 Street Violence: Take Back the Night and Stop Telling Women to Smile**
- Readings/ Videos:
 - “History of Take Back the Night”
 - “Stop Telling Women to Smile” (~6 min)

- Explore the Stop Telling Women to Smile website

W Mar 27 **Stage 2 & Review**

- Assignments: Stage 2 Learning from Others + Community Engagement Hours Due

M Apr 1 **NO CLASS – EASTER BREAK**

W Apr 3 **Sexual Violence: Chanel Miller**

- Watch Emily Doe’s Victim Impact Statement (~50 min)

UNIT 4: CASE STUDIES: SEXUALITY AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

M Apr 8 **Sex Education**

- Listen to “A Very Specific Mary Poppins” (~40 min)
- Explore the Scarleteen website.

W Apr 10 **Activist Speed Dating**

- Bring a 2 minute elevator pitch of your project, what you need, and what you can offer

M Apr 15 **Forced Sterilization**
View in class: *No Más Bebés*

W Apr 17 **Abortion**

- Read “Calling Jane” (King)

M Apr 22 **Feminist Action: Stage 3: Action Due**

W Apr 24 **Maternal Health**

- Read “About Black Maternal Health” (House of Representatives)
- Watch “Full Circle” (~4 min)
- Explore the Jamaa Birth Village Website

M Apr 29 **Killjoy Survival**

- Readings: “A Killjoy Survival Kit” (Ahmed)
- Assignments: Personal Reflection 4: Feminist Killjoy Survival Kit

W May 1 **Flex Day**

M May 6 **Looking Back/ Looking Forward**

- Assignments: Feminist Action: Stage 4: Reflection Essay Due

TBD **Presentations**