

**Feminist Pasts, Feminist Futures**  
POLSCI 703 (Winter 2022)  
Thursday 2:00-5:00 pm  
2469 Mason Hall

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Professor: Ann K. Heffernan  
Email: [akheff@umich.edu](mailto:akheff@umich.edu)

Office Hours: sign up here  
Haven Hall 7632

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**OVERVIEW:**

The evolution of feminism is often narrated as a series of successive waves, with each wave building on, and even exceeding, the wave(s) that came before. According to Kathleen Laughlin, “the ubiquitous waves metaphor remains the dominant conceptual framework for analyzing and explaining the genesis of movements for women’s rights in the United States.” And yet, as useful as this narrative may be, it perpetuates a “narrow conception of the direction and meaning of activism” in which moments of political contestation—the 1848 meeting at Seneca Falls, the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, the movements of the 60s and 70s—take center stage (77). Calling attention to the diverse forms of feminist of feminist practice that do not fit neatly within this paradigm, feminist historians like Laughlin propose “alternative ways to chronicle the past that delineate historical moments and contextualize active” (78).

Taking its cue from this and other efforts to rethink the stories we tell about feminism, this course considers how might we conceive of the past—and the future—of feminism differently. How is our perspective on the past shaped by the desires and motivations of the present? If “the historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences,” as Michel Rolph Trouillot alleges, how might we recover or otherwise give an account of those silences” (27)? And what, finally, would it mean to “construct genealogies of feminism for the future” (Boris 2010, 97)?

We will begin by considering the production of historical knowledge, its relation to the political present, and its bearing on possible futures. We will proceed by (re)considering key concepts and points of contestation in feminist theory—among them, the category of women debates, the uses (and abuses) of intersectionality, the limits of legal redress, and the evolution of queer theory. We will conclude by considering visions of feminist futures, from prison abolition to disability justice.

**ASSESSMENT:**

**Attendance and Participation:** 25%  
I view this class as a collaborative enterprise grounded in engaged discussion and open debate. I understand participation to include not only comments or questions, but the ability to actively listen to your colleagues and thoughtfully and respectfully engage with their ideas.

**Discussion Leadership** 15%  
While I will typically open class with a short lecture to frame the readings and provide some background, you will each be responsible for beginning one class discussion. Typically, this will

involve a short (5-7 minute) presentation in which you situate the text relative to each other and to the overall aims of the course. Think of this as if you are providing discussant comments at an academic conference. Your task is not to provide a summary (we will have read the texts, after all), but rather to highlight operative concepts, areas of confusion, agreement, or conflict between texts. While some readings are in explicit conversation with each other, in some cases the resonances (or points of disagreement) are less obvious. Your remarks should be followed by 2-3 questions to orient the discussion.

### **Seminar Paper**

60%

You will be required to write a seminar paper of 15-20 pages. (due date and details TBD).

### **OTHER POLICIES AND INFORMATION:**

**Attendance:** While complete attendance in the class is encouraged, I recognize that the pandemic will likely make this impossible. Most importantly: please stay home if you feel sick (no need to get a doctor's note). Depending on how things go, zooming in may be an option (if you're feeling well enough, that is). Testing is available around campus, including at the Michigan Union. You can sign-up [here](#).

**Accessibility:** If you have a physical, sensory, cognitive, or psychological disability and require accommodations, please let me know if I can do more to make the class (and class materials) more accessible. You do not have to disclose your disability status in order to request accommodations from me. I do want to know about what kinds of accommodations will make our classroom a productive learning environment for you, but I also want you to know that disclosure is a choice. Disclosure isn't limited to disability status, either: it may come up with respect to past trauma, gender identity, sexuality, etc.

Formal requests for accommodations may be made by contacting the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Office located at G664 Haven Hall. The SSD phone number is 734-763-3000. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (VISA) form. While I don't require you to have completed a formal request with the SSD Office, it can be helpful for accessing resources (OCR PDFs, for example).

**Student Well-Being:** Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being (especially this year). These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing any issues, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. If the source of your stressors is academic, please contact me so that we can find solutions together. For personal concerns, U-M offers many resources, some of which are listed at [Resources for Student Well-being](#) on the Well-being for U-M Students website. You can also search for additional resources on that website.

**Academic Honesty and Integrity:** The University of Michigan community functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. The college promotes the

assumption of personal responsibility and integrity and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct. For more information, including examples of behaviors that are considered academic misconduct and potential sanctions, please see [lsa.umich.edu/lsa/academics/academic-integrity.html](https://lsa.umich.edu/lsa/academics/academic-integrity.html)

**Zoom Policies:** Building rapport and a classroom community is essential in a small seminar. However, I recognize Zoom (and hybrid learning) presents some significant hurdles. Considering this, a few brief notes:

- Please mute your microphone if you are not speaking (and remember to turn it on when you are).
- Please try and keep your video on when you can (I recognize that some of us have less-than-great internet connections).
- Pets are absolutely allowed and eagerly welcomed (we need all the levity we can get)

**Contacting me:** I am here to be a resource for you. **Do** take advantage of my office hours, and feel free to email me at any point with questions or concerns. I will try to reply to emails within 24 hours. You can sign up for office hours [here](#). If there are no times available that work with your schedule, please email me and we'll figure something out!

**Finally:** The keyword for this semester is flexibility. Barring the first two weeks and further announcements from the University, we will attempt to be in-person. This will likely mean that people (including me) may be absent, ill, or in quarantine at some point during the term. I will try to work around this as best I can.

**Note on texts:** While all of readings are available on Canvas under the “Modules” tab, you may wish to have the following texts on hand:

Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

Reinhardt Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Columbia University Press, 2004).

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon, 1995).

Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (Duke University Press, 2012).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

(Please complete the readings in the order listed)

January 6<sup>th</sup>: Introduction

### PART I: CONCEIVING THE PAST

January 13<sup>th</sup>: Revisiting the Waves

Required Reading:

- Kathleen Laughlin et al., “Is it Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Waves Metaphor,” *Feminist Formations* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 76-101.

- Leela Fernandes, “Unsettling ‘Third Wave Feminism’: Feminist Waves, Intersectionality, and Identity Politics in Retrospect,” in *No Permanent Wages: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (Rutgers University Press, 2010), 98-120.
- William Spurlin, “Resisting Heteronormativity/Resisting Recolonisation: Affective Bonds between Indigenous Women in Southern Africa and the Difference(S) of Postcolonial Feminist History,” *Feminist Review* 95, no. 1 (2010): 10-26.
- Nancy A. Hewitt, “Feminist Frequencies: Regenerating the Wave Metaphor,” *Feminist Studies* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 658-680.

Recommended:

- Kanika Batra, “The Home, the Veil and the World: Reading Ismat Chughtai towards a ‘Progressive’ History of the Indian Women’s Movement,” *Feminist Review* 95, no. 1 (2010): 27-44.
- Melody Berger, *We Don’t Need Another Wave: Dispatches from the Next Generation of Feminists* (Seal 2006).
- Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton University Press, 2004), esp. 1-10.
- Martha Weinman Lear, “The Second Feminist Wave,” *New York Times Magazine*, March 1968.

January 20<sup>th</sup>: Historical Time

Required Reading

- Reinhardt Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Columbia University Press, 2004); Preface (pp. 1-5), Chs. 1-3 (pp. 9-57) 5 (pp. 75-92), 7 (pp. 105-114), 9 (pp. 128-151), 14 (pp. 255-275).

Recommended Reading

- Hannah Arendt, “The Concept of History: Ancient and Modern,” in *Between Past and Future* (Penguin, 2006): 41-90.
- W. B. Gallie, “Essentially Contested Concepts,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56 (1955-56): 167-198.
- François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, trans. Saskia Brown (Columbia University Press, 2016).
- Reinhardt Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Samuel Presner (Stanford University Press, 2002).
- Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” in *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Cambridge University Press, 1997): 57-124.
- David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Duke University Press, 2004).

January 27<sup>th</sup>: Historical Production and the “Cycle of Silences”

Required Reading

- Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon, 1995).

Recommended Reading

- Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000).

- Ethan Kleinberg, *Haunting History: For a Deconstructive Approach to the Past* (Stanford University Press, 2017).
- Achille Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive and its Limits," in *Refiguring the Archive*, eds. Carolyn Hamilton et al. (Springer, 2002): 19-27.
- Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge University Press, 1988).

February 3<sup>rd</sup>: Archival Limits, Archival Desires, and "Mutilated Historicity"

#### Required Reading

- Saidiya Hartmann, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1-14.
- Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

#### Recommended Reading

- Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
- Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (Oxford University Press, 1997).
- Walter Johnson, "Agency: A Ghost Story," in *Slavery's Ghost: The Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation*, by Richard Follet, Eric Foner, and Walter Johnson (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011): 8-30.
- Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton University Press, 2009).
- Jennifer Terry, "Theorizing Deviant Historiography," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (1991): 55-73.

## Part II: INSTITUTIONAL IMAGINARIES

February 10<sup>th</sup>: Feminist Histories, or: Stories we Tell (About) Ourselves

#### Required Reading

- Denise Riley, "Does Sex Have a History?" and "Bodies, Identities, Feminisms," in 'Am I That Name?' *Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History* (University of Minnesota, 1988): 1-18, 96-114.
- Joan W. Scott, "Feminism's History," in *The Fantasy of Feminist History* (Duke University Press, 2011): 23-44.
- Victoria Browne, *Feminism, Time, and Nonlinear History: A Polytemporal Approach* (Palgrave MacMillan: 2014), 1-47 (Introduction and Chapter 1).
- Kate Eichhorn, "'The Scrap Heap' Reconsidered: Selected Archives of Feminist Archiving," in *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Temple University Press, 2013): 25-54.

#### Recommended Reading

- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Molovany-Chevallier (Knopf 2010): 3-17.
- Rita Felski, "Telling Time in Feminist Theory," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 21-28.
- Margaret W. Ferguson, "Feminism in Time," *MLQ* 65, no. 1 (March 2004): 7-27.
- Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Duke University Press, 2005).
- Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Duke University Press, 2011).

- Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs* 7, no. 1 (Autumn, 1981): 13-35.

#### February 17<sup>th</sup>: Identity Knowledges: Revisiting the Category of Women Debates

##### Required Reading

- Judith Butler, "Preface (1999)" and "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1999): vii-xxviii, 1-46.
- Linda Zerilli, "Feminists Know Not What They Do: Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* and the Limits of Epistemology," in *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (University of Chicago Press, 2005): 33-65.
- Robyn Wiegman, "Doing Justice with Objects or, the 'Progress' of Gender," in *Object Lessons* (Duke University Press, 2012): 36-90.

##### Recommended Reading

- Linda Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory," *Signs* 13, no. 3 (Spring 1988): 405-436.
- Wendy Brown, "Feminism Unbound: Revolution, Mourning, Politics" and "The Impossibility of Women's Studies," in *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2005): 98-135.
- Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (Routledge, 1993): 1-23.
- Linda Nicholson, "Interpreting Gender," *Signs* 20, no. 1 (1994): 79-105
- Robyn Wiegman, "The Possibility of Women's Studies," in *Women's Studies for the Future: Foundations, Interrogations, Politics* eds. Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Agatha Beins (Rutgers University Press, 2005): 40-60.

#### February 24<sup>th</sup>: Institutionalizing Intersectionality

##### Required Reading

- Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 138-67.
- Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence, Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241-1299.
- Jennifer C. Nash, "Institutionalizing the Margins," *Social Text* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 45-65.
- Jennifer C. Nash, "A Love Letter from a Critic, or Notes on the Intersectionality Wars," in *Black Feminism Reimagined After Intersectionality* (Duke University Press, 2019): 33-58.

##### Recommended Reading

- Patricia Hill Collins, *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* (Duke University Press, 2019).
- Brittney Cooper, "Intersectionality," in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, eds. Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth (Oxford University Press, 2016): 385-406.
- Jasbir K. Puar, "I Would Rather be a Cyborg than a Goddess': Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory," *philoSOPHIA* 2, no. 1 (2012): 49-66.
- Robyn Wiegman, "Critical Kinship: Universal Aspirations and Intersectional Judgments," in *Object Lessons* (Duke University Press, 2012): 239-300.

March 3<sup>rd</sup>: No Class (Spring Break)

March 10<sup>th</sup>: Thinking Sex

### Required Reading

- Gayle S. Rubin, "Thinking Sex," in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984): 267-319.
- Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24 (Winter 1998): 547-566.
- Robyn Wiegman, "Telling Time: When Feminism and Queer Theory Diverge," in *Object Lessons* (Duke University Press, 2012): 91-136.
- Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics," *GLQ* 3 (May 1997): 437-65.

### Recommended Reading

- Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Routledge, 1993): 223-242.
- Judith Butler, "Against Proper Objects," *differences* 6, nos. 2-3 (1994): 1-26.
- Janet Halley, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* (Princeton University Press, 2006).
- Biddy Martin, "Sexualities Without Genders and Other Queer Utopias" *Diacritics* 24, no. 2 (Summer-Autumn 1994): 104-121.
- Gayle Rubin with Judith Butler, "Sexual Traffic," *differences* 6, nos. 2-3 (1994): 62-99 (includes Rubin's reflections on "Thinking Sex" and its reception, but also her reminiscences about Michigan in the 1970s and stalking Foucault in the Bibliothèque nationale.)
- Michael Warner, "Fear of a Queer Planet," *Social Text* 29 (1991): 3-17.

## PART III: IMAGINING ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

### March 17<sup>th</sup>: Queer Potentialities, Queer Refusals, and the "Romance of Negativity"

#### Required Reading

- Lee Edelman, "The Future is Kid Stuff," in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 1-32.
- José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York University Press, 2009): 1-32, 83-96.
- Carolyn Dinshaw, Lee Edelman, Roderick A. Ferguson et al. "Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13, no. 2-3 (2007): 177-195.
- Judith Butler, "Violence, Mourning, Politics," *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 4, no. 1 (2003): 9-37.

#### Recommended Reading

- Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Duke University Press, 2010).
- Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Duke University Press, 2010).
- Heather Love, "Epilogue: The Politics of Refusal," in *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Harvard University Press, 2007).
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### March 24<sup>th</sup>: Carceral Feminism and the Limits of Rights

#### Required Reading

- Wendy Brown and Janet Halley, "Introduction," in *Left Legalism/Left Critique* (Duke University Press, 2002): 1-37.

- Wendy Brown, "Suffering the Paradoxes of Rights," in *Left Legalism/Left Critique*, eds. Wendy Brown and Janet Halley (Duke University Press, 2002): 420-434.
- Elizabeth Bernstein, "Carceral Politics as Gender Justice? The 'Traffic in Women' and Neoliberal Circuits of Crime, Sex, and Rights" *Theory and Society* 41, no. 3 (May 2012): 233-259.
- Angela Davis, "Abolitionist Alternatives," in *Are Prisons Obsolete?*
- Charmaine Chua, "Abolition is a Constant Struggle: Five Lessons from Minneapolis," *Theory and Event* 23, no 4 (October 2020): S127-S147.

#### Recommended Reading

- Lisa Bower, "Queer Acts and the Politics of Direct Address," *Law & Society* 28, no. 5 (1994): 1009-1033.
- Wendy Brown, "Rights and Losses," in *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton University Press, 1995): 96-134.
- Chandan Reddy, "Time for Rights? Loving, Gay Marriage, and the Limits of Legal Justice," *Fordham Law Review* 76, no. 6 (2007): 2849-2872.
- Anna Terwiel, "What Is Carceral Feminism?" *Political Theory* 48, no. 4 (2020): 421-442.

#### March 31<sup>st</sup>: Fugitive Justice

##### Required Reading

- Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments," *Political Theory* 21, no. 3 (1993): 390-410.
- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're so Paranoid, You Probably Think this Essay is About You," in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Duke University Press, 2003), 123-151.
- Stephen Best and Saidiya Hartman, "Fugitive Justice," *Representations* 92, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 1-15.

#### April 7<sup>th</sup>: Disabling the Future

- Sami Schalk and Jina B. Kim, "Integrating Race, Transforming Feminist Disability Studies," *Signs* 46, no. 1 (2020): 31-55.
- Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Indiana University Press, 2013), selections.
- Eli Clare, "Stolen Bodies, Reclaimed Bodies: Disability and Queerness," *Public Culture* 13, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 359-65.
- Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018), selections.

#### Recommended Reading:

- Patty Berne, "[Disability Justice: A Working Draft](#)" (2015).
- Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory," *NWSA Journal* 14, no. 3 (2002): 1-32.
- Joanna Hedva, "Sick Woman Theory," *Mask Magazine*, January 2016, <http://www.maskmagazine.com/not-again/struggle/sick-woman-theory>
- Julia Watts Belser, "Disability, Climate Change, and Environmental Violence: The Politics of Invisibility and the Horizon of Hope," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2020).

#### April 14<sup>th</sup>: Flex Week