

**Activists, Artists, Scientists, Writers:
An Introduction to Women's Studies
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:30-11:30 a.m.
110 Asbury Hall**

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Office Hours: Monday through Friday, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

Our seminar will explore the life stories, struggles, and accomplishments of women in many fields of human endeavor. Gail Collins's exciting and readable new book, *When Everything Changed*, will give us an overview of American women's history during the past fifty years and will supply a framework for issues that come up later in the semester. Subsequent readings will provoke discussions about female sexuality, girlhood, ethnicity, private awakenings, political activism, environmental issues, myths about gender differences, and some of the many ongoing debates within feminism.

Our investigation will be guided by two simple questions. Virginia Woolf asks the first of these questions in *A Room of One's Own*, an influential (and wonderful) essay published in 1929. "*Where are the women?*" Woolf asks, reminding us to pay attention to women's often invisible achievements and restricted rights, no matter what subject, region of the world, or period of history we are studying. Twenty years later, in her path-breaking book *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone de Beauvoir asks an equally fundamental question: "*What is a woman?*" We will ask ourselves these questions frequently through the semester.

SOME BACKGROUND ON WOMEN'S STUDIES

New scholarship on women burgeoned in the 1970s and 80s in the United States and has continued to evolve and proliferate since then. No longer a suspect or marginalized field, Women's Studies now holds a respected place in the university curriculum. Men and women scholars alike teach books by and about women; topics of gender identity, gender roles, and sexuality are studied in anthropology, English, sociology, psychology, history, and philosophy courses; related topics of social class, race, and ethnicity are addressed in many courses, as well. Although Women's Studies is less well established in the sciences and mathematics, you will meet faculty members in these disciplines at DePauw, as elsewhere, who are passionately committed to the study of women and gender, and who understand how important it is to pay attention to women's perspectives in all areas of teaching and research.

The most contested word involved in Women's Studies is *feminism*. For some, the word still conjures up a particular type of politics and a particular (usually highly annoying) stereotypical woman. But in most areas, feminism and feminist analysis are accepted as central to liberal arts study, and the meaning of the term feminism is understood to be multivalent, able to accommodate many different approaches to life and a range of different ideologies. I have found it helps to start with a basic definition. To be a feminist is to believe in and strive for equality between the sexes; to believe that women, like all people, should have a say in what happens to them and should have real choices to make in life; and to believe that women's experiences and endeavors are worth knowing about. I could add many other beliefs to this list, but I'll leave these three as a starting point. Feminism is about equality and rights and agency. Looking at issues through a feminist lens helps make visible ideas and facts that might otherwise go unnoticed. In this seminar, we will keep an eye on the concept of feminism, both as it emerges in our readings and as

we find ourselves using it in daily life. What feminism means, and what it entails, will be a third guiding question in the class.

Women's Studies often has an activist component as well. Women's Studies majors and minors, for example, may seek opportunities to advocate for girls and women or to involve themselves in the local community. If you are interested, I encourage you to look around for women's advocacy groups and service projects. Activism comes in many, many forms, however. One of its forms is simply speaking out and educating others. You will be doing a great deal of speaking, listening, debating, and consensus building in our daily class meetings.

TEXTS

The following books and films are required for WS 140, with the exception of *Role Models* which I have made optional (but encourage you to buy if possible). Other course readings will be posted on Moodle, and you will need to print your own copy of each of these reading. Please bring your copy of the relevant book or essay to class each day. **This is an important requirement of the course; it counts!**

Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual* (5th edition)

Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present*

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*

Toni Morrison, *Sula*

Allison Bechdel, *Fun Home*

Edwidge Danticat, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*

Deborah Cameron, *The Myth of Mars and Venus*

Role Models: Feminine Identity in Contemporary American Photography

Readings on Moodle

EVALUATION

- Your grade in WS140 (FYS) will be based on the following work:
 - 3 papers, an in-class midterm exam, and a final exam (18% each)
 - Participation, including short, informal writings keyed to assigned reading (10%, see below)
- In a first-year seminar, class participation is a key ingredient for success—both your success as a student, and the success of the seminar as a memorable experience for all. I expect strong, consistent participation from every one of you.
- I will assign short, informal writing projects, as homework, in connection with class readings. (Generally these will be less than a page, double-spaced.) These informal writing assignments are designed to stimulate ideas for discussion in class. I will read them with interest, but not grade them.
- You can participate in class in several ways:
 - Simply by being well-prepared, having read and reflected on assigned readings;
 - By contributing ideas to class discussion;
 - By asking questions;
 - By inviting another person to speak or following up on a point made by a classmate;
 - And by putting thought into your informal writings.

- Class attendance is important. Except in the case of serious illness or emergency, more than a very few absences will lower your final grade. If you find yourself unable to come to class, please try your best to let me know beforehand.
- As you work on your papers for the class, I encourage you to take advantage of the excellent services offered by consultants in the **Writing Center in Asbury Hall**. As you prepare to lead class discussion in October and November, please seek advice from **Elaine Wiley, our Speaking and Listening Center consultant**.

ACADEMIC HONESTY & CITATION OF SOURCES

You are familiar with the most obvious types of academic dishonesty: cutting and pasting material from the web, borrowing and rewriting someone else's paper, speech, or slide presentation, using ideas from a book without citing the source, bringing notes to an exam, and so forth. Be aware that less obvious forms of plagiarism sometimes cause trouble as well. If you submit a paper or lab report to one class, for example, you can't submit the same work to another class, unless you have explicit permission from both instructors. Borrowing paragraphs, arguments, *or even short phrases* from an encyclopedia or website without proper documentation also counts as plagiarism and will result in a charge of academic dishonesty (in this class or others) and a severe grade penalty.

Please pay attention to DePauw's Academic Integrity Policy included in the online student handbook. I expect you to understand the policy and to adhere to it scrupulously. If you have questions about whether you're paraphrasing and citing sources correctly, please come see me and we'll work through the answers together. Please use **MLA documentation style** for all of your papers in the seminar.

Calendar / Fall 2010
Activists, Artists, Writers, and Scientists: An Introduction to Women's Studies

Weeks 1-3: Work, Rights, and Law

- Aug. 25 Introduction: What is a woman? What does it mean to be a woman?
27 Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed*, Introduction & chapters 1-3: "1960"
- Aug. 30 Chapters 4-6: civil and political rights
Sept. 01 Chapters 7-9: liberation and backlash
03 **Bring your laptop** for a visit to Roy O. West Library. The amazing reference librarian Tiffany Hebb will prepare us for paper #1.
- Sept. 06 Chapters 10-12: women and work. Class visit by Annie Glausser, Harvard School of Public Health
08 Chapters 13-14. Draft and notes for paper #1 due at the start of class.
- Special campus event:** Talk by Rebecca Skloot, author of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* in Moore Theatre, Green Center, 7:30 p.m.
- 10 **Paper #1 due** at the start of class (on one issue Collins raises and a source or two listed in her notes and bibliography)

Weeks 4-5: Dystopias and Utopias

- Sept. 13 Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*
15 *The Handmaid's Tale*
17 *The Handmaid's Tale*
- Sept. 20 *Thelma and Louise* View film on **Sunday, September 19, 4-6 p.m., Women's Center, 306 E. Hanna St.** Light dinner provided! (Discuss film on Monday.)
22 Sara Ruhl, *In the Next Room or the vibrator play* (on Moodle)
24 *In the Next Room* Class visit by Professor Gigi Fenlon, Communication & Theatre
Class will meet 11:30-12:30, with lunch!, instead of during regular hour.

Weeks 6-10: Growing Up Female

- Sept. 27 Toni Morrison, *Sula*
29 *Sula*
Oct. 01 *Sula*
- Oct. 04 **Mid-term exam, part 1**
06 **Mid-term exam, part 2**
08 Special class meeting at the Prindle Institute. Readings from Hacker and Lipson.
- Oct. 11 Allison Bechdel, *Fun Home*
13 *Fun Home* & excerpts from Amie Klempnauer-Miller, *She Looks Just Like You*

Special campus event: Reading by Amie Klemptner-Miller, DePauw class of 1988, co-founder (with Jane Miller '87) of the Coalition for Women's Concerns. October 14, 7:30 p.m., in Peeler Auditorium

15 Class visit by Amie Klemptner-Miller '88

----- **Fall Break** -----

Working in pairs, you will have a chance to lead class discussion on starred days.

Oct. 25 Edwidge Danticat, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*
27 Danticat*
29 Danticat*

Nov. 01 Writing conferences in 109 Harrison Hall (bring your key passages and bullet points)
03 Peer editing of paper #2 in class (full first draft due)
05 **Paper #2 due** (comparative close reading of accounts of growing up female)

Weeks 11- 12: Investigations and Critiques

Nov. 08 Sandra Steingraber, *Living Downstream* (selected chapters on Moodle)*
10 *Living Downstream**

Special campus event: Reading by poet Sharon Olds on Thursday, November 11, 7:30 p.m., in Thompson Recital Hall

12 Barbara Ehrenreich, "Welcome to Cancerland" (on Moodle)*
Nov. 15 Deborah Cameron, *The Myth of Mars and Venus**
17 *Mars and Venus**
19 *Mars and Venus**
Nov. 22 **Paper #3 due** (summary of a chapter from Steingraber or Cameron & story of your own)

----- **Thanksgiving Break** -----

Weeks 13-14: Visual Culture

Nov. 29 *Role Models: Feminine Identity in Contemporary American Photography*
Dec. 01 *Role Models*
03 *Role Models*

Dec. 06 We will study films & photographs and read a bit of feminist theory to end the semester.
08
10 Last day of class. **Please bring your laptop** for course evaluations.

Final Exam **Wednesday, December 15, 8:30-11:30 a.m.**