

Grande Prairie Regional College
Department of Arts, Commerce and Education

WS 3000 (Women's Studies)

Lecture 3 (3-0-0) UT to UA*, UC, UL, AU, CU, AUC
Fall 2004

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 – 12:45, Wednesdays 1 – 2:15 or by appointment

Required Textbook: Shaw, S. & Lee, J. (2004). *Women's voices, feminist visions: Classic and contemporary readings (2nd edition)*. Boston, Massachusetts: McGraw Hill.

Prerequisites: None

Course Description: This course introduces the field of women's studies, with emphasis on the theoretical foundations of feminist analysis and the diversity of debates within feminism. The primary focus surrounds issues of gender as a social, cultural and political construct and how this intersects with, for example, race, class and sexuality. The course is also an opportunity to explore the shared and diverse aspects of women's experiences and show how women's studies as an academic discipline challenges the methods, theories and knowledge of traditional disciplines.

Content Description: Evaluations will be based on the following:

Quilt Project	20%	September 28
Midterm Exam	25%	October 26
Activist Project	20%	
Paper due		November 23
Presentation		December 7
Final Exam	25%	TBA
In class journal/ Class participation	10%	

Please note that the dates listed on this outline are tentative and are subject to change. For the final examination students must be available between December 13 – 21. The Student Services Office will announce the date and time of the final exam later in the term. This information is also subject to change so students should confirm the posted exams schedules as they are updated.

It is hoped that you will find this course interesting, challenging and fun. As we explore current issues in Women's Studies we will also be developing our reflection and communication skills so that we can better express and defend our views on issues we care about. Discussion will play a central role in our learning together and the course therefore requires your active commitment and participation. You will be expected to attend class regularly, to take an active part in our learning activities, and to communicate with the instructor when you encounter difficulties with the course material. Your questions and comments are welcomed and encouraged at any time during the class. Attendance will be taken and used toward your in-class journal/class participation grade. The in-class journal will also be needed to complete the final exam. You will be expected to come to each class with the readings completed and be prepared to discuss those readings. Lectures will not consist of the instructor highlighting the main points of the readings and the instructor does not lend out lecture notes. If you do not attend class you will miss material that will not be presented elsewhere and will probably have a more difficult time with the assignments and the exams. I reserve the right to bar you from writing the final exam if you have accumulated more than 10% of unexcused absences.

Because the issues we will be discussing are complex and controversial, there are bound to be many different opinions about them. An important ground rule for the course, then, is a commitment from all participants to help build a respectful learning environment where we are all comfortable expressing our views and can learn from one another. You are encouraged to keep an open mind, allow for the exchange of views, and respect opposing viewpoints. Such an attitude is critical to maintaining a conducive learning environment. Should you be unable to conduct yourself in a professional and respectful manner towards your fellow students and the instructor you will be required to leave the class in the interest of maintaining the learning opportunities of the other students.

One of the difficult aspects of this course is that we will be acknowledging that one of the mechanisms of structural inequality (whether it is sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, or ableism) is that we are all systematically taught and have internalized misinformation about others and ourselves. We will also be confronting how we participate in this process ourselves. Thus, be aware of and sensitive to the fact that the issues confronted in this course will affect some of us deeply and personally. Please also be gentle with yourself should issues arise for you and feel free to talk with the instructor at any time about such matters.

As a significant part of this course will revolve around discussion you will be expected to read the assignment readings in preparation for the class. Some questions you may want to consider in your preparations for class are:

What are the key issues and concepts in the readings?

What do you know now that you didn't know before you read?

What aspects of the readings did you find challenging or didn't understand?

What did you react positively/negatively to? Why do you think you reacted this way?

Can you relate personally to the material?

Has your thinking or belief system changed or been challenged by what you have read?

How could you use the information in your own life to better understand yourself or improve your life or make another woman's life better?

Are there any current events (from newspapers, cinema, magazines, television) that strike you as relevant to the topic? (And feel free to bring clippings etc to class for discussion).

Are there any questions, comments, criticisms, poems, personal experiences or reactions you had to the material?

Please use your journal to comment and reflect on the readings as you read, during in-class discussions, or at anytime issues surrounding the course come up for you. But please be aware you will be asked to hand in those journals from time to time so consider the types of responses you are willing to share with the instructor.

Each week you will also be sharing your ideas with a partner or group and will be discussing commonalities, differences, and challenging aspects of the material. Also keep in mind that some of the issues we will address will be highly personal so consider the types of responses you are willing to share with other people in this class. It will be expected that all individuals will maintain confidentiality of the class discussions but you do not have to share experiences you would rather not disclose. Don't be afraid, however, of carefully examining what you believe and why you believe it. Also be cognizant of the fact that women's studies is an academic discipline that although draws from women's personal experiences is not meant to be a substitute for personal counseling nor an entertaining or dramatic chat session more suited to daytime talk shows.

Exams will consist of a take home project pertaining to the topics and discussion items from class. Detailed instructions about the take home exam will be given to you later in the term but exams and projects must be typed and usually double-spaced unless indicated otherwise. In the exam and in all projects you must be sure to avoid plagiarism by always being very clear about citing where borrowed wording, ideas and information begin and end in your work. It is not enough to just list the source in your reference/bibliography section. You are encouraged to read the section on plagiarism on page 40 of the current college calendar and ask your instructor if you are at all uncertain about this very serious and often misunderstood form of academic misconduct. The instructor is most familiar with APA format of referencing but you may use any academic referencing format you wish as long as it is consistently and correctly used. If you are not familiar with how to reference please talk to the instructor. You are also encouraged to familiarize yourself with the information on student rights and responsibilities, codes of conduct and the penalties that can be imposed for infractions on pages 39 – 43 of the college calendar.

In the exams and in the projects you are encouraged to use sources other than the textbook for this course. The library subscribes to an excellent academic journal called Canadian Woman Studies and has a really nice collection of books and videos on Women's Studies. There are also many fine academic and nonacademic resources available through the library. The exams and projects are meant to be both scholarly and personal in the sense that it should contain your own viewpoint as well as indicate an understanding of academic course concepts and theories. All materials covered in class, including readings, videos and guest lectures are subject to examination.

Projects and exams are due at the beginning of class on the due date assigned. A late penalty of 10% will be given for each day the project/exam is late including weekend days. Please be advised that a lack of planning on your part will not constitute an emergency on the instructor's part. For example, leaving all work on a project to the last minute and having a crisis arise will not get you an extension. Be aware that you may be asked to provide evidence of prior work before an extension is granted although extensions will rarely be granted in lieu of the late penalty. Bear in mind that marks are final. This means you cannot redo an exam or project because of a poor grade and there are no extra assignments you can do to make up for a poor grade. Requests to move a scheduled presentation will only rarely be accommodated under serious circumstances and often will require documentation such as a medical note.

NOTE: Any changes to the course outline will be made in consultation with the students during class time. Should you not be present in class when such a consultation is made it is your responsibility to acquire the changed information.

Course Schedule:

September 7 – October 26

Readings: Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7

Assignments: Quilt project on September 20
Midterm exam on October 26

Important dates: Last day to add a class September 13
Last day to drop a class September 17
October 11 is a holiday

November 2 – December 7

Readings: Chapter 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13

Assignments: Activist paper due November 23
Activist presentation on December 7

Important dates: Last day to withdraw from a class November 5

Grade Schedule:

A+	4.0		Outstanding
A	4.0	95 - 100	Excellent
A-	3.7	90 - 94	
B+	3.3	85 - 89	First Class Standing
B	3.0	80 - 84	
B-	2.7	75 - 79	Good
C+	2.3	70 - 74	
C	2.0	65 - 69	
C-	1.7	60 - 64	Satisfactory
D+	1.3	55 - 59	
D	1.0	50 - 54	Minimal Pass
F	0.0	0 - 49	Fail

Quilt Project

The quilt project is designed to help us remember or learn about and honour our historical foremothers. You will be asked to find a woman from Canadian history (our shared public history) that you admire and who has in some way made other women's lives better. She must be deceased and she cannot be someone you knew personally. In other words, many of us must have benefited from her life and not just women in her or your family. Really explore our 'herstory' to find obscure, almost forgotten women if you can. Try finding women from different disciplines like science, medicine, law, art, music, film, education or adventure/exploration activities. The key is to find an almost forgotten woman, or a woman you've never heard of before, that you can connect with at some level.

For this assignment you will be given a square blank piece of paper or 'quilt block' on which you should put the woman's name and some creative representation of her accomplishments (no sewing required). Please have some fun with this project and make it as colorful and creative as you like in representing who she was and what she means to you and perhaps should mean to other women or why she should be remembered. Feel free to color your quilt block, use pictures, glue items to it, whatever represents that particular woman and who she was and what her accomplishments were.

We will be creating a 'quilt' on the wall of our classroom from each of your quilt pieces to honor and remember these special foremothers. The quilt metaphor was chosen to remind us how our foremothers often expressed their creativity and artistic natures by making practical items beautiful. The metaphor of the quilt block also serves to remind us how our knowledge of women's historical lives is often sketchy and incomplete. Thus, every scrap of information is a precious part of our shared heritage.

As part of your grade in this assignment you will have to present your quilt block to the class and discuss your chosen foremother and her accomplishments and why you chose her as a particular role model. The presentations should be no longer than five minutes and I don't want you to read your presentation from a paper.

Finally, you must also hand in a written explanation of your quilt project to me. This paper should name the foremother, tell me why you chose her (why she is a role model for you personally), and some information on her life and accomplishments in making other women's lives better in some way. This should have a title page with your name, be typed, double-spaced, on white paper using 12 point font, have approximately one inch margins and be stapled rather than in a fancy cover or duo tang. The paper should be approximately six pages in length, which would include a title and reference page. Be sure to reference where you got information from both within the paper and in a more detailed reference page.

Activist Project

This project is designed to help us recognize that our lives and our actions can make a positive difference in the life of other women. In this assignment you are asked to identify and choose a particular issue that affects women and perform some action that makes a positive difference in the life of, or help, a woman or group of women. I am asking you to consider an action or issue you probably would not have done or recognized before you took this course. Your action could be a form of service, participation in, donation to or help raise awareness for a cause or an issue that relates to gender. You could also choose some issue in which gender interacts with an other 'ism' that affects the life of women such as classism, ableism, heterosexism, racism, etc. The key idea here is that your act must in some way make the life of at least one woman better in some fashion and is enough of a personal stretch for you to allow for some personal growth or risk taking on your part. However, your action must not be harmful to yourself or others and it must be legal. You may choose to do your act alone, with other classmates, or with other people you enlist. If you do work with other class members each of you must contribute to the class presentation and each of you must do an individual paper.

This assignment has three components: an act, an in-class presentation, and a paper. The act must be some action or activism that you have performed since beginning this course as opposed to something you have done in the past or are planning to do after this course has finished and it should not be something you had to do anyway for another class or educational activity. The in-class presentation will include telling the class what your act was, why you chose that particular issue, how your action helped other women and how performing the act made you feel before, during and after. The presentation should be no longer than 10 minutes and I don't want you to read your presentation from a paper.

You must also hand in a written explanation of your act further elaborating on the details of what you did, why you chose that issue, how your actions helped other women, and how the performance of the act made you feel. In the written explanation I would like you to particularly focus on the issue you chose to act on. Be sure to give me some larger background and critique of this focal issue. How common is this issue, locally, in Canada, in the world? What are the current statistics? What social structures or historical events helped to create this issue? What other ideas could be pursued in the eradication of this issue? The paper should have a title page, be typed, double-spaced, on white paper with 12 point font, have approximately one inch margins and be stapled rather than in a fancy cover. Be sure to reference where you got information from both within the paper and in a more detailed reference section.