

WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

SOCI 230-01 ☀ WMST 230-01

Fall 2009 ☀ Tues & Thurs 8:00 - 9:15 a.m. ☀ Butte 329

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Office Hours:

Tues: 9:30-10:45 & 1:00-2:15

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Or by appointment

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: There may be unavoidable changes to this syllabus and our projected course work in this class because of State- and University-mandated furlough days that all faculty members must abide by. Professors must take 9 unpaid furlough days during the semester, and 3 of those have been determined by President Zingg. On those days we are not allowed to do any university-related work, including checking or answering e-mails, being in the office, talking to students about coursework, grading, class preparation, and so on. I realize this will likely have an impact on this class and your overall experience and education this year. I am not happy about this, nor are most other faculty members. Our 10% pay cut is being met with a 10% reduction in faculty workload, which essentially means cutting course content. Who loses? You, the students, who are now paying more and getting less. One thing you can do is complain to your parents and have them complain to the Governor and your legislators. You, of course, may also register such complaints and/or organize protests. This is not the California any of us wants to live in.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Catalog description: An examination of the cultural and structural aspects of women's lives and experiences in contemporary societies. Different classes and ethnic/racial groups in the United States will be compared to those of other countries. The course includes discussion of the creation of social policies and related activism. This is an approved General Education course, open to all students, and is the same as WMST 230, which may be substituted.

This course engages students in an in-depth look at women's lives in today's world. We will explore women's lives across categories of class, race-ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and age, in domestic and global contexts. The influence and effect of the social structure will be examined, as well as the impact women have on society. Although taught from a sociological perspective, this is an interdisciplinary course that bridges sociology, psychology, and women's studies.

The course provides an overview of sociological and feminist perspectives on the study of women and introduces an activist project for student involvement. Students will explore the relationship between women's lives and broad social constructs, such as gender socialization, patriarchy, sex, culture, language, and sexuality, as well as examining women's experiences in relation to various social institutions, for example, the educational system, the world of work, health issues, reproductive rights, politics, and religion. To bring in a global context, the class will work on the social issue of global human trafficking, as well as conduct a comparative study of the lives of Islamic women. The course also addresses the broad topic of violence against women, including domestic violence, rape, and the experiences of women in cults. The final section brings it all together with students' reflections on their own lives and on their activist experience.

General Education Statement: This course is a General Education course, Area D1 (Individual and Society). As a GE course, this class includes a writing requirement. At the end of the semester, a GE assessment survey will be administered.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES & ASSESSMENT

1. To study and understand sociological and feminist perspectives on women in contemporary societies. (GE & Area D, D1; SLOs 1-4)
2. To explore the social institutions and ideologies that affect women's lives. (GE & Area D, D1; SLOs 1-4)
3. To examine the significance and interrelationship of class, race-ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and age; and to examine the effect of sexism, racism, classism, ageism, and homophobia on women's lives. (GE & Area D, D1; SLOs 1-4)
4. To learn about the impact women have on society and various social movements that address women's issues. (D1, SLOs 1-4)
5. To practice and improve written, verbal, and analytical skills. (GE & SLOs 1-3)

Learning will be assessed by satisfactory completion of course requirements, including

1. Participation and interaction
2. Written and oral assignments requiring analysis and synthesis of course material
3. Tests, papers, and discussions to demonstrate assimilation and mastery of course content

REQUIRED TEXTS & MATERIALS

Fight Like a Girl: How to Be a Fearless Feminist by Megan Seely (New York: New York University Press, 2007).
Lakota Woman by Mary Crow Dog (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991).
Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women by Geraldine Brooks (New York: Anchor Books, 1996).
Not for Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade – and How We Can Fight It by David Batstone (New York: HarperOne, 2007).
The Last Time I Wore a Dress: A Memoir by Daphne Scholinski (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997)
Two or Three Things I Know for Sure by Dorothy Allison (New York: Plume, 1996).
Other handouts and online material, as assigned.

GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The following are the general course requirements. The assumption is that you will take responsibility for your own education; this is your course.

Participation: The format for this class is interactive lecture and discussion aiming toward collaborative learning and analysis. Consistent class attendance, reading preparation, and active participation are essential. **You are expected to complete all assignments before class time and come to class prepared to discuss the material, with the assigned reading in hand.**

In-class work may include group work, individual reports, writing, quizzes, and other learning activities. The following criteria are used to evaluate your participation: consistent attendance, participation in discussions, apparent preparation of readings prior to class, use of concepts from the readings when contributing to class discussion, showing a mindful and engaged presence in class, willingness to work with classmates and participate in exercises and in-class assignments, and contributing to a positive and respectful learning environment. Active and constructive involvement in class discussions will certainly help your grade, while nonparticipation that is overtly hostile or negative or is the result of absences will certainly hurt your grade.

Attendance: Attendance in all Sociology classes is mandatory. Absences will be excused only in the case of a documented emergency. **Students who miss 5 or more class sessions put themselves in jeopardy of having their final grade negatively affected. Students with 6 or more absences – for any reason – will receive an F.** Students who find it necessary to miss a class should get class notes or information about any new assignments from a classmate.

Assignments: All assignments are due on the scheduled due date. An assignment sent via E-mail will not be accepted without the professor's consent. Always keep a back-up copy (hard copy and/or disk) of anything you turn in. **In fairness to all the students in the class, there will be no make-up exams, late papers, or incompletes except in the case of a documented emergency and at the professor's discretion.** Late papers that are accepted will be graded down for the lateness.

Classroom environment: Some topics and materials used in this class may be controversial, and my aim is to make this class a safe and productive learning environment for all students. **In that regard, all class members are expected to exhibit respectful behavior toward other students, the instructor, and any guests, regardless of how different others' views are from their own.** We may not always agree, but we must respect each other and our right to differ. All students have the right and privilege to learn in the class, free from harassment and disruption. Any comment made during class should be relevant to the entire class.

Turn off Blackberrys, laptops, pagers, cell phones, and any other electronic devices during class. Students may not read non-course-related materials (e.g., newspapers, magazines, books), do homework for this or other classes, or send or receive phone calls or text messages during class. Students are to remain in the classroom for the entire session. **Leaving class without informing the professor beforehand will count as an absence for that day.**

Academic honesty: Academic honesty is presumed. There will be zero tolerance of cheating or unethical behavior in relation to tests or assignments. Examples of cheating include but are not limited to plagiarizing, false citations, modifying a grade record, copying from another's work, or allowing someone to copy your work. Any such incidents will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs. Academic dishonesty will put your grade in jeopardy.

Writing: Papers are expected to be legible, organized, and free from errors; also, they are expected to be your original work. Out-of-class written work should be proofread and free from word-choice errors, grammatical errors, typographical errors, and so on. You are encouraged to use the campus Writing Center. Papers will be evaluated on substance, clarity, depth, and organization, as well as quality of expression, writing style, punctuation, spelling, and grammar. Good scholarship means well-written, thoughtfully organized, and legible papers. Before writing any paper, refer to "Guidelines for Papers" posted on the course homepage.

Office hours: I encourage students to meet with me during my office hours if you have concerns about the class or your progress, have problems with tests or assignments, or are falling behind for some reason. Also, you don't need a reason to meet with me. Feel welcome to come by or call during office hours, noted at the top of this syllabus. If you need to meet at a different time, contact me so we can set up an appointment. I appreciate all feedback on how to make this and future classes better. If you have comments, please meet with me or send a note by E-mail.

Students with disabilities: If you have a documented disability that may require reasonable accommodations, contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for coordination of your academic accommodations. DSS is located in the Student Services Building. The phone number is 530-898-5959 V/TTY and the Web site is <http://www.csuchico.edu/ds>

SPECIFIC COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Important note: To pass this course, you must complete the work for all required elements. Failure to participate in the activism project or failure to submit the three assigned papers will result in a failing grade for this course.

Sociological applications	5%
Reading responses	15%
Quizzes	25%
Comparative essay	15%
Self-reflection essay	15%
Activism project	10%
Personal/political reflection	15%
	100%

The level of achievement expected for each letter grade is as follows:

A = superior work	C = adequate or average work	F = failing work
B = good work	D = poor work	

Grading Scale: 93-100 = A	87-89 = B+	77-79 = C+	67-69 = D+
90-92 = A-	83-86 = B	73-76 = C	60-66 = D
	80-82 = B-	70-72 = C-	0-59 = F

SOCIOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS – 5% of grade

These are brief in-class and out-of-class assignments that allow students to demonstrate critical thinking by integrating course content and applying a sociological and/or feminist analysis to the issue or problem. They may include responses to readings, reactions to videos or guest speakers, analysis of historical or contemporary events, in-class writing, assigned critiques and analyses, and other work, including individual assignments, class exercises, and small group work. Overall participation is also graded here. At the professor's discretion, a student's final grade may be adjusted up or down for perfect or poor attendance or for positive or negative participation. (See above sections on "Participation" and "Attendance.")

READING RESPONSES – 15% of grade

It is your responsibility to keep up with the class by studying the assigned reading by the date indicated. Read carefully and thoughtfully; don't just read mechanically without thinking. Take notes as you read; you will retain more that way. Identify main ideas, key people and terms, and, where applicable, the author's argument and evidence, such as research results. Take a moment to write about the reading once you have finished it. Explain in your own words what you got from it. Be ready to ask questions and/or voice your own thoughts in class, sharing comments or examples from current events or your personal life experience that relate to the readings in order to participate in and facilitate class discussions. But remember, sociology is about more than personal experience and personal examples; it's about looking for social patterns to help us better understand the world we live in.

Brief typed reading responses (1-2 paragraphs – no more than 1 page) are due on each day there is a reading assignment listed in the syllabus (except on days of quizzes already noted in the syllabus). Your aim in this short paper should be to indicate clearly by what you write that you have read the entire assignment, have thought about it, and are incorporating it into what you are learning.

QUIZZES – 25% of grade

Multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, true-false, matching, and/or short-essay questions will be drawn from readings, lectures, films, guest speakers, and other course content. Quizzes will be given throughout the

semester, sometimes announced ahead of time and sometimes not. Always be prepared. Always bring a small (15-question) Scantron and pencil to class.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ESSAY – 15% of grade

Students will write an analytical paper based on reading *Nine Parts of Desires: The Hidden World of Islamic Women*. The objective is to compare and analyze issues addressed in the assigned chapters with similar issues facing women here in the United States, using theories, concepts, terminology, and data found in other course content. It must be evident from the paper that you have read the chapters in the book; in other words, the paper must be specific and not general (for example, to say something like the following is not acceptable: “What a hard life the women have over there” or “I am so lucky to live here”).

Required length: minimum 2 pages, no more than 3 pages. Due Tuesday, November 5.

SELF-REFLECTION ESSAY: Two or Three Things YOU Know For Sure – 15% of grade

After reading Dorothy Allison’s *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*, write your own two or three things you know for sure. Reflect on your life to this point, focusing on key events and people. What are your insights? Lessons learned? Challenges overcome? Personal battles yet to face? Write about the “things” you know for sure, and maybe a few you don’t. This essay should be written in the context of this course. In other words, address topics and issues of relevance to you as a woman that connect with the course material, including the reading, videos, speakers, class discussions, and so on. For men in the class, it will be important to approach this paper with a feminist consciousness. Be sure to following the guidelines for written assignments found at the end of this document and on the course homepage. **Required length: minimum 2 pages, no more than 4 pages. Due Tuesday, December 1.**

GLOBAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROJECT – activism portion 10%; reflection paper 15%

The class will engage in an activist project to get a taste of what it’s like to be active for a cause. The proposed project is to increase awareness on campus and/or in the community about the issue of human trafficking, in particular, the buying and selling of women and children for sex and/or labor. This is also sometimes known as the international or global slave trade. Common forms of trafficking may involve agricultural work, domestic service, mail-order brides, forced prostitution (on the street and in bars or brothels), sexual abuse/exploitation of children, and sweatshops.

Human trafficking is the second-largest criminal industry in the world, after the drug trade. A State Department report estimates that as many as 800,000 to 1,000,000 people are trafficked across borders each year, a figure that excludes slaves trafficked within their own countries. (Statistics vary based on the source.) Half of those trafficked are children; and 4 out of 5 trafficking victims are female. Approximately 17,500 people are trafficked into the U.S. annually, and a large number of those are brought in through California. They are then re-trafficked within the state or to other parts of the U.S. For more background, see articles and links in the “Human Trafficking” folder on the course homepage, plus the Web site of the campus anti-trafficking group, S.T.O.P. (Stop Trafficking of Persons) at www.csuchico.edu/STOP. Also, *Not for Sale* (one of your required books) can be used as a resource for your work on this project. The Meriam Library has a number of other books on this topic as well.

Working in self-selected teams, students will determine their own specific aims and activities. Students are encouraged to work with the campus organization, S.T.O.P. so as not to recreate the wheel. You might want to create flyers for distribution and table in front of your grocery store or local library; you could give a presentation or show a film to a class, a church, a workplace, or a group of friends; you could organize a petition or fund-raising drive – there are many possibilities. Any presentations or handouts must be approved by the professor before distribution. Each student should keep a time log including when, where, what you did.

A final personal/political reflection paper is due at the end of the semester, when we will discuss and evaluate together our contributions to this effort. You are expected to submit a serious and thoughtful paper, making connections to our course study and theories/concepts/terminology. This should not simply be a paper saying generally how much you learned; it must be specific. In the beginning of the paper, be sure to give a clear idea of what you actually did. Always refer to “Guidelines for Papers” on the course homepage before writing any paper. Attach your detailed time log to the essay. **Required length: minimum 3 pages. Due on Final Exam day, Tuesday, December 15.**

WEEKLY SCHEDULE – TOPICS, READINGS, & ASSIGNMENTS

This is a tentative schedule and may be subject to change during the semester. Changes will be announced in class or posted on the homepage. Check the homepage daily. Readings and assignments are to be completed by the date indicated below.

Sociology and Feminism

- 8/25 Introductions & course overview
- 8/27 Sociology & feminism: Seely "Preface," "The F-Word: An Introduction," & pp. 81-85
- 9/1 Activism: Seely chapter 1
Discussion of the Human Trafficking project – to familiarize yourself with this issue, see "Human Trafficking" folder on homepage, go to www.csuchico.edu/STOP and begin *Not for Sale*.
- 9/3 In-class film on human trafficking. Reading assignment on homepage.
- 9/8 UNIVERSITY FURLOUGH DAY
- 9/10 **Quiz** on all readings/material to date. Read Women's History: Seely chapter 2. Research an item of your choice in the Chronology and be ready to report on it to the class.

Constructing the Gendered Self

- During these weeks, read *The Last Time I Wore a Dress*. Have it finished by 9/29.
- 9/15 Socialization: Read chapter posted on course homepage (both parts 1 and 2)
 - 9/17 Race & other issues: Seely chapter 3, pp. 59-74
 - 9/22 Sexuality (GLBTQ): Seely chapter 3, pp. 74-81 & 85-92 & chapter 7, pp. 204-206, & article on homepage on same-sex marriage debate
 - 9/24 **Quiz** on this section of readings/material. Read Sexuality: Seely chapter 6, pp. 147-158
 - 9/29 **Quiz** on and Discussion of *The Last Time I Wore a Dress*.

The Influence and Impact of Social Institutions

- During these weeks, read *Lakota Woman*. Have it finished by 10/22.
- 10/1 Politics: Seely chapter 4, pp. 93-98, plus articles on homepage.
 - 10/6 Work: Seely chapter 4, pp. 99-102, plus article on homepage
 - 10/8 Media: Seely chapter 4, pp. 102-104
 - 10/13 **Quiz** on readings/material so far in this section. Religion & Education: Seely chapter 4, pp. 104-114 (check out some of the organizations on pp. 116-121). Also read articles on homepage about Afghan women.
 - 10/15 UNIVERSITY FURLOUGH DAY
 - 10/20 **Quiz** on *Lakota Woman*. Read Culture & Body Image: Seely chapter 5, plus articles on homepage
 - 10/22 NO CLASS. Read Reproductive Rights: Seely chapter 6, pp. 158-184, plus article on homepage

International Comparison: Women of Islam

- 10/27 Brooks "Prologue" & chapters 1 & 2 (socialization & sex)
In-class film: *Osama* (about a young girl in Afghanistan)
- 10/29 Brooks chapter 3, 8, & 9 (marriage, education, & work)
- 11/3 Brooks chapter 6, 10, 11, & 12 (military, politics, sports, & culture)
- 11/5 **Comparative Essay Due**

Dominance & Resistance

- 11/10 Violence against women, Seely chapter 7
- 11/12 Violence, continued. See articles posted on homepage.
- 11/17 Violence, continued
- 11/19 **Quiz** on readings/material in this section.

Thanksgiving Break

- 12/1 Be prepared to discuss *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*. Come to class ready to read your favorite part of the book – a sentence, a paragraph.
Self-Reflection Essay Due
- 12/3 Special topic: Women in Cults. Assigned readings on homepage.
- 12/8 Cults, continued
- 12/10 Seely chapter 8

FINAL CLASS: Tuesday, December 15 – 10:00 - 11:50a.m.
Personal/Political Reflection Paper & Evaluation Forms Due