

Piedmont Project Statement
Theater & Feminism
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My upper-level course *Theater & Feminism* teaches various theatrical and performative ways in which students can understand and practice different feminist theories. Over the years, my students in this course have learned about lesbian feminist theory and theater, and postmodern feminist theory and performance art. While covering a wide variety of feminisms and performing arts, I recognized the need of contextualizing the importance of sustainability and environmental issues in theater. In particular, I was interested in educating my students on how sustainability and environmental concerns are expressed through feminist theater and performance art. In Summer 2024, I participated in the Piedmont Project where I was able to update my knowledge and re-conceived this course.

As part of the Piedmont Project program, my peers and I took part in the Woods Walk, an outdoor activity in which we all walked a trail near the Luce Center on Emory campus. During this walk, we learned how flora and fauna interconnect with the environment surrounding us. After the activity, we reflected on our experiences by asking ourselves questions that helped us contextualize the experiences in deeper and meaningful ways. The questions included “What are a few examples of how touch can be used to augment other senses for understanding your surroundings?” “How did your introduction to tracks and other animal traces help expand your awareness of animal presence and behaviors?” Immersing myself into live nature on campus beyond the classroom inspired me to search for ecofeminist performance artists whose works engage with natural elements and sources we can find nearby.

As an outcome of the participation in the Piedmont Project, my course now includes a unit called “Ecofeminist Theory and Performance Art.” In this unit, my students will learn about the definition of ecofeminism and its applications to performance art by examining Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta’s *Bacayu* (Light of Day). For this work of art, Mendieta used found natural materials and backgrounds to draw and carve a female figure. Emulating her work, students’ engagement with this outdoor activity will lead them to embody the ecofeminist knowledge they learn in the classroom. As a continuing exploration of ecofeminist expressions, the course will guide students to conceive their final project of writing a creative scene that excavates and vividly expresses the urgency of sustainability and environmental issues.

THEATER & FEMINISM

Course Description

This course introduces the student to theater and performance as a crucial site to exercise feminisms. Students will learn about and apply feminist theory to plays, performance art, and solo performances penned and/or performed (mostly) by contemporary American women artists. Through readings, discussions, lectures, workshops, analytic/creative writing assignments, indoor and outdoor classroom activities, students will explore historical and socio-political factors entangled with representation, identification, and spectatorship, and strengthen their capacity to envision feminist practices in theater and performance.

Course Outcomes: Students will learn to

- Use feminist theory to interpret and evaluate performances and texts
- Utilize theater and performance as an analytic and conceptual tool to understand social constructions such as race, class, gender, and sexuality
- Identify women's engagement with social issues through performance including advocacy and activism
- Evaluate performance forms as interventions in the social realm

Assignments and Grading

Participation	10% (ongoing, attendance, in-class/outdoor activities, scene readings)
Performance Review	10%
Two Take-home Essays	40% (each 20%)
Creative Scene Project	40% (workshops, scene presentation, final scene/reflection)
Total	100%

Assignment Descriptions

Participation: The nature of this course consists of classroom and/or group discussions, instructor lectures, film screenings and scene readings/presentations. You should be prepared to comment on the day's readings in a meaningful way. Class sessions will largely be devoted to discussions based on assigned readings. Your participation grade is contingent on how actively you engage with and contribute to small/large group and class discussions regarding weekly readings and your responses to the instructor and your classmates. You are therefore responsible for reading all materials and participating in class discussions. *Make notes while reading your class assignments to bring up at least one comment and/or question in each class.*

Performance Review: You need to submit two 3-4 page performance review of Emory's productions. In the review, you should focus on answering this question: "How did this performance help you contextualize feminist ideas and/or issues regarding race, class, gender, and sexuality?" Make sure that you do not merely summarize the play. Guidelines will be distributed before the performance.

Take-home Essays: One before Spring Break and the second before the end of the semester. In 4-5 pages, you will need to answer a question by utilizing the plays, reading materials, lectures, discussions, in-class activities, and films (no extra research is needed). These take-home essays will be graded on 100 points.

Creative Scene Project: You will write a 5-7 page scene in which you should convey an ecofeminist message and/or through which you tackle an ecofeminist agenda. A guest lecturer will lead the preliminary development process in two playwrighting workshops for this assignment. After the workshops, you will read your scene in class. You can cast your characters from our class asking classmates to read your scene. As part of your creative project, you also need to submit a 2-3 page reflection paper about your theme, message, future development plan of the scene, and personal take-aways (ex. how the course contents influenced your concept and what you learned from the creative project process). More information will be distributed when the workshop dates approach.

Weekly Course Schedule

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. Students are responsible for reading the materials and formulating discussion questions prior to each class.

WEEK	THEME	READING
1	First Class	Greetings / Introduction / Course Overview
2	Feminism and Theater: Theory and Practice	- Keywords (gender, sexuality, heteronormativity, woman) - de Beauvoir, Excerpts from <i>The Second Sex</i> - Sue Ellen Case, "Traditional History: A Feminist Deconstruction" - Ahmed, Excerpts from <i>Living a Feminist Life</i> - Read closely the official website for #WakingTheFeminists movement: http://www.wakingthefeminists.org/
3	Radical Feminism and Theater	- Millett, "Theory of Sexual Politics" "Redstockings Manifesto" - Koedt, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" - Play: <i>In the Next Room (Or The Vibrator Play)</i>
4	Lesbian Feminism and Theater	- Play: <i>The Vagina Monologues</i> - Radicalesbians, "The Woman-Identified Woman" - Bunch, "Not for Lesbian Only"
5		- Play: <i>Stop Kiss</i> - Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" - Wolf, "Changed for the Better": Queer Conventions in <i>Wicked</i> (2003)
6	Postcolonial Feminism and Theater	- Cottom, "Brown Body, White Wonderland" - Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" - Mohanty, "Race, Multiculturalism, and Pedagogies of Dissent" - Play: <i>Venus</i>
7	Postmodern Feminism and Performance Art	- Phelan, "Introduction" in <i>Feminism and Art</i> - Butler, Excerpts from <i>Gender Trouble</i> - Faber, "Saint Orlan: Ritual as Violent Spectacle and Cultural Criticism" - Wolf, Excerpts from <i>The Beauty Myth</i>
8	Ecofeminism and Performance Art	- Shiva, Mies, and Salleh, "Introduction" in <i>Ecofeminism</i> - Reid, "ecofeminism(s): A Closer Look at Ana Mendieta's <i>Bacayu</i> (Light of Day)"
9	Spring Break	
10	Women of Color Performance	- Dolan, "Finding Our Feet in the Shoes of One (An)Other: Multiple Character Solo Performers and Utopian Performatives" - Anna Deavere Smith, Excerpts from <i>Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992</i> - Yamada, "Asian Pacific American Women and Feminism" - Karen Shimakawa, "I Should be—American!": Abjection and the Asian (American) Body" - Watch the performance of Diana Son's <i>R.A.W. ('Cause I'm A Woman)</i>: https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/hidvl-collections/item/2095-nwt-raw.html
11	Film Screening <i>{My Lingerie Play}</i>	- Watch five short videos available on Diana Oh's website <i>My Lingerie Play</i> in "Art" section: http://www.ohyeadiana.com/ - Raphaeli, "Performance or Protest?" - Lee, "<i>My Lingerie Play</i> Performance Review"
12		Ahmed, Excerpts from <i>Complain!</i>
13	Playwrighting Workshop	TBA
14	Scene Presentation	
15	Last Class	Course Review / Course Evaluation / What's Next?