

WOMEN, ACTIVISM, & SOCIAL CHANGE

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Spring 1999
Thursdays 10:15 a.m.—12:45 p.m.
Voorhees Chapel 005

Course description

This course is an exploration of the intersections of women's activism and movements for social change, with an emphasis on the period from the mid-1960s til today. The relationship between theory and practice, concerns about working with the state, challenges in organizing and maintaining movements, and other central concerns will be examined through the use of scholarly readings, case studies, and experiential learning.

Readings

All readings—except for the books noted below—are in the course packet on reserve at the Douglass Library and in the Scholars' Lounge. Four books have been ordered and are available at the Cook/Douglass Bookstore:

Donald Downs, *The New Politics of Pornography*
Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975*
Laura Kaplan, *The Story of Jane*
David Zucchino, *The Myth of the Welfare Queen*

CASE Component

All students are required to participate in the Community and Service Education (CASE) component offered with the class as a one-credit elective. Students will work with the instructor and the CASE office to obtain appropriate placements. CASE experiences will be incorporated into the course through reflection papers, class discussion, and final papers.

Course Requirements

Readings & class participation

Students are expected to complete readings **before** each class. In-class activities will often require students to summarize or present readings. Class participation is a vital element of the seminar and will comprise 10% of the final grade.

Reflection papers: CASE in point

Four reflection papers will be required over the course of the semester. Due dates and topics are given on the following page. Papers are due at the **beginning** of the class at which they are due. Late papers will be subject to grade reduction. Each paper will be graded and will constitute 10% of the final grade.

Final Papers

Each student will complete a 10-12 page final paper on the course theme exploring women, activism, and social change. Students will use their CASE placement as the basis for the paper. Papers should explore critical intersections which have been highlighted during the semester. Additional guidelines will be provided in a few weeks. The final paper will count for 50% of the final grade.

Reflection papers: CASE in point

You will be required to hand in four brief writing assignments that ask you to reflect on your CASE placement in light of the questions raised in the course. Papers should be two to three typed pages and, while they may be somewhat informal in structure and tone, should conform to normal standards of grammar and spelling. The topics below are guidelines and suggestions; you are not expected to answer each one of the questions. Choose one or two which are most interesting and pertinent to you and your placement and explore those in a thoughtful manner.

CASE in point #1: Due February 4

In light of the readings on mobilization, think about your own experiences either relating to CASE or to other public activities you have undertaken. What motivated you to get involved in the public sphere? What types of activism do you see as most necessary, useful, important? Can you identify experiences and/or influences which have shaped your perceptions of public action? What obstacles have you faced (material/physical, psychological) and how have you overcome these? What advantages have you had and how have you used them?

CASE in point #2: Due February 18

This week's readings have pointed to the importance of group structure and its relation to modes of activism. For your paper, think about how your community partner is organized. Do some research or talk to staff and get a sense of how power and authority are distributed. Depending on the size of the agency, you might ask for an organizational flowchart or various job descriptions. Who devises tasks and who carries them out? Does the organization have any explicit or implicit justification for the way it is structured? Is the agency structure adequate and appropriate to meet organizational and/or client needs and goals? How/does the structure of the organization influence its philosophy, its vision, and its ability to implement its plans?

CASE in point #3: Due March 4

In view of the two weeks spent discussing the positive and negative aspects of working with the state, discuss how your organization views governmental power. Does your community partner work with the state? Does the state provide material and/or intangible resources to your agency (e.g. funding, legitimacy)? Does the organization maintain a more confrontational stance toward state power? After discussing how the agency views and works (or does not work) with the state, assess the positive and negative benefits to the organization of that position. How might a different relationship with the state empower the group, and how might it hinder or limit it?

CASE in point #4: Due April 29 or earlier

This last paper is up to you. You may reflect on some of the "case studies" from the second half of the semester or write on a topic arising from your placement. If possible, try to connect some of the insights or problems raised by the case studies with an issue from your CASE placement. This paper must be handed in by April 29 at the latest.

January 21	Introduction	
		in-class readings: SCUM Manifesto, NOW Bill of Rights
January 28	What Does the Academy Have To Do With Activism?	
		Heidi Hartmann et. al., "Bringing Together Feminist Theory and Practice: A Collective Interview" Layli Phillips & Barbara McCaskill, "Who's Schooling Who?: Black Women and the Bringing of the Everyday Into Academe, or Why We Started <i>The Womanist</i> "
February 4	Mobilization & Participation	Reflection Paper #1 DUE
		Sara Evans, "Southern White Women in a Southern Black Movement" Sandra Morgen, "It's the Whole Power of the City Against Us!': The Development of Political Consciousness in a Women's Health Care Coalition" Carol Hardy-Fanta, "Latina Women and Political Consciousness: <i>La Chispa Que Prende</i> "
February 11	Getting Organized	
		Alice Echols, <i>Daring to Be Bad</i> , chs. 4 & 5: "Varieties of Radical Feminism" & "The Eruption of Difference" Joreen, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" Stephanie Riger, "Challenges of Success: Stages of Growth in Feminist Organizations"
February 18	Women & The State	Reflection Paper #2 DUE
		Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Antigone's Daughters: Reflections on Female Identity and the State" Frances Fox Piven, "Ideology and the State: Women, Power, and the Welfare State" Hester Eisenstein, "The Australian Femocratic Experiment: A Feminist Case for Bureaucracy"
February 25	Alternatives to the State	
		Laura Kaplan, <i>The Story of Jane</i>
March 4	Creating Coalitions	Reflection Paper #3 DUE
		Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Coalition Politics" Beverly Smith, "Crossing the Great Divides: Race, Class, and Gender in Southern Women's Organizing, 1979-1991" Ellen Scott, "Creating Partnerships for Change: Alliances and Betrayals in the Racial Politics of Two Feminist Organizations" Ruth Schwartz, "New Alliances, Strange Bedfellows: Lesbians, Gay Men, and AIDS"
March 11	Political Communities	
		Iris Marion Young, "The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference" Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"

March 18 SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS

March 25 Reconceiving History: Birth Control in African American Communities

Simone Caron, “Birth Control and the Black Community in the 1960’s: Genocide or Power Politics?”

Angela Davis, “Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights”

Suzanne Shende, “Fighting the Violence against Our Sisters: Prosecution of Pregnant Women and the Coercive Use of Norplant”

April 1 Practicing Politics: Anti-Pornography Movements

Donald Downs, *The New Politics of Pornography*

April 8 “The Master’s Tools...?": Abortion & Privacy in Public Discourse

Wendy Brown, “Reproductive Freedom and the Right to Privacy: A Paradox for Feminists”

Zillah Eisenstein, “Reproductive Rights and the Privatized State: The *Webster* Decision, Post-*Webster* Restrictions, and the Bush Administration” & “Revisioning Privacy for Democracy”

Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, “The Body as Property: A Feminist Re-vision”

April 15 Community Organizing?: Oregon’s Anti-Gay Initiatives

in-class film: “Ballot Measure 9”

Suzanne Pharr, “Community Organizing and the Religious Right”

April 22 Can Theory Matter?: Welfare Reform

David Zucchini, *Myth of the Welfare Queen*

Gwendolyn Mink, “The Lady and the Tramp (II)”

Nancy Fraser & Linda Gordon, “A Genealogy of *Dependency*: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State”

April 29 TBA

Reflection Paper #4 DUE (or earlier)