Piedmont Project Statement

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I have used environmentalist ideas and material from the Piedmont Project IV in two ways in my own work. First and most immediate is to integrate environmentalism into my regularly taught, existing course, Feminist Theory (WS 751R), which is a core required course for women’s studies Ph. D. and graduate certificate students. I will also integrate environmentalist material into a new graduate course that I intend to design and offer in spring 2005 on Feminist Theory and Disability.

WS 751R is organized around several “Keywords” essential to feminist theory. I have woven environmentalist readings into the keywords PATRIARCHY, REPRODUCTION, GENDER, and ACTIVISM. Placing specific readings on environmental issues within these rubrics allows us to examine the following interrelated issues: 1) the conflicts between sustainability as a green initiative and population control as a eugenic initiative; 2) the conflicts between promoting environmental biodiversity and developing reproductive technology that limits human diversity; 3) the gendered aspects of a domination model of natural resource management; 4) ecofeminism as a maternal model of environmentalism; 5) the conflicts between sustainability and consumer culture.

The two related, specific aspects of environmentalism I intend to emphasize in these courses are ecofeminism and biodiversity. Ecofeminism is an environmentalist perspective that figures gender into the analysis of why human presence threatens its own environment. It offers a gendered version of sustainability as a solution to this threat.
COURSE DESCRIPTION

Our purpose in this graduate seminar is to engage thoughtfully and critically, both as individual critics and as an intellectual community, with several foundational and vibrantly contested conversations within feminist theory. The course is organized around several “keywords” (to borrow a critical strategy from Raymond Williams), each of which is a central concept within feminist theory. Some of the conversations that we will enter take the form of debates, such as the essentialism/constructivism debates. Other conversations revolve around questions, such as “what is a woman?” By focusing on the contradictions and confluences in and among these conversations, we can avoid balkanizing feminisms into competing and mutually exclusive categories or periodizing feminist thought into a progress narrative composed of “waves.”

The keywords are organized to form a logical exploration, starting with perhaps the most fundamental concept of feminist thought, “patriarchy.” The readings gathered together explore each keyword by forming a conversation about the concept. The readings for each keyword challenge, support, augment, or contradict one another—illustrating that feminist theory is never monolithic, but rather is a polyphonic, often conflicting, always self-reflexive, conversation. In addition, the arrangement of the keywords is designed to form a larger conversation that will encourage us to consider and contest the keyword discussions we have already had as we move through the syllabus. I have arranged the readings for each key word in a suggested order to be read so that they “talk” to each other and have designated secondary readings most days so that you can manage the reading load according to your time and interest.

The readings included in this syllabus not only comprise a conversation, but reflect a range of academic disciplinary perspectives, methodologies, assumptions, and discursive styles so that we can consider a variety of feminist discourses. We will reflect as well on the politics and practices of language, methods, style, and interdisciplinarity. The readings are eclectic, covering feminist theory from the nineteenth-century to the present, with an emphasis on the last thirty years in western feminist thought. This centering on western theory is a limitation of my own expertise, although I have aimed for much diversity within that particular arena. The readings range from feminist classics to less known, or even obscure pieces. All the readings are essays or excepts from feminist books. This plan allows us to experience a variety of authors and approaches, while still focusing on a set of concepts. This cafeteria-style syllabus will encourage you to read more of the texts or authors that compel you or that pertain to your projects. Taken together, the texts, collections, and the required “Kolmar reader” are a rich resource for your own teaching and scholarship.

TEXTS

The only ordered text available at the Bookstore is *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, eds. Wendy Kolmar and Frances Bartowski, (Mayfield, 2000), simply because it contains several of
pieces on the syllabus and is a good, comprehensive reader. You may wish to buy this because it is a good resource or you may wish to share with someone.

All other readings are available through on-line reserves.

EVALUATION AND EXPECTATIONS

1) WEEKLY CRITICAL RESPONSES

For each class, you are to bring an informal but thoughtful written response to the readings that are due that day. These responses will allow you to synthesize your reading, reflect on the conversations about the keywords for that day, as well as place your readings in the larger context of the questions, issues, and discussions the course raises. Your responses will also help launch our class discussions, give you practice in critical writing, and allow me to get to know how and what you think.

Your response should be about two to three, double-spaced, typed pages. (Please put your name, date, course number, and keywords on it.) Your discussion should be a coherent but relatively spontaneous response that brings some of the readings for that day together into a conversation. Since many conversations are implicit or emergent from the readings juxtaposed under a particular keyword, you should focus on one— or only a few— aspects of the readings that interest you or pertain to your own projects. You need not deal with every reading, but try to be as comprehensive as you can. On days when we have several keywords, you may focus on one or relate the keywords to one another. Your paper should use specific ideas, quotes, or information from the readings to address or engage larger issues regarding the keywords, but you should of course not simply summarize the readings.

The responses must be handed in to me in person at the end of each class period. If you are absent, they can be made up only if you provide a documented excuse (medical, legal, Dean’s letter, death-in-the-family). You will get from 1 to 10 points on each response, depending on how well you demonstrate that you carefully read and thought about the material. You do not need to turn in a response paper on the day of your teaching presentation.

Even if you have not completed the readings or done the response paper, you should come to class anyway so that you can participate in the discussions. If you do not turn in a response paper, hand in a piece of notebook paper with your name, date, and course number and you will get four points for participation.

2) TEACHING PRESENTATION

Each of you will do a teaching presentation once during the semester as a part of the pedagogical component of the course. The presentation should be about 20 to 25 minutes (no more) and should center on one aspect of the day’s readings that you develop. Do not try to be comprehensive, but rather present a coherent, focused analysis of what interests or compels you about the days’ readings. In other words, you are not responsible for everything we consider that day in regard to the readings. You may discuss additional readings (although we will not read additional material) or focus on one of the plethora of “feminisms” You should offer a few discussion questions (not more than 5) to spark discussions during the rest of the class period. In addition, you may wish to present information, provide charts or diagrams, guide a critical
exercise, or use any pedagogical strategy that seems appropriate. Feel free to discuss the presentation with me in advance if you like. You will also be responsible for checking that the on-line reserves for that day’s readings are in order. Please do this early on in the semester and notify me if there is a problem.

3) SYLLABUS

The other pedagogical component of the course will be creating a syllabus of your own design for a women’s studies course that emphasizes feminist theory. You may wish to draw heavily from our course reading list and/or other parts of the books from which we read, or you may wish to find other sources that explicate the central concepts, questions, and architecture of your course. Your syllabus may be for disciplinary or interdisciplinary women’s studies at any level. It should include readings, assignments, a description that clarifies the logic and organization. There are many sources of WS syllabi that you may wish to consult or use as models, including samples from the web and from Emory WS faculty. The last class period will be devoted to sharing your syllabi and seminar papers in brief synopsis with your classmates.

4) SEMINAR PAPER

As part of the critical component of the class, you will write a seminar paper of about 15-20 d/s pages that emerges from our readings and conversations. The paper is due at the end of the semester (we’ll negotiate an exact date). This paper should arise from your own interests, a continuing project (like pre-dissertation components), or other course work you have done. It should focus primarily on the theoretical underpinnings or implications of your topic. It should be theoretically interdisciplinary, but may concentrate on specific disciplinary methods, approaches, or sets of materials. Although you should use many of the course readings as sources for the paper, you may bring in related material, other feminist theory, primary sources—in short, whatever you need to structure the paper and support its argument. Think of this seminar paper as a formal draft of a future conference paper, critical article, or chapter of your dissertation.

5) MIDTERM PROSPECTUS

Around midterm, schedule a conference with me, preferably during the weeks before spring break (2/24-3/6), to discuss your seminar paper. This conference will begin the process of developing a 2-3 page prospectus of your final seminar paper. You may come to the conference with ideas, notes, or a draft of the prospectus, but the formal prospectus should be handed to me within a week or two after the conference. We will set a date at the conference. Start thinking about your paper fairly soon in the semester, but the final paper may migrate somewhat—or even fairly far—from both your initial ideas as well as from the prospectus.

6) PARTICIPATION

Since our class is a seminar, everyone is expected to attend and participate in the discussions. You should be at all times respectful of one another’s positions and opinions and be attentive to the balance of conversation so that everyone has ample opportunity to speak. I will facilitate the discussion in a manner that accomplishes this. I encourage you to offer provisional comments, questions, and positions in order to create dynamic discussions in which we influence one another’s ideas and opinions. Although personal and subjective responses to the issues and questions the course raises are welcome, we should use personal experiences and opinions as a
way to critically examine the issues the readings raise. Your grade may be positively or negatively inflected by your level of participation and may be lowered because of unexcused absences.

CONFERENCES
I am available for informal conversations or conferences about the class, your work, your larger interests or concerns, or whatever you might like to talk over. Consider me an available mentor. Although my formal office hours are limited to give me flexibility, I am in my office very often and can usually schedule an appointment at your convenience, either there or off-campus. You are also free to drop by unannounced if I am available. If I am busy, we can schedule a better time.

Emory University complies with the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you are in need of a classroom accommodation, please make an appointment with me to discuss this as soon as possible. All information will be held in the strictest confidence.

GRADING
The weekly critical responses (combined) and the seminar paper will each count as 40% of your final grade. The presentation and the syllabus will each count as 10% of your final grade. I will compute a final grade based on the following scale:

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<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>100-93</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>92-90</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>89-88</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>87-83</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>82-80</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>79-78</td>
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<td>77-73</td>
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<td>72-70</td>
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SCHEDULE OF READINGS

The following readings are assigned for the class day indicated below. The readings are arranged to form a conversation about the key word or words for the day, often referring to and arguing with one another. The initial lists of readings are primary and should be read in the order listed. Suggested secondary readings that augment the primary ones are listed for most days. You may elect to scan, skim, or to read in depth, sometimes even focusing on some secondary materials in favor of primary ones, depending on your interests and the approaches of each particular reading. We should assume that everyone has read the majority of the primary list in order of appearance and perhaps some of the secondary list.

JAN. 15:
Introductions and syllabus
Formulate group definition: “What is Feminism?”

JAN. 22:
PATRIARCHY


Reuther, Rosemary Radford, “Ecofeminism”
http://www.spunk.org/library/pubs/openeve/sp000943.txt
http://www.ecofem.org/


Secondary:

OTHER
De Beauvoir, Simone. “Introduction” and “from Ch. 21,” (1949) pp. 145-155. (Kolmar Reader)


Plaskow, Judith. "The Right Question is Theological,” in Susannah Heschel, On Being a Jewish Feminist

Secondary:

GAZE


Secondary:


Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. “Dares to Stares: Disabled Women Performance Artists and the Dynamics of Staring” (manuscript, on-line reserves)

FEB. 5:

REPRESENTATION


Secondary:


FEB. 12:

**WOMAN**


Wittig, Monique "One Is Not Born a Woman,” in The Straight Mind (Beacon, 1992) (Kolmar Reader, pp. 299-303)

Secondary:

FEB. 19:

**GENDER**


**DIFFERENCE/EQUALITY**


Suggested:

Suggested readings on MASCUlINITY:


**FEB 26:**

**CONSTRUCTIVISM**


**ESSENTIALISM**


Fuss, Diana. from *Essentially Speaking*, (1989) pp. 423-432 (Kolmar Reader)

Suggested:


**MAR. 4:**

**POSITIONALITY**


Suggested:
MAR. 18:

IDENTIFICATION


Suggested:


VOICE


Truth, Sojourner. “Ain’t I a Woman” and “Keeping the Thing Going While Things Are Stirring.”(1851, 1867) pp. 66-7 (Kolmar Reader)


Suggested:
Piercy, Marge. “Unlearning Not to Speak” (handout)


**PERFORMANCE**


**MAR. 25:**

**INTERSECTIONALITY**


Suggested:

APR. 1:

**BODY**


**Young, Iris Marion,**"Throwing Like a Girl,” in *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990. pp. 141-159.


**Wendell, Susan.** “The Social Construction of Disability” and “Disability as Difference” (Ch. 2 and 3) in *Rejected Bodies* (NY: Routledge, 1996) pp.35-84; notes 183-188.


Suggested:

**Bordo, Susan.** “The Body and the Reproduction of femininity,” and “Reading the Slender Body,” “Anorexia Nervosa,” in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the...*


APR. 8:

REPRODUCTION


Rapp, Rayna. “How Methodology Bleeds into Everyday Life” (Ch. 1) in Testing Women,

DOMESTICITY


Tronto, Joan. C. “The ‘Nanny’ Question in Feminism.” Hypatia 17.2 (Spring 2002) 34-51.


Suggested:


APR. 15:
ACTIVISM
Manifestos:
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Declaration of Sentiments” (1848). pp. 63-66 (Kolmar Reader)


Media:
http://www.Vday.org/
http://www.guerrillagirls.com/
http://www.about-face.org

Songs:
When I was a boy" by Dar Williams, on The Honesty Room  (handout) "Talking wheelchair blues" by Fred Small, on The Heart of the Appaloosa  (handout) "Soundbite from Beijing," by Ysaye Barnwell, on Sweet Honey in the Rock 25 (handout)

Scholarship:

Hall, Kim Q. “Queerness, Disability, and the Vagina Monologues.” (unpublished manuscript)


Suggested:


Oprah packet (handout)

**APR. 22:**

Synthesis; project and syllabi sharing