

Feminist and Gender Studies Seminar – Annotated bibliography

*Ordered chronologically

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. 1929. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1945. Print.

Woolf's text, originally delivered as a series of lectures, has become a landmark text of feminist literary criticism. Woolf critiques the male-focused literary canon, exploring the claim of many literary professors and critics of the time that there are no great female writers. In a much-quoted part of the essay, she uses the fictional example of 'Shakespeare's sister' to argue that a woman with Shakespeare's gifts would never have made it as a writer, as she would not have had access to the same opportunities as male writers. As Woolf points out, one needs a 'room of one's own' - time and money, and social space - in order to write. This essay is a must-read for any literary scholar.

Beauvoir, Simone De. *The Second Sex*. 1949. Trans. H. M. Parshley. London: J. Cape, 1968.

This is a classic feminist text, by many seen as the start of the 'second wave' of feminism in the 1960s. It describes the social construction of gender in art, science, politics and society, stating that 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'. Beauvoir also examines the construction of Woman as 'Other' in sociocultural discourse, and delineates how prevailing myths of Woman have served as an oppressive force.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses.' *Feminist Review Autumn 88 (1988): 61-88*.

One of the most important texts within transnational feminism, Talpade Mohanty here highlights the colonial history of Western feminism, and its continued neo-colonial tendencies. She criticises the construction of one universal image of 'Woman', highlighting the importance to address local and specific issues and contexts (in terms of race, class, nationality, region, social conditions) in feminist theory and practice.

bell hooks. 'Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression.' *Feminist theory: from margin to center*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1984.

This essay defines feminism as a struggle to define various interlinked oppressions, such as those based on e.g. class, race, sexuality, and not merely gender inequality. Rather than considering feminism as an identity, something one simply *is* - and then whatever one does is a feminist act - hooks argues for a commitment to 'advocate feminism'. Critiquing liberal feminisms which ignore issues of class or race, hooks calls attention to the intersection of these categories with issues of gender.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands = La Frontera*. Second ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1999.

Borderlands is a diverse and wide-ranging collection of essays, poetry, and semi-autobiographical work by the Chicana activist and writer Gloria Anzaldúa. It is one of the

cornerstone texts of Chicana (Mexican American) feminism, and anticipates the growing interest in cultural identity in third wave feminist thought. Anzaldúa is fundamentally concerned with the development of what she introduces as “a new *mestiza*”, or higher consciousness. This entails, most clearly, the articulation of an inherently hybrid and plural identity that transgresses the borders of race and language.

Trinh, T. Minh-Ha. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989.

In this poetic and intense work, Minh-Ha blurs the boundaries between theory and art, and between academic and more literary writing, exploring issues such as language, agency, looking, memory, gender, ethnicity, displacement marginality, through a postcolonial framework. As in her other work (Minh-ha is also a filmmaker and literary writer), she in *Woman, Native, Other* bridges diverse fields such as gender studies, anthropology, and literature.

Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1985.

Irigaray’s *This Sex Which Is Not One* is a collection of 11 of her essays, and one of the landmark texts of what is known as the French Feminist movement in feminist studies. Working in the broader field of continental philosophy, she delineates the status of ‘Woman’ in Western philosophical discourse, phallogocentric reason, and psychoanalytic thought. Irigaray works predominantly in the field of ‘difference’ feminism (as opposed to egalitarian feminism), and here presents some provocative attempts to dismantle a masculine hegemony, and redefine the female subject in relation to its embodied and lived experience.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York; London: Routledge, 1990.

A crucial text of poststructuralist or third-wave feminism, with its questioning of embodied identities. Going a step further than Beauvoir who made a distinction between sex (biological) and gender (constructed), Butler collapses that distinction: there is no essential biological sex ‘expressing’ gendered behaviour, rather all our actions and embodiments are always already gendered, and performative. Gender is created through performative, iterative, acts.

Butler, Judith, and Joan W. Scott. *Feminists Theorize the Political*. New York; London: Routledge, 1992.

This is an edited collection by two of the most influential scholars working in feminist theory. It presents a series of essays by leading poststructuralist feminist theorists on the *political* significance of poststructuralism within the field of feminism. While poststructuralist thought has often been accused to have diluted the political core of the feminist consciousness, this collection brings together works by scholars such as Rey Chow, Drucilla Cornell, Jane Flax, Donna Haraway, Naomi Schor, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in order to critically

examine the convergence between poststructuralist and feminist thought in relation to the notion of political agency.

Connell, Raewyn. *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity, 1995. (Second edition 2005.)

Connell's book, in which she explores a wide variety of masculinities each associated with different positions of power (the 'social organization of masculinity'), has become a classic work in the field of masculinity studies. The second edition, published in 2005, contains a helpful new introduction and conclusion in which Connell maps the development of masculinity studies in recent years, as well as a further chapter considering the future of the field.

McRobbie, Angela. *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*. Los Angeles; London: SAGE, 2009.

Angela McRobbie brings up arguments that resonate in the fields of new media, pop culture, literature and cultural studies. She designates the critical undoing of feminism (24) in the current social climate as shaped by capitalist and neoliberalist forces as 'post-feminism'. Instead of the outright negation of historical feminist thought, McRobbie here argues that antifeminism has been co-opted into a much more "individualistic discourse" (1). As such, young women are promised success in the realms of various social and political spheres, but in return they must subscribe to certain well-established hegemonic values, including those of institutionalised femininity.

Braidotti, Rosi. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. Second ed. 2011.

Rosi Braidotti explores the notion of contemporary subjectivity in *Nomadic Subjects*, particularly as delineated by continental philosophy and sexual difference feminist theory. Her work is a lively reconsideration of the bounds of traditional theoretical paradigms, which conceives of the nomadic feminist subject—as predominantly thought through the theories of Gilles Deleuze—beyond the limitations of its historical, social, and political identities. Braidotti argues in particular for a situated subject that is both embodied and embedded in specific social, political, and cultural networks of power. In this text, she embarks on a radical exploration of the intersections between identity, subjectivity, and power.

Hemmings, Clare. *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*. Durham, N.C; London: Duke UP, 2011.

In this incisive text, Clare Hemmings examines the past four decades of Western feminist theory, and demonstrates that the dominant narratives of feminism have been portrayed as stories of progress, loss, and return. Hemmings writes that feminist criticism must move beyond these cyclical movements in order to retain its transformative potential. She suggests a radical change in citational practices in feminist criticism, as well as a mobilisation of affect in order to generate a greater self-reflexivity and awareness in the use of such political grammar.

Ahmed, Sara. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham, NC; London: Duke UP, 2012.

Ahmed explores the institutional racism and sexism in contemporary universities and other institutions. Criticising a culture of 'words but no actions', Ahmed highlights attempts failed attempts at 'inclusion' in which non-performative 'commitments' and policies become substitutes for action, and serve to create a polished view of the institution rather than crating real social justice. She insightfully depicts the 'sea of whiteness' of bodies at various levels of the contemporary university, and the ways in which British, Asian and minority ethnic staff and students are ostracised.

Gabriella Gutierrez y Muhs, Yolanda Flores Niemann, Carmen G. Gonzalez, Angela P. Harris, eds. *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2012.

An anthology of personal narratives by academics of colour, focusing on the presumption of incompetence (both from external sources and as internalised) of traditionally marginalised groups within academia. Though the collection has a distinct US focus, its engagement with various types of gender, class and racial politics, and the intensification of discrimination in marketised universities, will be familiar also to UK readers. A must-read for feminists in academia working from an intersectional understanding of gender and feminism.

Fraser, Nancy. *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*. London: Verso, 2013.

Nancy Fraser argues that feminism has colluded with forces of neoliberalism at the expense of its emancipatory origins. She traces the development of the feminist movement in the last century alongside the rise of neoliberalism in modern capitalist economies, and writes that second wave feminism of the 1960s, in its focus on identity politics and cultural difference, gained traction at the expense of its commitment to social, political, and economic equality. As such, feminism here lost sight of its revolutionary ideals. She therefore calls on contemporary feminist discourses to confront this dangerous entanglement in the various social and political spheres in order to resurface its radical force for women.

Downes, Julia, Maddie Breeze, and Naomi Griffin. 'Researching DIY Cultures: Towards a Situated Ethical Practice for Activist-Academia.' *Graduate Journal of Social Science* 10.3 (2013): 100-124.

The growing research areas of DIY culture and feminist cultural activism has enabled new forms of research practices to evolve: participant-researchers doing research on their own DIY cultures and activist communities of belonging. This article explores the problems that may arise in terms of data collection methods, ethics, and modes of research dissemination, when carrying out participant-research. While not directly applicable for scholars in literature and culture, the article's exploration on the ethics of research provides a great study of emerging fields within feminist research, and possibilities for intertwining research and activism in feminist practice.

Phipps, Alison and Isabel Young. "'Lad culture" in higher education: agency in the sexualisation debates.' *Sexualities* 18.4 (2015): 459-479.

This article explores female students' experiences of 'lad culture' in UK universities, focusing on female agency, 'sexualisation', and versions of masculinity. 'Lad culture', although only one of various potential masculinities, dominates UK university life. This study, funded by the National Union of Students and carried out through focus groups and interviews with female students, is crucial reading to understand the changing gender roles and norms in current UK universities, especially among students.