

**Colloquium: Teaching Women's Studies**  
**SC 6640; EN 6030; HS 6650**  
**Fulton Hall 230; Tuesday 5:45-7:15**  
**Fall 2008**  
**Professor Abigail Brooks**  
**412 McGuinn Hall; 617-552-8148**  
**Office Hours: 3-4 pm T/TH and By Appointment**

**Overview of Course Philosophy and Expectations**

Welcome to the Colloquium in Teaching Women's Studies. An intensive and rigorous discussion-centered seminar, this colloquium emulates and builds from the innovative and collaborative approaches to learning that enlivened feminist consciousness-raising groups of the second wave in the United States. In these gatherings initiated and facilitated by women, participants exchanged ideas and lived experiences with one another as peers; participants were simultaneously teachers and learners as they came to realize the depth and breadth of their shared experiences as women and gained awareness of the linkages between these experiences and larger social, economic, and political structures of power. This growing awareness of the reflexive connection between "personal troubles" and "public issues," to use the language of sociologist C Wright Mills (1959), the realization of the *personal is political*, galvanized women to fight for equality and social change on a multitude of societal and cultural fronts—from policy to politics, from workplace economics to domestic violence, from sports to housework.

Consciousness-raising, as embodied through women gathering together and sharing experiences, and as a vehicle and outcome of collaborative learning, was utilized by feminists of color as they problematized the concept of a uniform female experience and drew attention to the diversity of women's lives, knowledge, and struggles across race and class. Through consciousness-raising, feminists of color empowered each other to speak out and fight against, not only gender-based oppressions, but the intersecting oppressions of gender, race, and class (or what African-American feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins (1990) calls, the "matrix of domination.") Finally, feminists of colors helped to raise the consciousness of their white, and often privileged counterparts, as to the importance of recognizing and respecting the rich diversity of women's lives and experiences, and as to the potential of identifying commonalities and building alliances across and between women of different races, classes, cultures and ethnicities—such alliances strengthen the force and capacity for social change but simultaneously respect and remain attentive to the complexity and rich variety of women's experiences.

In this colloquium, we will each embody the roles of teacher and learner. Participants will be encouraged to share their own lived experiences of gender with one another, and to reflect on the different ways their own lived experiences reflect and/or contradict the concepts and theorizations projected through the course readings. Participants will be expected to read the assigned materials for each week thoroughly, to clearly identify the authors' principle arguments, and to analyze and critique these arguments in the context of collaborative discussion. It is a goal of this colloquium that through the process of reflexive and respectful interchange of ideas and

experiences, participants will developed a heightened consciousness of gender-related issues, on both the individual and the collective level.

Your participation in the colloquium will feed into your role as a co-discussion leader of your discussion session. As a co-discussion leader/facilitator, you will be expected to embody the role of teacher, but also to create an atmosphere of collaborative and mutual learning. The students in your discussion session will learn a lot from you, but you will also learn from them, and they will learn from each other. Ideally, your discussion session will echo the feminist consciousness- raising model of respectful listening and exchange of experiences and ideas—an exchange that involves the exciting potential of empowerment through the recognition of common experience, but also a keen awareness, respect, and appreciation for a diversity of lived experiences, worldviews, and perspectives.

## Specific Responsibilities of Colloquium/Seminar Participants

- Lead and facilitate your weekly student discussion section in collaboration with your co-leader.
- Collect, comment on, and grade weekly response papers written by the students in your discussion section.
- Maintain weekly attendance roster for Intro to Feminisms lecture and for your discussion section.
- Provide written mid-term evaluations for students in your section
- Attend weekly Intro to Feminisms Lecture and Teaching Colloquium/Seminar.

(40%)

- Thoroughly read all assigned Intro to Feminisms materials and be ready to discuss them for Tuesday's Teaching Colloquium/Seminar. Bring two (or more) questions or comments, based on the readings, to each seminar. These questions may be useful to draw from as you participate in, and contribute to, our discussions, and may also serve as a helpful first step in preparation for the facilitation of your discussion sections on Thursday. These questions will be collected by me at the end of Tuesday's class, along with your journal entry.
- Keep a weekly journal entry. (Each week's entry will be due and handed in to me at Tuesday's Teaching Colloquium/Seminar—I will comment on the entries and hand them back to each of you the following Tuesday.) Journal entries should consist of analysis and reflection on the assigned readings; analysis, reflection, observation, concerns, and questions about how your discussion section is proceeding and evolving; assessment and articulation of how, and in what ways, you are integrating the assigned readings into your facilitation of your discussion session; articulation and reflection on any specific methods or exercises you might be using to aid student comprehension of a particular concept, or to encourage student participation, reflection, and discussion of particular topics or issues; articulation and reflection on your own personal and intellectual growth and development, your evolution, struggles, and potential frustrations in your role as a TA/co-discussion section leader.

(35%)

- Co-facilitate two Teaching Colloquium/Seminar discussions and co-develop two lesson plans. Co-facilitation will consist of guiding the seminar discussion by providing key questions, observations, and highlights drawn from the assigned readings for the week. The same week that you co-facilitate discussion, you will also co-develop a lesson plan. You will distribute copies to seminar participants and review it with us. Lesson plans can consist of a range of outside materials (additional readings, newspaper articles, internet articles and sites, television/film/advertising clips, and/or magazine images) as well as discussion questions, learning activities, and exercises.

(25%)

*Please note that, while you will not receive a letter grade for this course, the percentages listed below each bullet pointed description of your responsibilities (see percentages above) indicate the weighting given to your different responsibilities, and will be utilized by me as an evaluative tool to determine your overall course performance.*

**Guidelines for Your Discussion Sections:  
Attendance, Grading, and Creating a Respectful, Constructive,  
Discussion-Conducive Learning Environment**

- **Creating a Respectful, Constructive, Discussion-Conducive Learning Environment:**

In your first discussion section meeting with your students, it is advisable to be proactive in setting a positive tone for the semester, and to take some time reviewing basic goals and expectations. In addition to sharing a bit with your students about yourself, your own path that led you to become an intro to feminisms TA, and your own hopes, aspirations, and goals for your discussion session, I recommend that you go over some of the fundamentals that inform a discussion-conducive environment. Your review of these fundamentals should include: an emphasis on respectful listening; an openness to hearing, and being exposed to, new and unfamiliar concepts, experiences and ideas; an understanding and acceptance of different and diverse experiences, views, and perspectives. Your goal is to create a learning environment that is safe, open, and supportive; an environment in which your students will feel comfortable articulating their different thoughts, feelings, perspectives, experiences and ideas without fear of judgment; an environment in which students will be encouraged to express all of their thoughts, feelings, perspectives, experiences, and ideas in a respectful and thoughtful manner; *an environment, in short, which encourages expression and openness, is receptive to, and respectful of, differences in lived experience, background, and perspectives, and which encourages sharing and constructive dialogue and communication about these differences.* Finally, in your first meeting, I recommend you engage in a kind of ice-breaking activity; at the very least, have students introduce themselves, and say a word or two about why they are taking this class, etc.

- **Attendance:**

You will be responsible for keeping track of the attendance of your discussion section participants *both* at the weekly lecture, and at your discussion sessions. I will provide you with an excel sheet for the lecture and for your discussion session for attendance record keeping purposes. For the weekly lecture, you will simply mark whether your discussion session members are absent or present. For the discussion session, your grading of attendance will be a bit more nuanced; you will be documenting, not only whether your students are present or absent, but whether or not they have done the readings, and the degree to which they are actively engaged in the discussion. The attendance grading rubric for your discussion session (which is also included on your excel sheet) is as follows:

1. Absent = 0

2. Present, readings completed, actively engaged in discussion = V+

3. Present, readings completed, alert and attentive = V

(Please note for the V category, a student may not say too much, or, in some cases, nothing at all, yet is clearly and conscientiously following the discussion, interested, and attentive to what others are saying.)

4. Present, yet less attentive, less engaged, and/or has not completed the readings: V-

(Please note that for the V- category, you can use your discretion, and may even, on occasion, decide to give a student a 0 instead of a V- .

If you feel that the student's lack of effort, with regards to the readings, for example, is simply unacceptable, you may decide to grant a 0 instead of a V-.)

- **Paper Grading Guidelines and Comments:**

First, please remember that in addition to the grades you give to your students' papers, your comments are a vitally important and equally informative part of the feedback that you will be giving your students. You will be expected to make thorough comments on each of the papers you grade—feel free to comment, both in margins, and at the end of each paper. Your comments can include positive and affirming responses to particular aspects of your students' papers, as well as highlighting particular problematics and/or weaknesses. Further, including questions as part of your comments, questions which provoke your students to delve deeper into a particular theme, or questions that will push them to expand their analyses, and to think and write more critically for their next assignment, are also encouraged.

**These are the aspects you will draw from to evaluate your students' papers:**

- 1. Reading Completion and Comprehension.** Students must demonstrate clearly, through their papers, that they have thoroughly completed and digested the readings. They must also demonstrate a solid grasp and understanding of the readings. Students must discuss **three (or more)** readings in each of their papers. (While some readings can be discussed more thoroughly than others, it is imperative that student papers make clear that they have done the readings, again, with a minimum of explicit discussion of **three (or more)** of the assigned readings.) \* *You may substitute the discussion of one reading only with discussion of a course film and/or speaker—in other words, should you chose to discuss a course speaker or film, you must also include discussion of **at least 2 (preferably more)** course readings.*
- 2. Critical Analysis and Reflection.** Students must engage in intelligent reflection, discussion, critique, and analysis of the readings—students should thoughtfully analyze, critique, and reflect on, the authors' primary arguments, the theories and concepts presented, and the experiences of women that are illuminated in the readings. Such analysis, critique, and reflection can include and be strengthened by, the incorporation of students' personal views, perspectives, and lived experiences. The discussion of course films, speakers, current events, additional readings, film, television, and/or any other aspects of culture (both past and present, local, national, and global), can also be a useful contributing aspect to critique and analysis. Finally, the demonstration of a cumulative understanding of previous course readings, and drawing from previous readings and units of the course, is strongly encouraged, and can be applied as a useful tool for comparison and critical analysis.
- 3. Quality of Writing and Clear Communication of Ideas: Flow, Cohesion, and Organization.** Does the student communicate his/her ideas, critiques, analyses, opinions and reflections clearly? Are the students' points presented in a cohesive and organized fashion? Does the writing read easily and flow well?

**Students' papers will be graded on a 10 point scale.**

Aspects 1 and 2 above (evidence of reading completion and comprehension and critical reflection and analysis respectively) are the 2 most important evaluative criterion; aspect 3 (quality, clarity, and organization of writing) being the least important.

**Paper points should be allotted as follows:**

**Criterion 1 (Reading Completion and Comprehension):**

<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Poor</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>4</b>

**Criterion 2 (Critical Analysis and Reflection):**

<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Poor</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>4</b>

**Criterion 3 (Quality, Clarity and Organization of Writing)**

<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>2</b>

- Please note that you may also use half points if you so choose. For example, if you feel that the student's critical reflection and analysis was very good (or between good and excellent) you can grant them a 4.5.
- After rating the student's performance on the 3 criteria, and tallying up the total number of points for the paper, add 10 points to the total and divide by 2. This number *will be the student's grade for the paper*. For example, say the student received 3 points for criterion 1, 3 points for criterion 2, and 1 point for criterion 3, with a total of 7 points. Add 10, (the total then becomes 17), and divide by 2, (the result being an 8.5). Thus, the student's numerical grade for the paper is an 8.5.

You will provide *number grades only on your student papers*. However, below is a guideline of approximate letter grade equivalents:

**9.8-10 = A+**

**9.4-9.7 = A**

**9.0-9.3 = A-**

**8.8-8.9 = B+**

**8.4-8.7 = B**

**8.0-8.3 = B-**

**7.8-7.9 = C+**

**7.4-7.7 = C**

**7.0-7.3 = C-**

**6.8-6.9 = D+**

**6.4-6.7 = D**

**6.0-6.3 = D-**

**5.9 and below = F**

- Papers will be turned around weekly, and handed back to students, with comments and grades, at the end of your discussion session each week.
- We will discuss this further in our first seminar meeting, but it is imperative that you and your co-leader (s) share paper-grading responsibilities equally. It is also highly recommended that you alternate the grading of your students' papers such that you each grade half of your students' papers one week, and then switch the half group of papers you grade the next, such that you become equally familiar with the written work of all of your students.

