**Women's Studies 1116 (Spring 2000)**

*Investigating Women's Realities*

**Instructor:** Nancy Pollak  
**Room:** A118g  
**Phone:** 604-323-5370  
**Office hours:** Mon., Wed., & Thur.: 1 pm - 2 pm (or call to make other arrangements)

**Required text:** *Women's Studies 1116 Course Reader*, available from Langara Bookstore

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**Weekly Topics, Readings and Assignment Due Dates**

- **Week #1** Jan. 8 or 10
  
  **Introduction to the Course**
  
  **Topics:**
  - Overview of course content and assignments
  - Methods of learning and teaching
  - Raising our voices, telling our stories: Some fundamentals of Women's Studies

- **Week #2** Jan. 15 or 17
  
  **Why Study Women?**
  
  **Topics:**
  - Sexism 101: Oppression’s deep roots
  - The question of power: Who constructs the idea of “woman”?
  - And questions of identity and history: Complexity, diversity, and voice
  - Your group project: Creating groups and assigning topics

**Readings:**

- **CR 1** “Remaking manhood through race and ‘civilization’” by Gail Bederman.  


- **CR 3** “Sifting Islam from fundamentalism: Muslim feminists struggle” by Mayyar S. Javed.  

- **CR 4** “Cuntspeak: Words from the heart of darkness” by Jane Caputi.  

**Assignment:** Practice Reading Comprehension Sheet
• Week 3: Jan. 22 or 24

The Power of Theory – and Some Feminist Theories

Topics:
• The power of questions: Feminist theory as tool, not dogma
• An overview of feminist theories: A churning sea with many currents
• Speaking in tongues: Getting to know the lingo of Women's Studies discourses

Readings:

⇒ Assignment: Reading Comprehension Sheet

• Week 4: Jan. 29 or 31

“She’s a Family Woman” – Why We Never Hear This

Topics:
• Love & marriage: Site of power, site of servitude
• Intimate and regulated: Ideology and the state make themselves at home
• The politics of housework: Is it work – and is this situation workable?

Readings:

⇒ Assignment: Reading Comprehension Sheet

• Week 5: Feb. 5 or 7

Motherhood: Just Doin’ What Comes Naturally?

Topics:
• Natural, essential, and undermined: Motherhood’s mythic status and rougher reality
• Joy and sorrow: Making choices about how or if to mother
• Right mothers, wrong mothers: Surveillance and stigma

Readings:


⇒ Assignment: Reading Comprehension Sheet

• Week 6: Feb. 12 or 14

**Housebroken: Women's Active Appetite for Change**

Topics:
- Activists R Us: The theory and look of women’s protest
- Outrage: The fear of women’s anger; overcoming internalized oppression
- Multidimensional consciousness: Acting on many fronts

Readings:


• Week 7: Feb. 19 or 21

**Group Project Presentations**

⇒ Assignment: Due date for Interview assignment

⇒ Group Projects: Presenting groups will submit 1) Summary Sheet; 2) Attendance Record, and 3) Bibliography

• Week 8: Feb. 26 or 28

**Group Project Presentations**

⇒ Group Projects: Presenting groups will submit 1) Summary Sheet; 2) Attendance Record, and 3) Bibliography

• Week 9: March 5 or 7

**“Our Bodies, Our Selves:” Reproductive Rights**

Topics:
- Bodily integrity: The abiding link between women’s rights and reproductive rights
- Race and class: Making visible the inequities of reproductive “choice”

Readings:


Assignment: Reading Comprehension Sheet
• Week 10: March 12 or 14

Reproductive Technology: Whose Needs, Whose Values?

Topics:
- Bodily integrity, Part 2: So you thought it was your body . . .
- Perfected life, rejected life: Disability and reproductive technology

Readings:

• Week 11: March 19 or 21

Violence against Women: In the Context of Social Control

Topics:
- The abuse of girls and women: Personal experiences with ideological roots
- The institutional ground: Understanding violence against women in the context of social control, economic vulnerability, and inequality
- Sisterhood and solidarity: Overcoming fear and making change together

Readings:
CR. 24 “Giving fear the finger” by Anna M. Standish. Shameless, spring 2006, Toronto.

➔ Assignment: Reading Comprehension Sheet

• Week 12: March 26 or 28

Sex Work as Women's Work

Topics:
- The sex trade: Finding our way into the issues
- Beyond sensationalism: The real crimes of global sex trafficking
- Listening to sex workers: Exploitation and resistance

Readings:

• Week 13: April 2 or 4
Course Review and Wrap-Up

Topics:
- Realism & idealism – Don't leave home without both!

Readings:
**Assignments**

**Women’s Studies 1116**

_**Instructor:** Nancy Pollak_  
_Rm.: A – 118G_  
_Phone:_  
604-323-5370

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Readings Comprehension Sheets (15%)</td>
<td>See outline for dates</td>
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<td>In-class writing on questions about the week’s assigned readings. Done 5 times; each worth 3 points.</td>
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| 2. Interview (25%)                                                       | Wk. 7 – Mon. class: Feb. 19  
|                                                                            | Wed. class: Feb. 21        |
| Interview a woman or girl of a different generation than your own. Write a report that reflects on her experiences, with reference to Course Readings and course concepts. |                           |
| 3. Group Project: “Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow” (25%)                     | Presentations: Weeks 7, 8  |
| Participate in a group research project, including a class presentation. See details. |                           |
| 4. Class participation (10%)                                              | Each class                |
| Attend and participate in classroom learning activities.                  |                           |
| 5. Final Exam (Take-home) (25%)                                           | Finals                    |
| To receive course credit you must write and submit this take-home exam.   |                           |
Grading

A+ To receive an A grade, complete all the required assignments with consistently excellent standard.

A- To receive a B grade, complete the required assignments with a consistently high standard.

B+ To receive a C grade, complete the required assignments with a satisfactory standard.

B- Marginal performance. Credit granted but insufficient to proceed to next level.

C Insufficient completion of assignments and/or unsatisfactory standards.

Letter Grade Equivalency

A+ = 96-100
A = 86-95
A- = 80-85
B+ = 76-79
B = 72-75
B- = 68-71
C+ = 64-67
C = 60-63
C- = 55-59
D = 50-54
F = 0-49
**** GUIDELINES for ASSIGNMENTS ****

1. Readings Comprehension Sheets

**Purpose:**
You are expected to do the Course Readings every week. The Readings Comprehension Sheets have 3 purposes:

- to get you in the habit of **identifying the key points in an article**, which will help you to focus on the subject matter and the author’s perspective;
- to increase the usefulness of the Course Readings in class discussions and other assignments, and in your own thinking about the course;
- to ensure that you do the readings!

**Guidelines:**
1) To prepare for this assignment, you will need to read the weekly articles in the Course Reader. While reading, make notes about the author’s key points: their main ideas and insights, their distinctive point of view, their own discoveries and concerns. **Bring your notes to class.**

2) At the beginning of designated classes, you will complete a Readings Comprehension Sheet. The Sheet will ask about **1 article** in the week’s assigned readings. You will need:

- to **identify 3 key points** made by the author(s);
- to answer a **specific question** about the article’s content.

** This is a closed book exercise, but you can use your own notes. **

3) Your answers will be in point form, not essay-style.

4) Each Sheet is worth 3 points. The assignment is worth 15 points in total. If you miss class or arrive late, you will not be able to make up the assignment.
2. Interview
You will interview a woman or girl of a different generation than your own. You will then write a paper that analyzes and reflects on her life experiences and beliefs, with reference to Course Readings and concepts.

**Purpose:** The Interview assignment will allow you:
- to practice the research method of oral history;
- to examine the impact of socio-economic structures and belief systems in the life of an individual female, including her resistance to these factors;
- to use course concepts and Course Readings in your analysis of the interview;
- to reflect on your own values, beliefs and expectations as a woman or man, including reflections on your learning process doing this assignment.

**Guidelines:**

**Preparation:**
- Choose an interviewee, explain your project, establish ground rules for confidentiality, and agree on a time and place for the interview.
- Be sure to schedule the interview well before the due date. Try to arrange an uninterrupted time of at least 2 hours. You may need to do a follow-up session.
- Develop a set of questions prior to the interview, yet also be willing to deviate from your script. Your goal is to examine the impact of factors such as gender roles, class, ethnicity, sexuality, family life, motherhood, migration, and work in her life.
- Be prepared to take notes during the interview. Tidy them up immediately afterwards so you don’t forget what was said. Try not to use a tape recorder (they tend to inhibit the conversation).

**Note:** Possible interview questions will be handed out in class.

**Writing the paper:**
Write a 1,300–1,500-word paper, double-spaced, typed, and stapled. Please put your name at the top of the first page only.
- **Begin with a brief summary:** Who you interviewed (use a pseudonym), how you know her, why you selected her, and how well you think the interview went for both of you. Provide a thumbnail description of your interviewee (age, birthplace, family status, cultural background, occupation if applicable, etc.).
- **Identify and explore at least one major theme** that emerged from your reflections on her life. In general, you will consider the effects of social structures, ideologies, economics and cultural factors on her experience as a female. How did she negotiate these factors? In her life, what were some of the limitations and opportunities? How did she comply and/or resist?
- **Reflect on how your interviewee described her own life,** but also consider a feminist interpretation of her experiences. Do this by using course concepts and referring to articles in the Course Reader.
- **Describe your own learning process:** Did anything surprise you? Did you need to re-think your belief or attitude about something? What would you like to explore further?
3. **Group Research Project: “Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow”**

You and 3–4 other students will form a group that examines a contemporary women's issue through the framework of “Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow.” In other words, you will explore how the issue has evolved over time by researching its historical roots, the contemporary situation, and future trends (including your own aspirations for the future).

**Purpose:** The Group Project gives you the opportunity:
- to collaborate with a small group of students in researching a Women's Studies issue;
- to deepen your understanding of the historical trajectory of a particular women's issue;
- to apply course concepts to your analysis, such as the significance of women's diversity and resistance; and
- to work collectively in conceiving and delivering a creative class presentation.

**Guidelines:**

1) **Working together as a group:**
   - You must schedule and participate in at least three substantial meetings together.
   - At the beginning, give yourselves time to simply talk about what you already know or think about your subject. Let your curiosity run free. Explore your beliefs, your personal relationship to the issue, your family's experiences, your cultural assumptions . . .
   - **Pay attention to each person's ideas,** show respect for each other, and create room for each person to contribute. Some people are fast talkers, others are silent thinkers – take the time to hear from everyone at all your meetings.
   - **Be practical** and well organized: **Take notes** about what you each decide to do. **Divide the research** in a fair manner. **Follow up** on what you agree to produce.
   - Aim to deliver a lively and stimulating presentation that engages the class in some way. Use any format but avoid a non-interactive panel or a bland power-point presentation.

2) **Presentation:** Your group will create a classroom presentation that illuminates what you have learned together. The presentation should be about 25 minutes long, followed by a 10-minute class discussion (based on questions you have prepared for the class).

3) **Your group will be evaluated on the basis of:**
   - the depth and clarity of your presentation – avoid being overly simplistic;
   - your analysis of the historical dimensions of the issue (e.g., the social, cultural, economic, and political factors at play, over time);
   - **your ability to apply course concepts to the subject matter**;
   - your reflections on what you learned about yourselves in relationship to the issue;
   - your ability to engage your classmates (i.e., encourage their participation).

- Your group must submit three things: 1) A point-form **Summary** of your key findings; 2) An **Attendance Record** of your joint meetings; and 3) A **Bibliography** of your research sources.
The group will receive one mark. Points will be deducted from an individual's mark if she or he did not attend the substantial meetings or did not contribute fully in the group's efforts.