

Theorizing Equality: Housewives, Radicals, & Gender-Blenders

Fall 2025 – zoom

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In this course you will learn about different feminist theories that explain and combat gender inequality. All theories examined are underpinned by Intersectional Feminism. You will examine questions, tensions, and debates in feminisms, and learn about feminist praxis – the transformation of theory into practice. You will explore how the boundaries between gender and other axes of identity are created, maintained, and challenged; the degree to which contemporary theoretical positions account for material inequalities and experiences of marginalization; and gaps in various theories. Theories explain why social inequalities exist and offer up solutions. Different feminist groups have different explanations for gender inequality and different political initiatives based on their theories. The project is not finished, and all the theories we review this term are alive and well.

As participants together in this course, we acknowledge that Lakehead Thunder Bay is located on the ancestral lands of the ᐱᓂᓂᓐᓂᓐ (Anishinabe) people, signatories to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850, in particular Fort William First Nation. Lakehead Orillia is located on the traditional territory of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Pottawatomi nations, collectively known as the Three Fires Confederacy. We acknowledge the history these nations hold in the areas around our campuses, and are committed to relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples based on the principles of mutual trust, respect, reciprocity, and collaboration. We recognize the continual commitment needed by non-Indigenous people and institutions to learn from and about Indigenous peoples and to reconcile this colonial relationship.

Required Course Materials:

All students will need to have access to Judith Lorber, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics* (5th edition) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). The library has a physical copy of this book on reserve in Thunder Bay. However, only one person at a time can use this copy and the Orillia library does not have a copy at all, despite a request for one. You cannot access these readings online through the university because of copyright limitations. I recommend strongly that you purchase your own personal copy. It can be bought as an e-reader for \$165.05 and is free for those with Kindle or Amazon. Used print copies are available at a range of prices (currently \$20.15-\$59.65). Readings from this text are indicated below with page numbers only. Additional readings are provided on D2L.

Evaluation:

Participation:	20% (2 marks out of ten at the half way point and the end of term)
Feminist Autobiography	10% x 2 = 20% (Sept.22 and December 12)
Theory Statements	3 x 20% = 60% (Sept. 29, Oct. 20, and Nov. 17)

Participation:

Discussions require that everyone participates (speaks, writes on D2L, and listens) in a meaningful and civil way. While there will be lots of disagreement and debate, everyone is expected to be respectful of others in the class. This requires that we listen to and value ideas and political positions that are different from our own. Personal attacks, gender and racial slurs, disrespectful comments on ability or sexuality, or other such behavior is not respectful and constitutes academic misconduct. I recognize that the materials we study are difficult and people may need to come and go from class. Please emphasize self-care.

I understand some students are very shy about speaking in class. I will post questions about the readings each week, and you may respond on D2L instead of speaking in class if you are more comfortable with this approach. You may also participate via chat during the zoom meeting itself.

Participation grades will reflect attendance, willingness to contribute to class discussions, and ability to listen respectfully to others. A full mark out of 20 will be subtracted for each absence from class for which the student

does not provide alternative evidence of reading and participation by posting on D2L. Disrespectful participation is worse than no participation and will be graded accordingly. Marks will be delivered twice, in sections of 10%, to provide feedback for improvement and to ensure that all students have received 25% of their final grade by the drop and add date, as per senate regulations.

Feminist Autobiography 1: (10%, due September 22)

Introduce yourself. You should write a maximum of 500 words. Tell me 1) what you know and why you want to learn about feminist theory; 2) what experiences you have working for equality or with equality-related issues. While I ask particularly for information in relation to gender and its constructions, given the intersectionality of feminisms, I am also interested in the intersecting ways in which you may have approached equity regarding other social identities.

Feminist Autobiography 2: (10%, due December 12)

You should write a maximum of 500 words. Tell me 1) which feminist theory resonated most for you and why; 2) how this theory will help you to work for equity or with equity-related issues. Has your feminist identification shifted over the course of this semester? If so, why and how? While I ask particularly for information in relation to gender and its constructions, given the intersectionality of feminisms, I am also interested in the intersecting ways in which you may have approached equity regarding other social identities. Re-submit your first feminist biography with this assignment and think about how your ideas have changed.

Theory Statements: (3 each worth 20%, due September 29, October 20, and November 17)

For each of these assignments you will write a maximum of 500 words. Since you are not doing this every week, but for each segment of the course, you always have some choice about which materials you will study/comment on. You must do one from each part of the course (a: gender reform feminisms; b: gender resistance feminisms; and c: gender rebellion feminisms). For each topic/form of feminism in the syllabus there is a question. For whichever feminism you choose for each section, write a brief answer to the posted question, supported with a page reference or direct quotation from the required reading to back up your response. This is a very focused exercise. You may NOT use other materials beyond the

required reading to formulate your answer. These are effectively three small-take home exams.

Issues for Student Information:

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words and/or ideas. Not acknowledging your debt to the ideas of a secondary source, failing to use quotation marks when you are quoting directly, buying essays from essay banks, copying another student's work, or working together on an individual assignment, all constitute plagiarism. Resubmitting material you have previously or simultaneously submitted in another course is also academic dishonesty. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct is 0 on the assignment in question. Students may also be subject to more severe academic penalties, up to and including expulsion for multiple offences. All students are required to know what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it. Please review the university guidelines at <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/academic-support/skills-for-success/responsibilities> or speak with the professor. Use the resources available at Owl at Purdue which contains examples of APA, MLA, and Chicago, including information on: paper formatting, intext citations, footnotes and endnotes, and works cited/references/bibliographies: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html. All cases of plagiarism will be dealt with in accordance with the Code of Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedures approved by Senate and the Board of Governors.

GenAI Use:

Generative artificial intelligence (Generative AI or GenAI) is a category of AI systems capable of generating text, images, or other media in response to prompts. These systems include ChatGPT and its variant Bing (built by OpenAI) and Bard (built by Google) among several others. The following information and guidelines apply to the use of AI-based tools in this course:

a) **Student Responsibility** – It is the responsibility of the student to understand the limitations of AI-based tools. While these tools can provide suggestions and insights, final decisions and critical thinking should come from the student's own understanding and effort. Before submitting, review your work with this in mind. If you don't understand what type of GenAI usage is appropriate, ask the course instructor for clarification.

b) **Error & Bias** – AI content is created by computer algorithms that have been trained using large amounts of data. The AI learns from patterns and

examples in the data to generate new content that resembles what it has been trained on. If the training data used to train the AI model is biased or limited in scope, the AI may reproduce content that is inaccurate, incomplete, offensive, and/or biased. Students should weigh this as they consider material produced by AI. **This is particularly important in the context of this course. AI is notoriously androcentric/misogynist and may not provide reliable responses to the questions generated in this course.**

c) **Trustworthiness** – Generative AI can be vulnerable to manipulation and misuse. It can be used to generate fake news, misinformation, or deepfake content, which can have harmful consequences. Students should check AI generated content against reputable sources. **See above.**

d) **Citation of Sources** – If you use material generated by an AI program for an assignment in this course, it must be cited like any other source (with due consideration for the quality of the source, which may be judged as poor). Failure to do so will be considered a violation of academic integrity.

Accommodation: I make every effort to meet the varied needs of students. Please feel free to speak to me directly. You are also encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and to register with them as early as possible. For more information, please email sas@lakeheadu.ca or view <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>.

Assignment Due Dates: Due dates are suggestions to keep you on track for timely course completion. I am flexible and will accommodate your health/work/family obligations. I am happy to adjust dates, but you need to communicate with me. Accommodation can include incomplete standing (see below).

Incomplete Standing (from the Lakehead University Calendar): An incomplete grade may, at the discretion of the instructor and in consultation with the student, be assigned to a course when the instructor considers that for a valid reason the student has not yet completed all the requirements of the course. Please talk to me in advance if this is something we need to consider. I will not automatically provide an incomplete if you have not talked to me.

Expectations and Marking: All written work will be evaluated based on organization, presentation, grammar, and clarity as well as content. Writing is a process. It is only learned through practice and repetition. Writing is an

important skill you can take into the workplace and the wider world. Written communication can be very powerful. However, your first draft is unlikely to be the best possible work you can produce. For this reason, I strongly encourage you to submit rough drafts of papers for review. I will mark your paper as many times as you want to submit it and only the final mark will count towards your grade. This is true for all assignments. Good writing does not happen the night before an assignment is due. You should expect to spend a significant period of time on each assignment. These are guidelines to assist:

1. Start assignments early.
2. Read the instructions for your assignment carefully and ask questions if there is anything which is unclear.
3. Seek support. You can visit the Academic Support Zone at <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/academic-success/student-success-centre/academic-support-zone> or make an appointment for assistance at mysuccess@lakeheadu.ca. You should also, of course, make use of my offer to read multiple drafts of each of your assignments.

Weekly Topics and Materials:

Intersectional feminism has been foundational since the early 1990s. All feminist theories now incorporate an intersectional feminist lens. Some theories incorporated intersectional feminism early on or indeed birthed it: intersectionality was introduced under a different name by Black Socialist Feminists and Multiracial/Multiethnic feminists like Audre Lorde and bell hooks in the early 1980s; other theories took it up after the term “intersectionality” was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to build on concepts like Lorde’s matrix of domination. Intersectional feminism is everywhere in feminisms now, as it should be, and I will look for it in your work too. If you’re unsure about what Intersectional feminism is, please read Crenshaw to refresh! You covered it in WOME-1100, so revisit those notes.

Week 1 **September 8** **Introduction**

Together we will review the syllabus and introduce ourselves to one another.

Readings:

Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House": https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Lorde_The_Masters_Tools.pdf.

Roxanne Gay, "Bad Feminist Manifesto", in Margaret Hobbs and Carla Rice (eds.), *Gender and Women's Studies: Critical Terrain 2nd ed* (Women's Press, 2018), 35-36.

Part A: Gender Reform Feminisms

Week 2

September 15

Liberal and Marxist Feminisms

Reading:

Judith Lorber, 27-50 and 51-73.

Prompt Question: Why is putting diverse women into political or management roles important to Liberal feminists? How do Marxist feminists theorize the gender wage gap?

Week 3

September 22

Socialist and Transnational Feminisms

Reading:

Judith Lorber, 74-89 and 90-105.

Prompt Question: How do Socialist feminists theorize the gender wage gap and what solutions do they propose? How does transnational feminism provide a powerful critique of both globalization and the West?

NOTE: First Feminist Autobiography is due today.

Part B: Gender Resistance Feminisms

Week 4

September 29

Radical and Lesbian Feminisms

A Note about TERFs: TERFs are a small minority of radical feminists and get way too much media time. Feminism interrogates gender construction and the oppressive outcomes of binary gender norms, institutions, beliefs, and embodiment. Trans-inclusive radical feminists are the majority of radical feminists. I am not at all interested in TERFs' policing of an oppressive

gender binary; I am 100% interested in what Radical Feminism has to say about violence, misogyny, and control.

Reading:

Judith Lorber, 127-150 and 151-167.

Prompt Question: What are the central contributions of radical feminism? Why is it often misunderstood? How do lesbian feminists envision a more gender-equitable world?

NOTE: First Theory Statement is due today

Week 5

October 6

Psychoanalytic, Cultural, and Standpoint Feminisms

Reading:

Judith Lorber, 168-182 and 183-202.

Prompt Question: Why is it important to insert feminine-linked experience into public culture? Why is intersectional standpoint important to research?

Week 6

October 13

READING WEEK – NO CLASS

No work this week! Enjoy the break and take some time to ground and rejuvenate.

Part C: Gender Rebellion Feminisms

Week 7

October 20

Indigenous Feminisms

Readings:

Verna St. Denis, “Feminism is for Everybody: Aboriginal Women, Feminism, and Diversity”, in Joyce Green, eds., *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (Fernwood Press, 2017), 33-52.

Gina Starblanket, “Being Indigenous Feminists”, in Joyce Green, (ed), *Making Space for Indigenous Feminisms* (2nd edition) (Fernwood Press, 2017), 21-41.

Prompt Question: How/why can feminism feel irrelevant to Indigenous struggles? How do Indigenous feminists want to balance feminism with the cultural resurgence movement?

Note: Second Theory Statement is due today.

Week 8

October 27

Multiracial and Multiethnic Feminisms

Reading:

Judith Lorber, 231-253.

Prompt Question: How is fragmentation (prioritizing of only one aspect of identity – i.e.: race over gender, or class over sexuality) counteractive to a feminist consciousness?

Week 9

November 3

Postmodern, Queer, and Trans Feminisms

Reading:

Judith Lorber, 284-303.

Leslie Fienberg, "Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come", in Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim (eds.), *feminist theory reader: Local and Global Perspectives 3rd ed* (Routledge, 2013), 148-158

Prompt Question: Does the term woman have cogence/meaning? How are queer and trans feminisms challenging to identity politics?

Week 10

November 10

Social Construction Feminisms and Feminist Studies of Men

Reading:

Judith Lorber, 183-230 and 253-283.

Prompt Question: How has your gender been socially constructed? Why does it matter for feminists to study men?

NOTE: I will be away at a conference and we will not meet this week. However, you are required to post comments online to illustrate that you have completed the required readings and to comment on one another's postings. This is to replace on-zoom participation.

Part D: Feminisms and the Future

Week 11

November 17

Third-Wave Feminisms and Beyond

Reading:

Judith Lorber, 304-325.

Chimamande Ngozi Adichie's TEDxEuston talk, "We Should all be Feminists," available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc.

NOTE: Third Theory Statement Assignment is due today.

Week 12

November 24

Guiding Ethics for a Collective Future

Reading:

Judy Rebick, "The Future of Feminism", in Margaret Hobbs and Carla Rice (eds.), *Gender and Women's Studies: Critical Terrain* (2nd ed) (Women's Press, 2018), 700-706.

Sonja John, "Idle No More: Indigenous Activism and Feminism", in Margaret Hobbs and Carla Rice (eds.), *Gender and Women's Studies: Critical Terrain* (2nd ed) (Women's Press, 2018), 681- 687.

Eziwanne Tooohukwu Odozor, "A Love Ethic for Black Feminisms", *Hypatia* 37 (2) (2022), 241-256.

Kai Cheng Thom, "9 Ways We Can Make Social Justice Movements Less Elitist and More Accessible", in Margaret Hobbs and Carla Rice (eds.), *Gender and Women's Studies: Critical Terrain* (2nd ed) (Women's Press, 2018), 692-696.

NOTE: The second Feminist Autobiography is due by December 12.

Week 13

December 1

NOTE: I will be away at a conference and we will not have class this week. Use this time to work on your second feminist autobiography assignment.