

Applicant Information:

- 1) **Department:** Women's Studies
- 2) **PI:** Dr. Jessica Schiffman
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Women's Studies
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Course Information:

- 1) **Course Title:** Theory and Methods in Feminism
Course Number: WOMS313
Course Description: This course focuses on the visions and methods that feminist scholars use to study issues within and across a range of disciplines. Students will read and discuss how feminist scholars rethink analytical paradigms and create new theoretical models to guide their work. Feminist theory is presented as an intellectual history placing theoretical frameworks in conversation with other perspectives. Students will develop a critical awareness of their own research methods and the research methods of others.
- 2) **Expected Enrollment Limit Per Course Offering:** 40
- 3) **Course Status:** WOMS313, Theory and Methods in Feminism, is a new course that is now in the course approval process and is scheduled to be offered for the first time during Fall Semester 2012. This course will become a permanent part of the Women's Studies curriculum and is required for all Women's Studies Majors beginning in Fall 2012. The Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate has already approved this change to our major requirements.

General Education Goals: The learning objectives of WOMS313 further a number of the University's General Education Learning goals. While this course fulfills requirements for Women's Studies Majors, its alignment with these goals ensures that WOMS313 is a valuable and relevant course for students throughout the University.

- 1) **Attain effective skills in (a) oral and (b) written communication, (c) quantitative reasoning, and (d) the use of information technology.**
Students will acquire knowledge of various feminist research methodologies and apply these methodologies to their own research project. During the course of developing and executing their research projects students will need

to orally explain and justify their choice of methodologies and how they apply to their research question. Through the multi-phased process of executing their research project they will produce a variety of forms of written communication including: research project proposals, first drafts, final drafts and project abstracts. Academic research skills, particularly the use of academic databases, are crucial for developing quality projects. The development and application of quantitative and qualitative reasoning skills are necessary components for argument development and engagement with outside scholarship.

- 2) **Learn to think critically to solve problems.** The development of critical thinking skills are essential for students to engage with various feminist scholars' explanations of and solutions to gender inequality. Students will evaluate these various theoretical perspectives and will develop the tools to apply these methods in their own work.
 - 3) **Be able to work and learn both independently and collaboratively.** Through peer edits of their individual research project and group engagement with various theoreticians student will have the opportunity for both independent and collaborative work.
 - 4) **Understand the diverse ways of thinking that underlie the search for knowledge in the arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences.** With its emphasis on Feminist Epistemology this course is precisely about the search for and development of knowledge. Students will explore a variety of different ways of thinking to deepen their understanding of how knowledge is constructed and how feminists have and continue to critique that knowledge.
 - 5) **Develop the ability to integrate academic knowledge with experiences that extend the boundaries of the classroom.** As we engage with, discuss, and seek to understand the great variety of feminist theories, students will be encouraged, through class discussion, to articulate how these theoretical positions apply to and are exemplified in everyday life.
 - 6) **Develop an international perspective in order to live and work effectively in an increasingly global society.** Reflecting the current state of the field this course dedicates considerable time to issues of globalization and transnational feminist theories and activism. This current emphasis in feminist studies is used to evaluate the shortcomings of past theoretical constructions.
- 4) **Student Learning Goals Primarily Emphasized:** All three learning goals are simultaneously emphasized and work together as students are required to both engage with the range of feminist theories and methodologies and develop their own research projects.
- 1) **Students will understand how new knowledge is generated and disseminated through scholarship, and the importance of scholarship to society.** As discussed above in reference to both emphasis on Feminist Epistemology and extending the boundaries of the classroom, students will

achieve these learning goals as they read and discuss the feminist theories covered during class meetings.

- 2) **and 3) Students will articulate a scholarly question; engage in the key elements of the scholarly process; and situate the concepts, practices or results of scholarship within a broader context. Students will create an original scholarly or creative project.** As students develop their original scholarly research project they will be required to articulate either a question that their project will answer or a problem that their application of feminist methodology will solve. To effectively answer their question or propose a solution to their problem students must engage in the key elements of the scholarly process and articulate their project's significance to the broader context.

Alignment with UD / College Strategic Initiatives:

- 1) **A Diverse and Stimulating Undergraduate Academic Environment:** The Women's Studies Department is well equipped to facilitate learning experiences outside of the classroom through our well-established internship program and through our community partners in our new Domestic Violence Prevention and Services Program. As students develop their research projects for WOMS313 and as they are called to action by reading course materials, they may build upon Department relationships to engage in activism, service or pursue scholarly research questions. This strategic initiative coincides with our department's commitment to developing student activists and providing thorough and broad-based understanding of gender and how it informs practice.
- 2) **The Engaged University:** The research component of WOMS313 requires significant academic exchange among faculty and students. The development of the project is accomplished through a variety of meetings with WOMS313 faculty and other faculty members willing to participate in the student's project. Students who choose to share their research with the broader regional scholarly community may apply to present their work at the annual Geis Student Research on Women Conference, run by the Women's Studies Department in conjunction with the Greater Philadelphia Women's Studies Consortium.
- 3) **A Diverse University:** WOMS313 focuses a diverse range of theoretical perspectives and research methodologies with the goal of understanding the need to incorporate different methodological tools in different contexts. Cultural and ethnic diversity demands methodologies that are sensitive and responsive to various populations. Therefore, students must evaluate the success of methodologies in various cultural contexts. Their understanding of the cultural and ethnic diversity of people within and outside the United States and the behaviors and experiences of individuals will be critical to this evaluation. Furthermore, students will be required to systematically reflect on how their own ethnic and cultural background, beliefs and values shape their research projects.

Goals for Participating in The Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Undergraduate Research and Experiential Learning Student Research Initiative:

- 1) To integrate a substantial yet realistic research component for WOMS313, Theories and Methods in Feminism.
- 2) To structure the course work for WOMS313 students in a way that results in comprehension of the historical and contemporary range of feminist theories and methodologies while also allowing for the production of an original scholarly research product.
- 3) To facilitate student relationships with community service providers, activists and relevant faculty to help students articulate the social significance of their research projects.
- 4) To develop assessment tools providing useful yet timely feedback for all phases of student research project development.
- 5) To better utilize the tools and resources available through Sakai.
- 6) To help students gain mastery of library research tools and employ the expertise of our reference librarians.
- 7) To instill in undergraduate students the belief that they are participants in the production of knowledge.