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## WOMEN'S STUDIES 2240: SPECIAL TOPICS DEBATES AND RESEARCH ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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COURSE MEETS: MONDAYS 1:00 P.M. TO 3:25 P.M. FALL TERM 2004  
ROOM: 2201 POSVAR HALL  
PROFESSOR: DR. LISA D. BRUSH  
OFFICE LOCATION: 2J28 POSVAR HALL  
OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAYS 12:00-1:00 P.M. AND BY APPOINTMENT  
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### Course Description

This course will use shared readings, discussion, and student presentations and projects to explore classic and critical research, theoretical debates, and political practice related to violence against women. The substantive focus of much of the reading will be violence against women by their intimate partners (IPV), with particular attention to the theoretical, political, and empirical contributions of women of color, lesbians, and immigrant women. However, the discussion (and student projects) can range more widely to include sexual harassment in the workplace, rape, dowry deaths, femicide, honor killings, physical and sexual violence against girls in a variety of settings, women's violence, and other interests or concerns of seminar participants. Readings will include a range of interdisciplinary treatments, including various forms of social science research, policy analysis (especially health- and justice-related), and biography/autobiography.

The shared readings will include:

- Classical feminist accounts of violence against women, especially IPV.
- Critical accounts of the specificities of race and sexuality in IPV, and the challenges of critical race feminisms to classic accounts.
- A variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches in the social sciences, humanities, and law.
- Selections from the methodological/political/theoretical debate over “gender symmetry” in intimate partner violence.

Discussions and written work will address theories, methods, and substantive examples of feminist analyses of and responses to violence against women.

## LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Identify and explain the significance of many of the central concepts and arguments in interdisciplinary work on violence against women.
- Use fundamental categories of feminist analysis to assess some of the most influential contributions to work on violence against women and to enhance your comprehension, appreciation, and exposition of central ideas in this special topic.
- Confront the intellectual, methodological, theoretical, and political challenges of and to interdisciplinary feminist work on this topic.
- Mobilize your skills, intelligence, and talent to the task of informing yourselves and others about violence against women.

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## Course Requirements and Grading

### DISCUSSION PARTICIPATION

Graduate study means learning to learn from every possible source – from readings, peers, life experience, and research. Participating in seminar discussions is one of the best ways to learn. You are expected to contribute your questions and insights to the class. The culture of the seminar will, I hope, be a congenial one for self-expression. I will work to maintain such a culture by swiftly countering displays of contempt and by practicing principles of pedagogical equity to the extent possible. I cannot help you learn if you don't participate in discussion, however. Doing excellent written work is not enough to demonstrate adequate performance in graduate school. So show a little backbone, organize yourselves in what ever way you need in order to ensure broad participation in the discussion, and whatever you do, don't suffer in silence. Say anything you can defend against reasoned argument. Treat your colleagues' contributions with respect (which means taking them seriously and challenging them as well as extending basic courtesy).

This should go without saying, but attendance at each seminar meeting is required. More than one absence that is not due to extraordinary circumstances will result in a lowered grade.

In addition to participating in seminar discussions, everyone enrolled in this seminar is expected to complete the following assignments:

### WEEKLY COMMENT MEMORANDA (15% OF FINAL GRADE)

Before 6:00 pm on the day before the seminar meeting (that is, Sunday evening), submit to the seminar distribution list a comment memorandum (as a Word or .rtf file attached to an email message) of not more than 300 words. Comment succinctly on what you found most interesting, important, puzzling, infuriating, fundamental, etc. about the readings. You may find it helpful to pick the sentence that best states your purpose, meaning, question, or point of view (often at the end of the draft memo) and use that as the topic sentence of the final (distributed) version of your comment. I want a focused comment, not a summary of the material, although sometimes a sentence that distills what you think the reading is “really about” can also be very useful. Distributed over email in a timely manner, these abstracts will not only help you organize your response to the readings but will also serve as a guide for discussion. Altogether, these short written assignments contribute 15 percent to your final grade. Submit eight abstracts over the course of the term.

### CRITICAL REVIEWS AND GROUP PRESENTATIONS (40% OF FINAL GRADE)

For three sessions of the sessions for which we read an entire book, each student must write a publication-length (750 words) formal review of the text for that week. I suggest you look over the most recent issues of *Signs*, *Women's Review of Books*, or *Gender & Society*. Your review should respond to the text in an evaluative way by placing the work in scholarly context, assessing the methods and findings of the research, and identifying controversies. Your written work will be graded individually. Please submit reviews electronically (as a Word or .rtf file attached to an email message). Submit final drafts as though to a book review editor.

For most of the sessions, a small group of seminar participants will be responsible for presenting and facilitating discussion of key concepts and controversies from the readings. Individuals will present at least on the 3 occasions they submit written reviews. The presentations should stimulate discussions. Groups will receive a collective grade based in part on peer evaluation. The criteria for evaluation are effectiveness of the presentation in conveying important points from the reading and stimulating useful discussion, and apparent equity in preparation among the group members. Presentations may be in any format (although long media presentations, unless produced by the group, are generally

discouraged, as are "talking head" recitations of prepared written materials). Summaries or outlines of the readings alone are NOT acceptable presentations. Presentations should cultivate and reflect creative collective preparation and oral presentation skills.

Your three reviews and presentations will contribute 40 percent of your final grade.

## FINAL PROJECT AND PRESENTATION (40% OF FINAL GRADE)

During the final session of the semester, you will present your final project to the seminar group. Final projects must demonstrate your engagement with the seminar topic. Any of the following are acceptable project ideas:

- A synthetic critical review of at least three sets of readings from the course, at least one of which must not be among those formally reviewed for a presentation.
- A research proposal for a specific empirical project that would be significantly strengthened by your engaging with the materials for the course.
- A concept clarification that draws on multiple sources in the course readings and (if appropriate) beyond.
- An annotated bibliography and ideal-typical questions for a comprehensive examination in gender and feminist approaches to violence against women.
- A website FAQ on violence against women research and feminism or cultural studies suitable for undergraduates or non-specialist graduate students.
- Some similarly substantial piece of scholarly work (at least 3000 words) that demonstrates your sustained engagement with the ideas and materials featured in this course.

Email a digital file of the final version of this work – or the URL for a version of it that you post to the World Wide Web – to me as an attachment before the last class session. Depending on enrollment, you will present to the seminar (and possibly a wider audience) either on that occasion or earlier in the term. You must submit a draft of your project text to another seminar participant for comments two weeks before the last class (see below). This is your opportunity to present your own work in a supportive-yet-critical setting. The presentation and written project together count for 40 percent of your grade.

## COMMENTS ON PROJECT DRAFTS AND PRESENTATIONS (5% OF FINAL GRADE)

Each participant will be responsible for reading and providing written and oral comments on the draft project of one fellow participant. This will be your opportunity to provide supportive-yet-critical feedback to your colleagues at a crucial stage in the development of their projects. You will receive drafts the week of December 6 and must return comments by the following week to allow time for revisions. You will also serve as commentator or privileged interlocutor on final presentations. Hand in your colleague's comments with the final version of your own paper. These comments count toward 5 percent of your grade.

I am more than happy to work with you to develop your final project or discuss your critical reviews and other written assignments; we will moreover devote seminar time to this endeavor, and to presentation and comment skills.

Grades will be assigned on the following scale:

A: Exceeds expectations for graduate-level work

B: Meets expectations for graduate-level work

B- or below: Below acceptable level for graduate work

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## Readings

All texts should be available at the Book Center or on the Reserve Walls in Sociology and Women's Studies.

### BOOKS

R. Emerson Dobash & Russell P. Dobash, *Women, Violence, & Social Change*.  
Ann Goetting, *Getting Out*.

Michèle Harway & James M. O'Neil (eds.), *What Causes Men's Violence Against Women?*

Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*.

Linda Mills, *Insult to Injury*.

Molly Hurley Moran, *Finding Susan*.

Jody Raphael, *Saving Bernice*.

Aysan Sev'er, *Fleeing the House of Horrors*.

S. Laurel Weldon, *Protest, Policy, and the Problem of Violence Against Women*.

Carol I. Winkelmann, *The Language of Battered Women: A Rhetorical Analysis of Personal Theologies*.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR ADDITIONAL READINGS

- Linda Ammons, "Mules, Madonnas, Babies, Bathwater, Racial Imagery, and Stereotypes: The African-American Woman and the Battered Woman Syndrome." In *Critical Race Feminism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, edited by Adrien Katherine Wing (NYU Press, 2003), pp. 261-269.
- John Archer, "Sex differences in aggression between heterosexual partners: A meta-analytic review." *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 126 (2000), pp. 651-680. (available on-line)
- Lisa D. Brush, "Poverty, Battering, Race, and Welfare Reform." *Journal of Poverty*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2001), pp. 67-89.
- Lisa D. Brush, "Changing the Subject: Gender and Welfare Regime Studies." *Social Politics*, Vol. 9, no. 2 (Summer, 2002), pp. 161-186. (available on-line)
- Patricia Hill Collins, "The Tie that Binds: Race, Gender, and US Violence." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 5 (September, 1998), pp. 917-938. (available on-line)
- Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 43, No. 6 (1991), pp. 1241-1299. (available on-line)
- Shamita D. Dasgupta, "Defining violence against women by immigration, race, and class." In *Issues in Intimate Violence*, edited by R. K. Bergen (Sage, 1998), pp. 208-219.
- bell hooks, "Violence in Intimate Relationships: A Feminist Perspective." *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (South End Press, 1989), pp. 84-91.
- Michael P. Johnson, "Patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence: Two forms of violence against women." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 57, No. 2. (May, 1995), pp. 283-294. (available on-line)
- Michael Kimmel, "'Gender Symmetry' in Domestic Violence: A Substantive and Methodological Research Review." *Violence Against Women*, Vol. 8, No. 11 (November, 2002), pp. 1332-1363. (available on-line)
- Julia O'Connor, Ann S. Orloff, and Sheila Shaver, "Body rights, social rights and reproductive choice." Chapter 5 in *States, markets, families : Gender, liberalism, and social policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 157-185.
- Claire M. Renzetti, "Violence in Lesbian and Gay Relationships." *Gender Violence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Laura L. O'Toole and Jessica R. Schiffman (NYU Press, 1997), pp. 285-293.
- Southall Black Sisters, "Two Struggles: Challenging Male Violence and the Police." In *Femicide*, edited by J. Radford and Diana E. H. Russell (Maxwell Macmillan, 1992), pp. 312-316.

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## SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND MEETINGS

- 30 August – Organizational meeting.
- 6 September – Labor Day. Observe as you like.
- 13 September – MacKinnon.
- 20 September – Dobash & Dobash.
- 27 September – Reader: Collins; Crenshaw; Dasgupta; hooks; Ammons; Southall Black Sisters; Brush, "Poverty, Battering, Race, and Welfare Reform."
- October 4 – Reader: Archer; Johnson; Kimmel.
- 11 October – Goetting.
- 18 October – Sev'er.
- 25 October – Raphael.
- 1 November – Winkelman.
- 8 November – Mills.
- 15 November – Moran. Abstract for final project idea due.
- 22 November – Weldon.
- 29 November – Reader: O'Connor, Orloff, & Shaver; Brush, "Changing the Subject".
- 6 December – No new readings. Draft version of project due to peer commentator. No formal class meeting.
- 13 December – Harway & O'Neil. Peer comments due.
- 20 December – Final presentations. Final version of project due.

## REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

If you have a disability that makes it impossible for you to complete the requirements for this course in the manner specified in the syllabus, please see me with documentation from the Office of Disability Resources and Services (216 William Pitt Union; x8-7890) and we will make appropriate arrangements.