

Feminist Theory and STS

Convener: Anne Pollock

Possible Instructors: Wenda Bauchspies, Carol Colatrella, Narin Hassan, Anne Pollock, Robert Rosenberger, Lisa Yaszek

Introduction

This course is an advanced science, technology and society (STS) seminar in feminist theory. As a graduate level theory course, it both introduces students to the canon of the field, and focuses on feminist theory as a method of analysis.

Science and Technology Studies (STS) matured in an historical period that saw an explosion of theoretical inquiry in humanities and social sciences, including the significant development of feminist theory. Therefore, much research in STS reflects and refracts issues and ideas related to principles of feminist theory. Moreover, feminist analyses have developed into a distinct mode of inquiry within STS, providing both original theoretical frameworks and essential critiques of established perspectives.

This course provides sustained attention to the productive intersections of STS and feminist theory. Many of the texts situate issues of gender within critical engagement with scientific ideology and technology in practice, for example by interrogating intersecting binaries such as nature/culture, femininity/masculinity, subjectivity/objectivity, affect/knowledge, specificity/universalism. Feminist theory in STS has both opened out to consider diverse aspects difference – attending not only to gender but also to race, class, sexuality, disability, postcoloniality, and more – and honed in on fundamental issues of epistemology. Thus, feminist theory both helps to foreground attention to gender and other structures of inequality, and can inform inquiry into any topic.

Structure of the Course

It has been designed collaboratively, but will be taught by a single professor. The first half of the class explores key texts in feminist theory that either situate themselves within STS, as being in dialogue with STS, or have had a major impact on STS. The material in the second half of the class varies according to the professor teaching it that semester. Possible focal areas in that component might include: power and knowledge, new materialisms, feminist science fiction, reproductive technology.

Course Objectives

- To understand core concepts in the feminist theory of science and technology.
- To engage in-depth with one particular area of feminist STS work.
- To learn about historical and cultural influences on the development of feminist theory of science and technology.
- To apply concepts in feminist theory of science and technology in original essays about STS topics.
- To develop facility in research in feminist theory of science and technology.

Assessment:

- Active participation in the seminar discussion: 30%
 - Blogs about the readings completed in advance of each class: 30%
 - A final paper/project, according to student interest and professor approval: 40%
- Appropriate formats might include: a research paper that apply theories from this class to dissertation research; a review essay about books in student's field in light of this class; a design project that engages and applies concepts from this class.

UNIT ONE: FOUNDATIONS OF FEMINIST SCIENCE STUDIES

Week 1: Introduction to the course

Week 2: Overviews

Appropriate texts include:

Subramaniam, Banu. "Moored Metamorphoses: A Retrospective Essay on Feminist Science Studies," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 34.4 (2009): 951-980.

Bauchspies, Wenda, and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa. "Feminist Science and Technology Studies: A patchwork of moving subjectivities," *Subjectivity* 28.9(2009): 334-344.

Week 3: Gender and Science

Appropriate texts include:

Keller, Evelyn Fox. *Reflections on Gender and Science*, New Have: Yale University Press, 1985.

Week 4: Women and Science

Appropriate texts include:

Schiebinger, Londa. *Has Feminism Changed Science?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Colatrella, Carol. "Introduction: Cultural Narratives and 'The Leaky Pipeline.'" *Toys and Tools in Pink: Cultural Narratives of Gender, Science, and Technology*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011, pp.1-27.

Ceci, Stephen J. and Wendy Williams. *Why aren't there more women in science?* American Psychological Association, 2006.

Week 5: Feminist Epistemologies

Appropriate texts include:

Harding, Sandra. *The Science Question in Feminism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986

Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" From C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988, pp. 271-313.

Collins, Patricia Hill. (1986). "Learning From the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought." *Social Problems*. 33.6 (1986): S14-S32.

Narayan, Kirin. "How Native is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" In *Situated Lives*, eds. L. Lamphere, H. Ragoné, and P. Zavella, pp. 278-41, New York: Routledge.

Ong, Aihwa. "Women Out of China: Traveling Tales and Traveling Theories in Postcolonial Feminism." In *Women Writing Culture*, eds. R. Behar, and D. A. Gordon, pp. 351-372, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week 6: Cyborg Feminism

Appropriate texts include:

Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

- Moraga, Cherríe. *Loving in the War Years*. Cambridge: South End Press, 1983.
- Moya, Paula. *Learning From Experience: Minority Identities, Multicultural Struggles*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. (first chapter)

UNIT TWO: KEY TOPICS IN FEMINIST SCIENCE STUDIES

Week 7: Theorizing Embodiment

Appropriate texts include:

- Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994. (selections)
- Wilson, Elizabeth. "Gut Feminism," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 15.3 (2004): 66-94.

Week 8: Feminism and Medicine

Appropriate texts include:

- Balsamo, Anne. *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Martin, Emily. *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1987.
- Hartouni, Valerie. *Cultural Conceptions: On Reproductive Technologies and the Remaking of Life*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne. *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Week 9: Feminism and Technology

Appropriate texts include:

- de Lauretis, Teresa. *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987. (Intro)
- Firestone, Shulamith. *The Dialectic of Sex*. The Women's Press, 1979.
- Wajcman, Judy. *Technofeminism*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004.
- Wajcman, Judy. "Feminist Theories of Technology," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34.1(2010): 143-152.
- Suchman, Lucy. "Feminist STS and the Sciences of the Artificial," in *New Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007.
- Oldenziel, Ruth. *Making Technology Masculine: Men, Women, and Modern Machines in America 1870-1945*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

UNIT THREE: AT DISCRETION OF PROFESSOR

Example provided for New Materialisms

Week 10:

Selections from Coole, Diana, and Samantha Frost. *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010:

Intro;

Elizabeth Grosz, "Feminism, Materialism, and Freedom";

Rosi Braidotti, "The Politics of 'Life Itself' and New Ways of Dying"

Week 11:

Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Half Way: Quantam Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Week 12:

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Week 13:

Wilson, Elizabeth. *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Week 14:

Clough, Patricia Ticineto. *Autoaffection: Unconscious Thought in an Age of Technology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Week 15: Discontents

Ahmed, Sara. "Open Forum Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the 'New Materialism,'" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 15 (2008): 23-39.

David, Noela. "New Materialism and Feminism's Anti-Biologism A Response to Sara Ahmed," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 16.1(2009): 67-80.

Week 16: Wrap Up – Papers Due