

Prof. A. Conway
Winter Course, English 2620G / Women's Studies 2252G

Special Topics: Laughing Feminisms

This course is not a study of humor in feminist theory and practice, although we will study stand-up comedy in the last week of class. Rather, the class advances feminism's joyful aspect. It responds, first, to media representations of feminism as a soul-deadening exercise in political correctness. Second, it shifts feminism's theoretical emphasis away from the hermeneutics of suspicion. Late twentieth-century theory emphasizes the need for us to interrogate our "common sense" understandings of the world, so capable of transmitting—among other things—racist, sexist, and homophobic values. In the past decade, an alternative perspective has arisen, one that preserves a more optimistic relation to the worlds in which we live.

Readings

We intersperse our readings in theory and culture with a study of three women's texts, each framed with historical and theoretical reflections on the questions raised by their authors: religion, science, and race. How do these authors transform the masculinist traditions they've inherited? Our last four weeks will be spent on recent developments in LGBT studies, research methods, and, finally, women and comedy.

Assignments:

Participation	10%
Response paper 600 words (2 pp)	10%
Personal essay: 900 words	15%
Research essay: 2100 words (7 pp)	25%
Final exam	35%

- Th. Jan. 8: introduction
Lake Bell, *In a World*
- Th. Jan. 15: representations of feminism in the media
Eve Sedgwick, "Reparative Reading"
- Th. Jan. 22: Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*
Response paper (group 1)
- Th. Jan. 29: Valerie Solanas, The SCUM Manifesto (1967)
Pat Mainardi, "The Politics of Housework" (1970)
Personal essay presentations (group 1)
- Th. Feb. 5: Margaret Cavendish, *Blazing World*
Response paper (group 2)
- Th. Feb. 12: Judy Syfers, "I Want a Wife" (1971)
Jill Johnston, from *Lesbian Nation* (1973)
Personal essay presentations (group 2)
- Th. Feb. 19: reading week
- Th. Feb. 26: Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Response paper (group 3)
- Th. Mar. 5: Helene Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa"
Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which is Not One"
Personal essay presentations (group 3)
- Th. Mar. 12: Sarah Ahmed, "Happy Futures, Perhaps" in *Queer Times*
But I'm a Cheerleader
- Th. Mar. 19: library class: I am at a conference this week:
provisional thesis and bibliography due by Tuesday, March 24, at 4 pm, by email
- Th. Mar. 26: *After Stonewall*—documentary—Act Up and Aids: 15 minutes
Cvekotovich *Archive of Feeling*
Paris is Burning

Th. Apr. 2: comedy: essay

Joan Rivers

Lea Delaria

Elvira Kurt (lesbian stand up comedy: on Q with Jian)

Sandra Shamus

Final essays due.