

U.S. Women of Colors
WS 5463.01, Women's Studies Seminar

Texas Woman's University, Fall 2009
Tuesday 2:30 – 5:20pm in ASB 309

Dr. Judy Rohrer

HDB 307E

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Office Hours: Tues. 11:00-1:30 and Thurs. 11:00-11:30; also by appointment

The premise behind much “women of color” organizing is that women from communities victimized by white supremacy should unite together around their shared oppression... This framework...tends to presume that our communities have been impacted by white supremacy in the same way... Rather, white supremacy is constituted by separate and distinct, but still interrelated, logics. Envision three pillars, one labeled Slavery/Capitalism, another labeled Genocide/Colonialism, and the last one labeled Orientalism/War, as well as arrows connecting each of the pillars together.

- Andrea Smith

Course Description

This course explores the histories, theories, cultures, consciousness, and lives of U.S. women of color from a variety of perspectives and interdisciplinary methodologies. The course is structured on Native American feminist scholar Andrea Smith's conceptualization of three pillars of white supremacy: slavery/capitalism; genocide/colonialism; and orientalism/war. Smith argues that white supremacy in the U.S. is constituted by these interrelated logics, impacting various communities of color in different ways at different times. Thus, she contends that rather than presuming women of color are impacted in the same way by racism, or fracturing into “oppression olympics,” feminists need to build theories, solidarity and resistance that address the ways this tripartite structure naturalizes white supremacy by enacting violences against women of color. Using this framework the course analyzes issues related to conflict, agency, survival, resistance, intervention, and transformation.

Central Course Questions

- How have various women of color been racialized differently in the service of white supremacy?
- How can we mobilize intersectional theory to help us deal with being both privileged and disadvantaged across multiple scales of oppression?
- In what ways can we draw connections and organize against all the violences that injure us from sexual violence, to economic injustice, to low expectations, to state violence, to militarism?
- How do we build effective organizing models that neither essentialize our commonalities nor nationalize our differences?

- How do different understandings, by various constituencies, of place in the U.S. (home, homeland, diaspora, frontier, territory, land of opportunity, inside/outside incarceration) help to constitute those groups, often in opposition to each other?

Course Objectives

- explore interdisciplinary feminist scholarship by and about U.S. women of colors
- learn about the different ways white supremacy is mobilized against, and resisted by, Black, Native, Asian, Latina, Arab and mixed-race women in the U.S.
- formulate strategies of resistance that build solidarity by acknowledging that intersecting systems of oppression involve complicity as well as subordination
- analyze the connections between theory and practice in building racial justice
- consider the strengths and weaknesses of Andrea Smith's model of white supremacy, as well as alternative frameworks

Required Texts

- Incite! Women of Color Against Violence. Color of Violence : The Incite! Anthology. Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2006.
- Puar, Jaspir K. Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times. New Wave: New Directions in Women's Studies. Eds. Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan and Robyn Wiegman. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Silva, Noenoe K. Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Smith, Andrea. Conquest : Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005.
- Washington, Harriet A. Medical Apartheid : The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present. 1st pbk. ed. New York: Harlem Moon, 2006.

Recommended Texts

- Johnson, Paula C. Inner Lives: Voices of African American Women in Prison. New York: New York University Press, 2003.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you anticipate the need for reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of this course, you must register with the office of [Disability Support Services](mailto:dss@twu.edu) (HDB 002, 940-898-3835, dss@twu.edu) in order to obtain the required official notification of your accommodation needs. Please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss approved accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

Course Requirements:

Grades will be calculated on a 600 point scale. More information about each assignment will be provided in class and an assignment sheet posted on Blackboard (Bb).

- Participation (40% total):
 - Classroom Participation (15%, 90 pts): Your participation is the most important component of this class. A successful class depends upon everyone coming to class having done the reading and prepared to engage in discussion. Thoughtful engagement does not simply mean speaking a lot. It includes listening attentively, making connections to the readings and comments by others, asking informed questions, offering critique, and so forth. Participation also includes posting continued discussion comments or related resources to the class Discussion Board on Bb. I will post classroom participation points mid-semester and then again at the end. If you are concerned about your participation, please contact me so that we can talk about it. In order to foster classroom participation, you will post discussion questions before each class and do response notes every other week.
 - Discussion Questions (10%, 60pts): In order to prime everyone for discussion, you will be responsible for posting 1-2 discussion questions (DQs) to the "Discussion Question" Wiki on Bb by **10pm** the evening before class. You will post questions for classes 9/15 through 12/1 – a total of 12 classes with each post worth up to 5 points. Questions should be at least 3 sentences long and demonstrate your critical analysis of the readings. They can focus on one reading in particular, but I encourage you to try to put the readings in conversation and to find challenging questions that emanate from that interaction. If someone else has asked a question similar to yours, ask another one you are interested in.
 - Response Notes (15%, 90 pts): To help me gauge where everyone is with the readings, and to help you delve into them, you will be submitting response notes by **10pm** every other Monday. Half the class will be responsible for the readings on six odd weeks and the remaining half for six even weeks between 9/15 and 12/1. Each response note is worth up to 15 points. The response notes should be submitted using the Bb Assignments feature as MS Word documents (or in Rich Text Format if you don't have Word), and should be 400-700 words (try to fit them on one page single-spaced; be sure to include your name and the date of the readings you are responding to). You may explore one of your discussion questions (but please don't repeat it verbatim), critique some aspect of the readings, grapple with different possible interpretations, or suggest connections with other readings. I do not want a summary of the readings. This is a chance for you to share your thinking directly with me. While these are not formal papers, please attend to proper grammar and spelling.
- Leading Discussion (25%, 150 pts): You will be asked to lead discussion for one of our class sessions. You will prepare a presentation on the materials for that

day which gives background information on the authors, summarizes the main arguments of each piece, and discusses connections between the readings. Be creative in your presentation so that you engage the class: use brainstorming, group activities, debates, PowerPoint, multimedia materials, etc. You will also prepare a handout summarizing your presentation to be posted on Bb by **10pm** the night before.

- Final Paper (35%, 210 pts): A 10-12 page final paper is due 12/15 in class. Topics can be drawn from any of the gamut of issues dealt with in the course. Papers must utilize at least two of the course readings and three outside sources, using MLA citation style.

Late or Missing Work

Assignments are due as indicated above or announced in class. You must complete all assignments to pass this class. Late assignments will be docked by 25% for each day they are late. It is not fair to your classmates for you to take extra time on an assignment. I will not accept emailed papers except in extraordinary circumstances if you have obtained prior permission. For your protection, keep a file of all your graded work in case any questions arise about an assignment or grade.

Attendance

This small graduate seminar will not be successful unless everyone shows up for each class ready to engage. Therefore, attendance is mandatory, which necessarily means being in class on time and staying the full period. Your final grade will be dropped by 30 points for each unexcused absence after the first two (absences will be excused with documentation from the Office of Student Life; see TWU Attendance Policy: <http://www.twu.edu/o-sl/StudentLifeOffice/AttendancePolicy.html>). It goes without saying that excused absences should be avoided when at all possible since you obviously cannot participate if you do not attend and we only have 16 class sessions. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes and find out about assignments from a classmate.

Conduct

It is important in this seminar that we create as safe a space as possible for all involved. Discussions of ability, race, gender, identity, privilege, oppression, and power challenge all of us. I expect that there will be times in class when we will each feel uncomfortable, angry, sad, confused and/or depressed because we will be dealing with difficult topics. Often some of our previously held beliefs or theories are unsettled. I need for you to exercise self-care and to reach toward empathy for your classmates (remember, TWU offers free counseling services to students). If you are someone who tends to talk a lot in class, monitor yourself and allow silences for others to step into. If you tend not to speak in class, I want you to challenge yourself to be more vocal.

Think of others in class as peers who will help make you smarter, rather than rivals in competition. I expect us to disagree, and believe disagreement enriches class by stimulating our thinking, but we have to find ways to disagree respectfully. Here are some suggestions:

- Describe your reactions with “I” statements (i.e. “I was uncomfortable when you said...” rather than “Your comment made me uncomfortable...”)
- Be as specific as possible (relate what you are saying to what has already been said or to a specific part of a text; state the reasoning behind your position; avoid broad generalizations)
- Concentrate on sharing information, ideas and experiences, rather than giving advice, persuading, cajoling, or judging.
- Check with others to ensure they have a shared understanding of what is being communicated (i.e. “I hear you saying X, is that correct,” or “I read this author as arguing Y, is that what others got?”)

Academic Integrity

This class assumes that all participants are doing the assignments with integrity. TWU’s policy on Academic Dishonesty states: “Students who violate University rules on academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure or removal from a course, disciplinary probation, and/or dismissal from the University. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion, fabrication, falsification, falsifying academic records and other acts intentionally designed to provide unfair advantage to the student and/or the attempt to commit such acts.” (see: <http://www.twu.edu/student-life-office/academic-integrity.asp>).

You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with all TWU student policies, especially those regarding academic dishonesty. As this is a graduate course, I am assuming you know the rules for proper citation and how to avoid plagiarism. If you do not, you need to educate yourself (start with the library web site and come to me with further questions). In this class, if you plagiarize, commit or attempt to commit another act of academic dishonesty, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment, have your actions reported to Student Life, and probably fail the course.

Course Schedule

Be aware that some changes in this schedule are likely as we flex around unforeseen obstacles and opportunities. Any changes will be announced in class. It is your responsibility to stay on top of them. (CoV = Color of Violence anthology).

I. Introductions, White Supremacy, & U.S. Women of Colors (Weeks 1-2)

This section establishes the framework for the course, introducing the Color of Violence anthology and Andrea Smith's argument regarding the three pillars of white supremacy. We consider what mainstream progressive organizing would look like if it centered women of color and consider critiques of how white supremacy continues to thrive in liberal feminist politics. Rather than think about cultural differences between different racial-ethnic groups in the U.S., we turn our focus for this class to structural violence embedded via slavery, colonialism, and orientalism. In this section we begin to think about how that violence is perpetuated, as well as how it is resisted, recognizing the intimate interrelation between the two.

9/01 Course introduction, individual introductions, & streaming video: *Andrea Smith presentation at Native Feminisms conference (10 min)*

9/08 Discussion, assignment of Response Notes groups and sign-up for Leading Discussion

- CoV:
 - Introduction
 - Andrea Smith, "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy"
 - Dorothy Roberts, "Feminism, Race, and Adoption"
 - Loretta Ross, "The Color of Choice"
- Andrea Smith interview, Critical Resistance (Bb)
- Sonia Sotomayor's 2001 address at UC Berkeley law school symposium (Bb)

II. Slavery / Capitalism (Weeks 3-5)

This section discusses the slavery/capitalism pillar of white supremacy that constructs Black people in the U.S. as inherently unfree, first through the logics of slavery in which they were property of the slave master, and now through the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) in which they are property of the state. Particular attention is paid to the way these logics have been mobilized through medical experimentation and the incarceration of Black women.

9/15 Discussion and streaming video: *Interview with H. Washington (32min)*
First Response Notes and DQs due

- Harriet Washington, Medical Apartheid, Part 1-2

9/22 Discussion

- Medical Apartheid, Part 3 & Epilogue

- Excerpts from Inner Voices: “Analysis of African American Women’s Experiences in the U.S. Criminal Justice System,” Sandra Barnhill, Rhodessa Jones (Bb)

9/29 Discussion and video: *What I want my Words to Do to You* (80min)

- Rose Braz, “Kinder, Gentler, Gender Responsive Cages” (Bb)
- CoV:
 - Andrea J. Ritchie, “Law Enforcement Violence Against Women of Color”
 - Patricia Allard, “Crime, Punishment, and Economic Violence”
 - Statement by Critical Resistance and Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, “Gender Violence and the Prison-Industrial Complex”

III. Genocide / Colonialism (Weeks 6-9)

This section discusses genocide/ colonialism as the second pillar upholding white supremacy. Consideration is given to the argument that sexual violence has been an integral part of colonization from early attacks on Indian tribes to contemporary brutalization of Indian women with the complicity of federal and state governments. An exploration of the colonization of Hawai’i and the on-going resistance by Kanaka Maoli (native Hawaiian) women broadens our understanding of native resistance and U.S. imperialism. We will think about the connections between the first and second pillars of white supremacy by learning about the disproportionate incarceration of native Hawaiians through a video conference with an expert on the subject, Dr. RaeDeen Keahiolalo Karasuda.

10/6 Discussion

- Andrea Smith, Conquest

10/13 Discussion and mid-semester course evaluation

- Haunani-Kay Trask, “Lovely Hula Hands” (Bb)
- CoV:
 - Sarah Deer, “Federal Indian Law and Violent Crime”
 - Haunani-Kay Trask, “The Color of Violence”
 - Stormy Ogden, “Pomo Woman, Ex-Prisoner, Speaks Out”

10/20 Discussion and video clips: *Act of War*

- Noenoe Silva, Aloha Betrayed

10/27 Discussion and Video Conference with Dr. RaeDeen Keahiolalo Karasuda

- RaeDeen K. Karasuda, “Carceral Landscape in Hawai’i: The Politics of Empire, the Commodification of Bodies, and a Way Home”
- – “E Holomua Me Ka ‘Ike Pono (Go forward with correct knowledge): Hands-on Curriculum Offering a New Perspective for Prisoner Reentry”

IV. Orientalism / War (Weeks 10-13)

Andrea Smith argues that the third column of white supremacy is orientalism/ war because it organizes all immigrants of color into varying categories of national threat: the “yellow peril” of a rising Asian tide of people and economic power; the job-taking

and resource-sapping of (“illegal”) Latino/a immigrants; and the terrorist threat of (“fundamentalist”) Arab/Muslim immigrants. Women in each of these groups are particularly targeted as they have the potential to biologically and culturally reproduce these “threats” from inside U.S. borders. U.S. nationalism depends on the continued construction of threatening alien “others” against which it can position itself. We will start off by watching and discussing the film “The Way Home” by Shakti Butler.

11/3 Discussion and video: *The Way Home* (92min, part)

- Lisa Lowe, “Immigration, Citizenship, Racialization: Asian American Critique”
- Lisa Lowe, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Asian American Differences”

11/10 Discussion

- Jaspir Puar, Terrorist Assemblages, Intro, Ch 1 & 2

11/17 Discussion and video: *Under one sky: Arab women in North American talk about the Hijab* (44min)

- Terrorist Assemblages, Ch 4 & Conclusion
- Sunaina Maira, “Belly Dancing: Arab-face, Orientalist Feminism, & U.S. Empire” (Bb)

11/24 Discussion and video: *New World Border* (28min)

- CoV:
 - Sylvanna Falcón, “‘National Security’ and the Violation of Women: Militarized Border Rape at the US-Mexico Border”
 - Rosa Linda Fregoso, “The Complexities of ‘Femicide’ on the Border”
 - Renee Saucedo, “INS Raids and How Immigrant Women are Fighting Back”
- Michelle Téllez, “Community of Struggle: Gender, Violence and Resistance on the U.S./Mexico Border”

V. Organizing Resistance (Weeks 14 & 15)

In the final section, focused attention is given to some models of feminist resistance to white supremacy. We will watch and discuss the film “Fires in the Mirror” by Anna Deavere Smith as an example of the use of performance as a form of education and resistance. We will also discuss final paper research and wrap up the course.

12/1 Discussion

Final Response Notes and DQs due

- Anita T. Revilla, “Muxerista Pedagogy” (Bb)
- June Jordan, “A New Politics of Sexuality” (Bb)
- CoV:
 - Sista II Sista, “Sistas Makin’ Moves: Collective Leadership for Personal Transformation and Social Justice”
 - Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez, “Unite and Rebel!: Challenges and Strategies in Building Alliances”

12/8 Video: *Fires in the Mirror* (82min). Discussion and course evaluation

- Gregory Jay, "Other People's Holocausts: Trauma, Empathy, and Justice in Anna Devere Smith's 'Fires in the Mirror'" (Bb)
- Elizabeth Myers, "Performing Personal Narrative: Anna Devere Smith's 'Fires in the Mirror'"

12/15 @ 1:30 Exam week meeting, final papers due in class, course wrap up

Full Citations for Course Readings (MLA)

- Braz, Rose. "Kinder, Gentler, Gender Responsive Cages: Prison Expansion Is Not Prison Reform." Women, Girls & Criminal Justice (2006): 87-91.
- Incite! Women of Color Against Violence. Color of Violence : The Incite! Anthology. Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2006.
- Jay, Gregory. "Other People's Holocausts: Trauma, Empathy, and Justice in Anna Devere Smith's "Fires in the Mirror"." Contemporary Literature 48.1 (2007): 119-49.
- Johnson, Paula C. Inner Lives: Voices of African American Women in Prison. New York: New York University Press, 2003.
- Jordan, June. "A New Politics of Sexuality." Women's Lives : Multicultural Perspectives. Eds. Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey. 4th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007 (1992). xxiii, 610, [53] p.
- Keahiolalo-Karasuda, RaeDeen. "Carceral Landscape in Hawai'i: The Politics of Empire, the Commodification of Bodies, and a Way Home." Abolition Now! Ten Years of Strategy and Struggle against the Prison Industrial Complex. Ed. The CRIO Publications Collective. Oakland: AK Press, 2008.
- . "E Holomua Me Ka 'Ike Pono (Go Forward with Correct Knowledge): Hands-on Curriculum Offering a New Perspective for Prisoner Reentry." 2008.
- Lowe, Lisa. Immigrant Acts : On Asian American Cultural Politics. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.
- Myers, Elizabeth M. "Performing Personal Narrative: Anna Devere Smith's "Fires in the Mirror"." The English Journal 87.2 (1998): 52-57.
- Puar, Jaspir K. Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times. New Wave: New Directions in Women's Studies. Eds. Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan and Robyn Wiegman. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Revilla, Anita Tijerina. "Muxerista Pedagogy: Raza Womyn Teaching Social Justice through Student Activism." The High School Journal 87.4 (2004).
- Silva, Noenoe K. Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Smith, Andrea. Conquest : Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005.
- Soto, Sandra K. "Where in the Transnational World Are U.S. Women of Color?" Women's Studies for the Future : Foundations, Interrogations, Politics. Eds. Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Agatha Beins. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005. 111-24.
- Sunaina, Maira. "Belly Dancing: Arab-Face, Orientalist Feminism, and U.S. Empire." American Quarterly 60.2 (2008): 317-45.
- Télez, Michelle. "Community of Struggle: Gender, Violence and Resistance on the U.S./Mexico Border." Gender & Society 22.5 (2008): 545-67.
- Trask, Haunani-Kay. "Lovely Hula Hands: Corporate Tourism and the Prostitution of Hawaiian Culture." From a Native Daughter: Colonialism & Sovereignty in Hawai'i. Ed. Haunani-Kay Trask. Revised ed. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999. 179-97.
- Washington, Harriet A. Medical Apartheid : The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present. 1st pbk. ed. New York: Harlem Moon, 2006.