HU 6111 Special Topics in Gender: Feminist Critiques and Constructions of the Subject (Fall 2001)

Dr. Heidi Bostic
hlbostic@mtu.edu
Office: Walker 334
Office Phone: 487-2376; Dept Phone: 487-2540
Office hours: Mon. 2:00-3:00, Wed. 3:00-4:00, Thurs. 2:00-3:00 and by appointment

Meeting place: Walker 139
Meeting time: Thursdays 7:05-9:35 p.m.

Required Texts:

Isabelle de Charrière, Letters from Mistress Henley Published by her Friend (MLA)
bell hooks, Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics (South End Press)
Luce Irigaray, I Love to You (Routledge)
Luce Irigaray, To Be Two (Routledge)
Genevieve Lloyd, The Man of Reason: “Male” and “Female” in Western Philosophy 2nd ed. (Minnesota)
Course Packet, available on library reserve (see Reading Schedule below)

Course Description:

The issue of the human subject, or the self, plays an important role in any theory. Put another way, theories are deeply influenced by the notion of the subject that they posit, whether explicitly or implicitly. Therefore, virtually any research project in the humanities may be enhanced by closer attention to and greater understanding of theories of the subject and the historical and philosophical background of these theories.

Critical thinking about the subject, sometimes aligned with the postmodern “critique of the Enlightenment subject,” is a crucial component of much recent feminist thought. The new constructions of subjectivity that accompany this critique are, however, too often overlooked. In this course, we will examine a variety of feminist critiques and constructions of the subject from an interdisciplinary perspective, including literary, historical and philosophical texts.

The seminar will be organized around three major themes: reason, the body and intersubjectivity. Within these themes, topics to be treated include modernist ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity; postmodern interrogations of these ideals; the intersection of race, class and gender; and the split between public and private spheres.

Grading Criteria (see descriptions below):

Seminar paper, including class presentation 40%
Précis (2 over the course of the semester) 20%
Critical book review 20%
Attendance, participation 20%

The final grade will be calculated according to the official MTU scale:
A = 93-100%  AB = 88-92%  B = 83-87%  BC = 78-82%  C = 73-77%  CD = 68-72%  D = 60-67%  F = 0-59%
Seminar Paper:
All participants will be encouraged to treat this seminar as an opportunity to further their own intellectual and professional development, which includes creating a seminar paper project that is tailored to their interests and that engages with some of the key issues treated in the seminar. This aspect of the course will involve both a written paper of some 15-20 pages (double-spaced) in length and a class presentation on this research. The seminar paper should illustrate both the innovativeness of the approach taken and its relation to existing scholarly work. Everyone is encouraged to solicit peer commentary and constructive criticism as they write and revise their paper.

Précis:
During the course of the semester, each participant will give two précis, which involve a written and an oral component. The précis is a critical engagement with an article or an article-length portion of some text we will have prepared for the class meeting during which the précis will be presented. The précis should not simply summarize the ideas of the text, but should critically engage with the text by showing the significance and the interrelation of the key points. The oral presentation of the précis should serve as a springboard for class discussion, and may include discussion questions. The written portion of the précis should be some 5 pages (double-spaced) in length.

Critical Book Review:
Each course participant will write a critical book review. A list of suggested titles will be provided; students may also select a different book, with the prior approval of the instructor. The critical book review should be modeled on published book reviews in the participant’s field(s). It should give the book’s main points, situate the book in the context of other relevant scholarship, and explain the book’s original contribution. Students will briefly present their book review in class.

Attendance and Participation:
Because this course is designed as a seminar, its success depends on careful preparation and active participation. As there is only one meeting per week, missing just one class means missing an entire week’s worth of discussion. You are strongly advised not to miss any class meetings. After one absence, the attendance/participation grade will decrease by 10% per absence. In case of any emergency or unforeseen conflict, or if you know in advance that you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to notify your instructor as soon as possible. Late work will not be accepted, and no Incompletes will be granted.

NOTE:
MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students, 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department chair, or the Affirmative Action Office (487-3310).

⇒ This syllabus is subject to modification at the discretion of the instructor, in response to student needs and abilities.
Seminar Paper: All participants will be encouraged to treat this seminar as an opportunity to further their own intellectual and professional development, which includes creating a seminar paper project that is tailored to their interests and that engages with some of the key issues treated in the seminar. This aspect of the course will involve both a written paper of some 15-20 pages (double-spaced) in length and a class presentation on this research. The seminar paper should illustrate both the innovativeness of the approach taken and its relation to existing scholarly work. Everyone is encouraged to solicit peer commentary and constructive criticism as they write and revise their paper.

Précis: During the course of the semester, each participant will give two précis, which involve a written and an oral component. The précis is a critical engagement with an article or an article-length portion of some text we will have prepared for the class meeting during which the précis will be presented. The précis should not simply summarize the ideas of the text, but should critically engage with the text by showing the significance and the interrelation of the key points. The oral presentation of the précis should serve as a springboard for class discussion, and may include discussion questions. The written portion of the précis should be some 5 pages (double-spaced) in length.

Critical Book Review: Each course participant will write a critical book review. A list of suggested titles will be provided; students may also select a different book, with the prior approval of the instructor. The critical book review should be modeled on published book reviews in the participant’s field(s). It should give the book’s main points, situate the book in the context of other relevant scholarship, and explain the book’s original contribution. Students will briefly present their book review in class.

Attendance and Participation: Because this course is designed as a seminar, its success depends on careful preparation and active participation. As there is only one meeting per week, missing just one class means missing an entire week’s worth of discussion. You are strongly advised not to miss any class meetings. After one absence, the attendance/participation grade will decrease by 10% per absence. In case of any emergency or unforeseen conflict, or if you know in advance that you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to notify your instructor as soon as possible. Late work will not be accepted, and no Incompletes will be granted.

NOTE: MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students, 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department chair, or the Affirmative Action Office (487-3310).
Proposed Reading Schedule (subject to modification)

Thursday, August 30
Introduction to key issues
In-class reading and discussion of:
The American Declaration of Independence
The Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments
The French Declaration of the Rights of Man
Olympe de Gouges, Declaration of the Rights of Woman

Thursday, September 6
Geneviève Lloyd. The Man of Reason. 2nd ed.

Thursday, September 13
Susan Bordo. “The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought” in Signs 11.3 [recommended: Descartes Meditations]
Michèle LeDoeuff. “Women, Reason, etc.” in Differences 2.3
Immanuel Kant. “An Answer to the Question: ‘What is Enlightenment?’” in Kant: Political Writings, ed. Reiss
Nancy Fraser. “Rethinking the Public Sphere” in Justice Interruptus

Thursday, September 20
Isabelle de Charrière. Letters from Mistress Henley Published by her Friend.
Martine Sonnet. “A Daughter to Educate” in A History of Women in the West vol. III, ed. David and Lafarge
Joan W. Scott. “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis” in Gender and the Politics of History

Thursday, September 27
Julia Kristeva. “Women’s Time” in Signs 7.1
Julia Kristeva. “From One Identity to an Other” in Desire in Language
Carol Watts. “Revisiting Kristeva’s Women’s Time” in Literature and the Contemporary, ed. Luckhurst and Marks.

Thursday, October 4
Hélène Cixous. “We Who Are Free, Are We Free?” in Freedom and Interpretation, ed. Barbara Johnson.
Luce Irigaray. “This Sex Which is not One” in This Sex Which Is Not One
Luce Irigaray. “Women on the Market” in This Sex Which Is Not One
Luce Irigaray. “Sexual Difference” in An Ethics of Sexual Difference
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Thursday, October 11 | Grosz and Spivak. “Criticism, Feminism, and The Institution” in *The Post-Colonial Critic*  
Judith Butler. *Bodies that Matter* [preface & intro]  
<p>| Thursday, October 25 | Luce Irigaray, <em>I Love to You</em> |
| Thursday, November 1 | Luce Irigaray, <em>I Love to You</em> |
| Thursday, November 8 | Luce Irigaray, <em>To Be Two</em> |
| Thursday, November 15 | Luce Irigaray, <em>To Be Two</em> |
| <em><strong>Thanksgiving Break</strong></em> | |
| Thursday, November 29 | bell hooks, <em>Yearning</em> |
| Thursday, December 6 | bell hooks, <em>Yearning</em> |
| Thursday, December 13 | Seminar paper presentations; final thoughts, wrap-up discussion |
| Monday, December 17  | Seminar Paper Due |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Thursday, October 11  | Grosz and Spivak. “Criticism, Feminism, and The Institution” in *The Post-Colonial Critic*  
Judith Butler. *Bodies that Matter* [preface & intro]  
| Thursday, October 25  | Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You*                                                   |
| Thursday, November 1  | Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You*                                                   |
| Thursday, November 8  | Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*                                                       |
| Thursday, November 15 | Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*                                                       |
|                       | **Thanksgiving Break**                                                           |
| Thursday, November 29 | bell hooks, *Yearning*                                                           |
| Thursday, December 6  | bell hooks, *Yearning*                                                           |
| Thursday, December 13 | Seminar paper presentations; final thoughts, wrap-up discussion                 |
| Monday, December 17   | Seminar Paper Due                                                                 |