

Women's Studies 5101
Theories and Methods in Women's Studies: Theories
Winter 2026
Tuesday, 11:30am-2:30pm
Dr. Lori Chambers
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Feminism has fought no wars. It has killed no opponents. It has set up no concentration camps, starved no enemies, practiced no cruelties. Its battles have been for education, for the vote, for better working conditions . . . for safety on the streets . . . for child care, for social welfare . . . for rape crisis centers, women's refuges, reforms in the laws. If someone says 'Oh, I'm not a feminist,' I ask 'Why? What's your problem?'

Dale Spender, *For the Record: The Making and Meaning of Feminist Knowledge*

Course Description:

The aim of the winter term is to provide an overview of the major themes and debates in feminist theory and to equip students to integrate feminist theories into a variety of disciplines. The approach is historical, with emphasis on the development of these ideas over time.

Land Acknowledgement:

As participants together in this course, we acknowledge that Lakehead Thunder Bay is located on the ancestral lands of the ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ (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. As a class, we 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.

Learner Outcomes:

By the end of this course, you will:

- Have a working knowledge of the major schools of feminist thought and be able to apply them to analysis and transformative action;
- Have a strong understanding of gender/women's/sexuality studies as an applied discipline;
- Have a strong understanding of the definitions, practices, and foundations of gender/women's/sexuality studies;
- Have produced Master's level written work; and
- Have articulated evidence-based positions in discussions and postings that show creative application of both course concepts and experiential knowledge.

Required Readings:

All students will need to have access to Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997). The library has a copy of this book. It can be purchased as an e-reader for \$44.26 and is free for those with Kindle or Amazon. Used print copies are available at a range of prices (currently \$15-70). Readings from this text are indicated below with page numbers only. Additional readings are provided on D2L.

Evaluation:

NOTE: this term is worth 50% of your overall grade.

Oral/In-class work:

a. Discussion – Mandatory:

This is a participation-based class and attendance is mandatory. Students may miss one class without documentation and receive no penalty; if you miss more than one class without appropriate documentation your discussion grade will be reduced by 1 full mark out of ten. You are able to augment in-class participation (but not attendance itself) with on-line responses to the readings on D2L. This

may be an important option for those who are shy to speak in a group.

Grade weighting: 10%

b. Facilitation - Mandatory:

We meet for 3 hours weekly. Each student will present one reading to the class. The presentation should be about 20 minutes in length.

The student will then present an analysis of the week's overall themes and pose questions for the group based on all the combined readings. When there are multiple articles being presented by students in a single week, they will work together on part two of this assignment.

Grade weighting: 10%

Written work: Choose one of the following three options.

a. My Theory Project:

You will apply feminist theories from the term to the thesis/research paper/creative project you are developing in your home discipline.

The Theory Project paper will illustrate how the theory you chose intersects with course materials and discussions and why it is the best framework for your project. It will be important to reflect on your own social location when you explain why the theoretical framework you chose appeals to you. What are the strengths and limitations of using this particular framework?

Grade weighting: 30%

b. Readings Journal:

You will journal a response to **one reading per week**. Please note: responses are not descriptions. Responses must show analytical engagement with the text. Either connect it to your own life in a way that illustrates experiential knowledge (i.e.: explore how the text helps you to understand why you experienced something in a particular way) or connect it with other readings from this course, showing how it speaks to / with / against them.

Grade weighting: 30%

c. Annotated Bibliography:

You will compile an annotated bibliography on a topic related to your thesis/research paper/creative project in your home discipline. Each

entry in the bibliography should be approximately a paragraph in length. This assignment should be used to help you to prepare a literature review for your thesis or project.

Grade weighting: 30%.

Tips for Reading Feminist Theory

Context is everything. Some of the following tips are from Charlotte Bunch, "Not by Degrees: Feminist Theory and Education".

- 1. Description:** How does the theorist *describe* society? What *problem(s)* does the author identify? Does the theorist introduce or define any important terms or concepts?
- 2. Analysis:** How does the theorist *analyze* why society exists as it does? How does the author explain the *problem*? Who benefits from the reality she describes?
- 3. Vision:** What does the theorist argue *should* exist?
- 4. Strategy:** What are the short and long-term *goals* to make the vision real?
- 5. Timing:** How does the theorist's *time period* affect the theory? What parts of the theory are still relevant today?
- 6. Social location:** What is the social location of the theorist or the theory? *Whose reality* does the theory describe? How does the social location of the author impact the theory?

Other 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 submitted to another course is also academic dishonesty. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct is a 0 on the assignment in question. Students might also be subject to more severe academic penalties up to and including expulsion from the university. 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. 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. Other Generative AI models include artificial intelligence art systems such as Stable Diffusion, Midjourney, and DALL-E. GenAI tools can provide valuable assistance and support in academic work. However, it is essential to use them responsibly and ethically. 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) **Formative Usage** – In this class, you may use GenAI for formative, but not summative, work. That means it can be used as a “possibility engine” (brainstorm tool), a “study buddy,” a “collaboration coach,” a “guide on the side,” a “personal tutor,” a “co-designer,” etc. to help you learn course content, but it cannot be used as the primary vehicle for any work that is submitted for marks or evaluation.

c) **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.

d) **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.

e) **Plagiarism** – Since [writing and critical thinking ability] are learning outcomes of this course, all work submitted for evaluation must be the student's original work. Using the work of others (including content curated/generated by AI) without proper citation is considered plagiarism.

f) **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 make accommodation unnecessary. Please feel free to speak to me directly about your needs. You are also strongly 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>.

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. It is also an important skill you can take into the workplace. 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.

Due Dates: All due dates in my classes are suggested dates for submission to keep you on schedule for timely completion. All are subject to revision/extension if you need time. You do not need to explain yourself or your reason for a delay but you do need to keep me informed about when to expect papers. Do keep in mind that I CANNOT change end of term dates, so I must receive all materials before the mark deadline for the university. If you cannot complete by this time, we can submit an incomplete (see below), but you must tell me that you need it.

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.

Student Success Centre: Help regarding academic matters can be found at the Student Success Centre:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/academic-success/student-success-centre/academic-support-zone> and make an appoint for assistance at mysuccess@lakeheadu.ca.

Health and Well-Being: We will be dealing with difficult material and self-care is very important. If you or anyone you know experiences academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings of anxiety or depression, Student Health and Wellness is available to help: 343-8361 or <http://healthservices.lakeheadu.ca/>. Their services are free for Lakehead students and appointments are available. If you require immediate support regarding a mental health crisis, call Crisis Response at 346-8282 (24 hours/day). For non-crisis issues, please call Good To Talk at 1-866- 925-5454. Please monitor your well-being, keep me informed if you need accommodation, and seek help as needed.

Weekly Schedule for Readings

Week 1 – January 6

Foundations

Why does theory matter? Who gets to make theory?

Required 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.
- Mary Evans, “In Praise of Theory: The Case for Women’s Studies”, in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 17-22.
- bell hooks, “Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression”, in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 22-27.
- Francine Descarries, “Language is Not Neutral: The Construction of Knowledge in the Social Sciences and Humanities”, *Signs* 39 (3) (2013), 564-569.

Week 2 – January 13

Classical Feminisms 1: Liberal, Socialist, and Marxist Feminisms

Required Readings:

- “Harriet Taylor Mill”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: [Harriet Taylor Mill \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy/Spring 2006 Edition\)](#).
- Kathleen Gerson, “Changing Lives, Resistant Institutions: A New Generation Negotiates Gender, Work, and Family”, *Sociological Forum* 24 (4) (2009), 735-753.
- “Emma Goldman”: [Emma Goldman: Early Life, Work and Death of a Rebellious Anarchist | History Cooperative](#).
- Heidi Hartmann, “The family as the locus of gender, class and political struggle: the example of housework”, *Signs* 6 (3) (1981), 366-394.

Week 3 – January 20

Classical Feminisms 2: Radical, Cultural, and Standpoint Feminisms

Required Readings:

- Shulamith Firestone, “The Culture of Romance”, in Carole McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, eds., *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (Routledge, 2013), 123-128.

- Marilyn Frye, "Oppression", *The Politics of Reality* (The Crossing Press, 1983), 1-16.
- Carol Gilligan, "In A Different Voice", in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 146-152.
- Nancy Harstock, "The Feminist Standpoint", in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 152-160.
- Breanne Fahs, "The Urgent Need for Radical Feminism Today", *Signs* 49 (2) (2024), 479-497.

Week 4 – January 27

Challenging Essentialism: Poststructuralism

Required Readings:

- Denise Riley, "Am I That Name? Feminism and the Category of 'Women'", in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 241-246.
- Diana Fuss, "The 'Risk' of Essence", in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 250-258.
- Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", in Carole McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, eds., *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (Routledge, 2013), 462-473.
- Lena Gunnarson, "A Defense of the Category 'Women'", *Feminist Theory* 12 (1) (2011), 23-37.

Week 5 – February 3

Indigenous Resurgence and Feminism

Required Readings:

- Sherene Razack, "Gendered Violence and Spacialized Justice", *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 15 (2) (2000), 91-130.
- 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.
- Tracey Lindberg, "Not My Sister: What Feminists Can Learn about Sisterhood from Indigenous Women", *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 16 (2) (2004), 342-352.
- Gina Starblanket, "Transforming the Gender Divide? Deconstructing Femininity and Masculinity in Indigenous Politics",

in *Turbulent Times*, eds., Fiona MacDonald and Alexandra Dobrowolsky (UTP, 2020), 121-137.

Week 6 – February 10

Black Feminisms and Intersectionality

Required Readings:

- “Sojourner Truth”: [The Remarkable Untold Story of Sojourner Truth | History | Smithsonian Magazine](#).
- Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color”, *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6) (1991), 1241-1299.
- Patricia Hill Collins, “Mammies, Matriarchs and Other Controlling Images”, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, consciousness and the politics of empowerment* (Routledge, 2000 and 2009), 76-107.
- Eziwanne Tooohukwu Odozor, “A Love Ethic for Black Feminisms”, *Hypatia* 37 (2) (2022), 241-256.

Week 7 – February 17

Reading Week

Week 8 – February 24

Multiracial/Multiethnic and Transversal Feminisms

Required Readings:

- Maria Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman, “Have We Got a Theory for You?: Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for ‘the woman’s voice’”, *Women’s Studies International Forum* 6 (6) (1983), 573-581.
- Isabelle Gunning, “Arrogant Perception, World Travelling and Multicultural Feminism: The Case of Female Genital Surgeries”, *Columbia Human Rights Law Review* 23 (2) (1992), 189-248.
- Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes”, in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 91-96.
- Jen Roth and Lori Chambers, “Transversal and Postmodern Feminist Praxis in Everyday Politics”, *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture and Social Justice* 40 (1) (2019), 1-17.

Week 9 – March 3

Lesbian, Queer, and Transgender Theory

Required Readings:

- Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 320-325.
- Charlotte Bunch, "Lesbians in Revolt", in Carole McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, eds., *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (Routledge, 2013), 129-133.
- Heather Davis, "The Difference of Queer", *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* 24 (2/3) (2005), 23-26.
- Riki Anne Wilchins, "What Does it Cost to Tell the Truth?" in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, Susan Stryker and Steven Whittle, eds., (New York: Routledge, 2006), 547-551.
- Lori Chambers, "Unprincipled Exclusions: Transgender Jurisprudence, Feminist Theory and Kimberly Nixon", *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 19 (2) (2007), 305-334.

Week 10 – March 10

Theorizing the Body

Required Readings:

- Iris Young, "Throwing Like a Girl", *Human Studies* 3 (1980), 137-156.
- Kathy Davis, "Reclaiming Women's Bodies: Colonialist Trope or Critical Epistemology?", in Carole McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, eds., *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (Routledge, 2013), 502-516.
- Janell Hobson, *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 87-112.
- Judith Hamera, "Weighty Anti-Feminism, Weighty Contradictions: Anti-Fat Coverage and Invective in US Right-Wing Populist Outlets", *Women's Studies* 48 (2) (2019), 146-166.
- Susan Wendell, "Feminism, Disability, and the Transcendence of the Body", *The Rejected Body* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 165-181.

Week 11 – March 17

Theorizing Sex/Violence/Law

Required Readings:

- Andrea Dworkin, "Pornography", in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 325-226.

- Catharine Mackinnon, "Toward a Feminist Theory of the State", in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 351-357.
- Carol Vance, "Pleasure and Danger: Toward a Politics of Sexuality", in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 327-334.
- Angela Harris, "Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory", *Stanford Law Review* 42 (3) (1990), 581-616.
- Tracey Lindberg, Priscilla Campeau and Maria Campbell, "Indigenous Women and Sexual Assault in Canada", in Elizabeth Sheehy, ed., *Sexual Assault in Canada: Law, Legal Practice and Women's Activism* (University of Ottawa Press, 2012), 87-109.

Week 12 – March 24

Feminism, Science, and the Cyborg

Required Readings:

- Sandra Harding, "Is There A Feminist Method?", in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 160-170.
- Emily Martin, "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles", *Signs* 16 (3) (1991), 485-501.
- Sarah Franklin, "Fetal Fascinations: New Dimensions to the Medical-Scientific Construction of Fetal Personhood", in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 487-492.
- Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s", in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 474-482.
- Jude Browne, "AI and Structural Injustice: A Feminist Perspective", in Jude Browne ed., *Feminist AI: Critical Perspectives on Algorithms, Data and Intelligent Machines* (Oxford University Press, 2023), 328-346.

Week 13 – March 31

Ecofeminism

Required Readings:

- Carolyn Merchant, "Women and Ecology", in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 468-472.
- Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva. "Ecofeminism", in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 497-503.
- Josephine Donovan, "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory", *Signs* 15 (2) (winter 1990), 350-375.
- Karen Warren, "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism", *Environmental Ethics* 12 (2) (1990), 125-146.
- Native Women's Association of Canada, "Water Carriers": [Water Carriers Project | Native Women's Association of Canada \(NWAC\)](#).