

Notes from WMST 488X, Spring 2019. Do not share outside of class.

Feminist conflict? Preliminary ideas

Areas of difference - specifically in regards to experiences, backgrounds, and priorities - within feminist movements.
conflicting understandings of what feminism should focus on and how it does/should operate throughout history and currently, especially white feminism vs intersectional feminism
The phrase feminist conflict makes me think of how women have had to fight for rights and how there have always been different ideas and groups within feminism that have clashed.
The different intersections within feminism and how that may cause conflict within the feminist community. I am not entirely sure if that is what it means.
Feminists putting other feminists down for not conforming to their idea of the right way to be a feminist.
This phrase makes me think of the conflict between different views of feminism, such as radical vs. liberal feminism. I think of the question of how to make change; can we make change while working within the system that we want to change, or do we have to abolish the system entirely? I also think of whether or not this conflict is overall productive, if it's useful or if it can get in the way of a larger picture.
including women and making sure women's voices are heard. inequalities and power relationships men and women i.e gender wage gap. challenges in intersectionality
Feminism has general underlying concepts that feminists generally agree on. However, there are many topics in feminism that feminists disagree or differ on. These conflicting theories create "feminist conflict."

Feminist conflicts we have known

Women's March splitting

Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism

Trigger warning debates

How do you think things could go wrong in a class like this one?

Not enough different opinion of views making discussing other opinions difficult

One person has very different views than all the others...

Not enough participation in discussion

Not actively engaging with the assigned readings

Bringing someone down with their different opinion(s)

How can we make things go right?

Do the readings!

Going off of what someone says rather than going against it

Don't have mindset of trying to correct

Staying open minded, trying to see both/all sides though it may be difficult

Notes for Week 2: Mobilizing (2/7)

Social Justice Feelings

- Mobilizing
- Fracturing
- Institutionalizing

Question of the day: What feelings did the readings evoke?

- Ahmed:
 - Things always wanted to put in words
 - Evolution of sensation in feminism, different encounters, public vulnerability
 - Fired up, racialized figure of the stranger
 - Familiarity: the unwanted male attention, male gaze (TV)
- Gould:
 - Aspects of AIDS movement unquestioned: the memorial quilt as controversial
- Lorde:
 - Anger as something to use productively rather than aim at one another. Anger at racism directed at WOC by white feminists; how to use it to effect change
 - Inspirational and a reminder: can we afford to fight one another? Revolution as not a one time event (exhaustion we experience today)

Audre Lorde, Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism

- Keynote presentation at the National Women's Studies Association Conference, Storrs, Connecticut, June 1981
- Memorable quotes within the text itself
- Better to see them within the text than standing alone because you have more context
- Women responding to racism
- Imagine the audience to this speech was majority white women
- Microaggressions that occur with black women
 - How they use it to help create change
- Justify women of color's anger
- The difference between white women's anger v. women of color's anger
 - White women's anger gets fed to women of color
 - White anger ends up reinforcing oppression
- "Guilt is only another way of avoiding informed action, of buying time out of the pressing need to make clear choices, out of the approaching storm that can feed the earth as well as bend the trees."
- Instead of respond to anger by listening and understanding
 - Don't jump to punishment or blame
- Black women's anger and white women's guilt (130-131)

Audre Lorde, Learning from the 60s

- Talk delivered at the Malcolm X Weekend, Harvard University, February 1982
- Talking to people of color
- By tearing each other apart they are letting the enemy win
- No such thing as a single-struggle because we don't live single-issue lives
- Malcom X: believed in fighting back
 - Held up to opposition to MLK
- Malcom X painted as this figure of violence
 - If he had lived it wouldn't be as easy to paint him in this way
- Black power movement
- Promised change did not come to change
- What we need to learn from the 60s is that even if you win there will still be conflict and contention
- FBI would plant seeds of conflict, comes within and without
- Probably a lot of men in the audience

Sarah Ahmed, Feminism is Sensational

- Background: her father is from Pakistan and she grew up in very white Australia, now lives in London. Quit academia in protest to the way her institution was treating people who were involved in sexual misconduct issues
- Feminism as unpleasant sensations
- Idea of being left feeling fragile
- Whenever you name something then you become the problem
- Ignorance is bliss is troublesome
 - Easier to brush off and ignore
- Feminism as "lets all get along," "girl power"
 - Empowering young women
- Putting feminism in the embodied aspect
- Existing in a body that's not at ease
- Making a space for uneasiness and comfort
 - Feeling of recognition
- Mobilization: this is not just me
- Click: the moment the personal becomes structural
- Trained not to notice, to not see those less fortunate than ourselves
 - Turning away from homeless people- not notice
 - Fear of "that could be me"

Sarah Ahmed, A Killjoy Manifesto

- Killjoy as being disagreeable
- Killing joy as a world making project
- We enact the world we are aiming for
- Feminism is something that we practice in all aspects of our life
- The costs of killing joy are high- we are not all in the same position

- Social media - killing joy is hard/risky
- Choose your battles
 - Who the person is
 - What is the relationship
 - Hatred vs. anger
- We need to start with our own complicity
- If you benefit from unjust system you have the power/responsibility to disassemble it

Gould, The Emotion Work of Movements

- “Emotional habitus”
 - Embodied habits that come out
 - Transformation of grief into anger
 - Shared spaces create emotional habituses
 - Shift of emotions because of responsibility
- “Affective pedagogy”
 - Learning how to have a particular emotion
 - Learning how to feel
 - Ex. young man goes on protest, not quite sure if he should be there, has a cross with a name on it and someone recognizes the name and asks to carry it, he then realizes how real the situation is and becomes angered and more sure of his position in the movement
- “Strategic deployment” vs. “emotional resonance”
- “Grief into anger”
- “The queer transformation of shame”
- “The emotion of queer”

Using an AIDS-activism slogan to protest gun violence -

<https://timeline.com/dickey-amendment-nra-gun-violence-research-29e54b94bbd3>

Note Taking Week 3

Freeman, structurelessness: informal structure leading to abuse of power

Freeman: trashing, surprised at age when it feels so current

Are things changing now with technology- makes it easier to trash people

Reagon also mentions tech

Freeman: people being pushed out of movements/ Reagon: people being left out in the first place

Reagon: styles move away from the more formal- more feeling, emotion, humor

Coalition Politics- Reagon

Key points:

- Coalition work should make you feel threatened to your core, it's not supposed to be comfortable or easy
- A barred room metaphor to talk about excluding people from the movement
- Choosing women only festival to use this metaphor that really also described the exclusion that the festival did with "women only"
- Felt similar to the Audre Lord piece
- Wonder what the demographics of the audience would have been
- People showed up who the festival wasn't expecting: like black women and lesbians
- Festival was run by cis white women
- When the festival said "Women" they really meant other cis white women
- Can't have homogenous groups anymore, maybe never should have
- Making change for younger generations
- Festival would have probably been mostly women of the same age as Reagon and she was trying to speak to carrying things over for the younger generations
- The conflict for most of the pieces arises from people being left out or not included

Solidarity and Strife: Third-World Feminists in Conflict" Grace Kyungwon Hong,"

- Triple Jeopardy newsletter covers: Militant, Women holding guns
- Third World Women's Alliance: people targeted by suppression, colonization
- When things in the movement went wrong
- Sexual abuse, assault, betrayal,
- Fights, betrayals, factionalism, and violations as learning experiences & part of the process, not as failure

Trashing- Freeman

- Women get the most angry at other women because they hold them to higher standards and are safer and more easy targets than men.

Structurelessness- Freeman

- The lack of formal structure does not mean there is no structure, it is just informal

"Solidarity and its Fracturing"

- Getting drugs into bodies versus finding the most ill bodies and finding ways to treat them
- Split that broke up ACT UP was that more drugs were being made, but women were being diagnosed. Gay men were the main example of what symptoms looked like and so women's symptoms were not considered an AIDS related illness Also black men and women were being ignored and racism hurt the non white ACT UP members
- Moralizing: Self righteousness
- Is moralizing the problem? What if you really are right
- HIV positive versus HIV negative people

Week 4: Institutionalizing (2/21)

Question of the Day: As a student, how have you experienced the conflicts within academic women's studies that this week's readings describe?

- The T in LGBT - should trans studies be independent of sexualities
- Nash and flaws in approaches to intersectionality; class annoyed at feminists running of our own things - critiques with intersectionality
- Brown - emphasizes on white feminism in WMST and history classes, needing advanced classes to see more - Black feminism/WOC feminism not coming up until later
- Divide between prioritizing speaking from lived experiences and more academic/theory understanding of issues

Boxer, "For and about Women: The Theory and Practice of Women's Studies in the United States" (1982)

- Background: historian, served as chair of Women's Studies program at San Diego State University
- Key Idea: bridging feminism and activism into education
- Connects to Jo Freeman's reading
- Formal networks: power structures
- "Collectivity in teaching and in program governance has been deemed the most radical and vital contribution of the women's movement to educational innovation." (668)
 - Evening the ground between the students and professors - students leading discussion
 - Less intimidating, freely to express own feelings
 - More comfortable
- "'pioneers' who had taught about women before women's studies began, 'ideologues' who had come to women's studies through the feminist movement, 'radicals' who had been politicized by other movements, 'latecomers' who became interested after women's studies began, and 'bandwagoners' who found women's studies fashionable and useful for their careers." (669)
 - Celebrities as bandwagoners i.e Kardashian's as body positivity
 - Jameela Jamil criticizing the Kardashian's
- Establishing NWSA
- "Feminist activity made women's studies possible, women's studies must in turn make feminist activity possible" (676)
- Women's Studies as a discipline and as a department
- "Perhaps other ways to foster contemplation and communication need to be developed: shorter, simpler conferences on single issues such as integrating theory and practice in the classroom; moving students beyond the favored courses in health, psychology, and sexuality to the less popular courses on economic and political systems; finding or

creating job markets for graduates; opening general education to women's studies; building a major or graduate program; implementing feminism in hiring practices; developing means to produce more women's studies teachers; pioneering cross-disciplinary Ph.D. programs; and surviving "Reaganomics" and New Right attacks on academic freedom" (695)

Brown, "What Has Happened Here? The Politics of History in Women's History and Feminist Politics"

- History in a linear order
- Majority of feminist historians are white women - not acknowledging systems of oppression
- "Learning to think nonlinearly, asymmetrically, is, I believe essential to our intellectual and political develop" (14)
- Comparing reality of experiences to the likeness of jazz

Keegan, "Getting Disciplined: What's Trans* About Queer Studies Now?"

- Trans* studies does not fit with queer studies - exclusionary
- Trans* studies as a *but*, a blockage
- Should be welcomed and acknowledged
- "Trans oppression cannot be conceptualized using a subordination model in which one gender or sexuality unilaterally oppresses the others, as if bodies simply are certain genders/sexes unquestionably, or as if binary genders/sexes map neatly onto the operations of power."
- Resolution: "Perhaps trans* studies, with its investments in flex and stretch, need not say anything more legible right now than *but* to those framing the story—to be fixed as nothing more than a reminder of what exceeds the implicit disciplinary frame."
 - Demand to continue to break things up - continue with a *but*

Nash, "Introduction: Feeling Black Feminism"

- Defining intersectionality and its institutional history; defensiveness in "intersexuality wars" - sense of ownership, use of intersectionality
- Struggle between what institution see as intersectionality and how it originally started as
- "I treat intersectionality as women's studies' primary program-building initiative, as its institutional and ethical orientation, even as the field retains an ambivalent relationship."
- Transition of intersectionality - transformative justice
- "Who owns intersectionality, and who steals it?" (26)

End Question: If we could use our studies in conflict to reimagine our program, what would (and wouldn't) we change?

Week 5: Decentering Whiteness (2/28)

"This Bridge Called My Back"

Introduction:

- Summary: Revolutionary, solidarity, embracing differences
- Do you think the authors and the other women they chose to share their stories fully represent Third World Women?
- What did you think the organization of the book? Did you find it made sense or was it ever redundant?

Section I: Children Passing in the Streets

- Summary: "Voices from childhood," understanding racism from home life, forming the roots of radicalism
- What is the role of the family in the author's experiences?
 - Oppression and experiences are passed down by various ways
 - "Learned to live with these contradictions"
- What kind of impact do these experiences have on someone's future? How do we acknowledge them when trying to make feminism an inclusive movement?
 - Making room for women who does not inherently have a voice in society
 - "This experience that moves light-skinned o "passable"
 - Growing up trying to mask it, now acknowledging it
- Conflict: within oneself and identity
 - "From those families we were on the one hand encouraged to leave, to climb up white." (pg.4)

Section II: Entering the Lives of Others

- Summary: how women of color experiences of their oppression and pain
 - "A theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives — our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings — all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity."
 - use their own experiences and the understanding of the "flesh" of their people
- "Wonder Woman" - woman's relationships to other woman
- "La Guera" - half white, half chicana
 - Mother taught her that she belonged to "a different class of people"
- "Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster" - reflects the double invisibility among Asian Americans, oppressed and stereotyped as a "silent" struggle
 - Urges to speak out and defy the cultural codes of being silent
- "Gee You Don't Seem Like ..." - "I'm not interested in pursuing a society" (pg.44)
- Conflict: within own community; coming into your own with the background you have and becoming your own person; feeling of what home is

Section III: And When You Leave, Take Your Pictures With You

- Summary: experiences of racism in the feminist movement
- Intro: “how do we take personal responsibility for our own racist actions and assumptions” and how do we deal with ingrained racism, sexism, etc. How did this chapter answer these questions?
 - “I believe that lack of knowledge about other cultures is one of the basis for cultural oppression ... I do not hold every woman responsible for the *transformation* of this ignorance.” (pg. 73)
 - Be aware of it - intertwining of histories
- Doris Davenport writes (top pg.83) about white women in her essay. What was your reaction to this paragraph?

Section IV: Between the Lines

- Summary: hesitation to identify as Third World Women - further marginalization affect their differences/experiences
- What were some specific examples or quotes that illustrated as Third World Women?
 - “we understand the importance, yet limitations of race ideology to describe our total experience” (pg.101)
 - Lesbian Separatism (pg.118) & Homophobia in the Black Community (pg.121)
- “Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance” - being a lesbian in a patriarchal society
- “Letter to Ma” - idea we inherit parents’ traumas - relationship between mother and daughter - despite it all, can’t hate mother

Section V: Speaking in Tongues

- Summary: Third World Women trying to find a space to write, becoming writers
- “Chicana’s Feminist Literature” - Malintzin - symbol in her culture - given as a slave to a Spanish conquistador
 - “male myth of is made to see betrayal first of all in her very sexuality” (pg.182)
- “In Search of the Self as Hero” - conflict of herself
 - “angered by the arrogance of some articles that would tell you that Virginia Woolf is your spiritual mother, your possible role model” (pg.177)
- “Speaking in Tongues” - struggles as a writer
 - “I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories other have miswritten about me, about you.” (pg.167)

Section VI: El Mundo Zurdo

- Summary: imagining a feminist future
 - Reconnecting to the spiritual - does this individual work still help a larger cause?
 - El Mundo Zurdo (left-handed world) - discussing the meaning behind the name

- “Words are not enough. We must perform visible and public acts that may make us more vulnerable to the very oppressions we are fighting against. But our vulnerability can be the source of our power - **if we use it.**”
- “For the politically correct stance we let color, class, and gender separate us from those who would be kindred spirits. So the walls grow higher, the gulfs between us wider, the silences more profound. There is an enormous contradiction in being a bridge.”

End Activity - Create a poem that encapsulates your response to the book

It is often the case that devotion is equated with obedience and vice versa

For although some of us traveled more easily from street corner to corner than the sister whose color or poverty made her an especially visible target to the violence on the street,

Particularly for women and children, so that disobedience is seen as a lack of devout allegiance, and not necessarily as a radical questioning of our forms of life.

All of us have been victims of the invisible violation which happens indoors and inside ourselves: the self-abnegation, the silence, the constant threat of cultural obliteration.

An act of resistance
 She lives dangerously
 I come with no illusions
 An earth lover
 Survivor
 Musician
 We write letters to ma

I, an Asian American women,
 look at them and wonder if
 They are a part of me
 I look in their eyes and wonder if
 They share my dreams
 “This is so uncharacteristic of you”
 Of course I don’t eat (Filipino) food

March 7th, Sex Wars

- Barnard Conference, a conference that took place in 1982 during the Feminist sex wars.

- how many of the debates and conversations that took place at this conference are still relevant today?
- There is a conference that is very similar to this one that still takes place with similar topics.
- Daring to question traditional sexuality and sexual arrangements of the current political climate.
- Are these issues current?
 - Thinking of Kavanaugh hearing and #MeToo movement
 - “If not now, when?”
- The male gaze in pornography
 - Could the male gaze ever be used by women or appropriated to benefit women?
 - Hard to say yes because of all the negative associations
- Sex positive versus sex negative perspectives debate within feminism and splitting of feminist views of sexual empowerment & pornography/prostitution

Week 7: Challenging Trans Exclusion 3/14

Why did this start?

-Feminist believing men were trying to pose as women to infiltrate feminism.

Separatism

Sandy Stone & Beth Elliot

Sandy Stone:

Beth Elliot

-changed how feminists acted and went forward in the future

- accused partner of sexual assault

-Do anti trans feminists use this as a unhealthy therapy of replicating trauma to feel power and control over their social group.

-Example of violence that happens within social spaces

-looking at modern TERF conversations, defensiveness around the phrase lesbian, backlash against the term queer, had to fight to be allowed to be attracted to women and at all trans men are lesbians, losing lesbians, destroying lesbian autonomy and space

-arguments made for trans exclusion

-Raymond comparing sex conversion surgeries to nazism, no basis in logic but stems from violent history where enslaved individuals were operated on without consent.

-Jefferies: Biological essentialism, while saying gender doesn't exist and needs to be abolished

-How does trans exclusion intersect with other feminist conflicts?

-The bad side versus good side and how transgender would fall on the bad side just like lesbians, but they think it's wrong for them to be considered bad, but agree with the exclusion of transgender individuals

-Trashing & structurelessness: practicing against what say is goals and beliefs is same with saying gender doesn't exist but anyone born with the biological sex male is gendered and should be judged and excluded because of that.

-TERFs are still incredibly prevalent

Week 8: The Interpersonal is Political: Conflict and Abuse

3/28/2019



Susana Loza: Hashtag Feminism (Discussion led by Julie)

- Social media is the new platform for feminist discussion -> gives WOC a place to discuss their experiences
- White feminism given more ability to deny the voice of WOC
- White feminists have previously made the voice of WOC sound angry

- This has been repeated on Twitter and other social media platforms
- White digital feminism putting all women in one category rather than acknowledging the different experiences
- #HASHTAGS
 - #FeministConflict Unity is overrated. But how do we have generative conflict and challenge power without enabling abuse?
 - #morethangender because there are more differences that need to be heard and understood
 - 28 more days till Avengers: Endgame. #notyourasiansidekick
 - #WhiteFeminismisAPyramidScheme, they'll convince you buying or selling feminism is the key to your freedom, but leaves you broke and angry.
 -

Katherine Cross: Words, Words, Words and Beyond Niceness

- Trolls - not wanting to speak your truth for the fear of people immediately hurling hateful things at you
 - Someone who tries to get a rise out of you
- The Tumblr-isation of activism
 - “Call out culture”
- When people get violent or almost a “vendetta” against someone it can impact people’s lives and endanger them
 - Toxic -> harm

Sarah Schulman: Abandoning the Personal

- Conflict vs. abuse
- The human experience
- Social work
- Graduate student discussion page 71-73

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha: Protect Your Heart

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Book recommendation: Twitter and Tear Gas by Zeynep Tufekci

April 4th, Feminist Accountability

Key ideas:

- definition => makes visible how interlocking systems of oppression rely on one another in complex ways. Draw critical scrutiny to the ways these systems come into existence
- Transformative justice: justice through lens of accountability rather than punishment

- Community accountability: abuse harms the individual as well as the community as a whole

Introduction:

- Politics of accountability => recognizing that our lives are interconnected and we are responsible for the shape of that interconnection
- Cultivation => process, takes time and energy, outcome is unpredictable so we have to keep learning, continuous process rather than single act

Part I:

Chapter 2

- Privilege and location serve to reproduce the very systems and relationships of power that we try to combat
 - What are ways we can speak out without reinforcing systems of power or marginalizing the voices of minorities?
 - Speaking up vs. stepping back
 - Speaking from a place of active learning
- #MeToo movement
 - Claiming outsider position without acknowledging insider position
 - <https://www.theroot.com/brooklynbecky-exposes-woke-washed-white-supremacy-1828193626>
- White innocence
 - What are solutions?

Chapter 3

- Anesthetic aesthetic
- Talk with Katherine Cross
- Written at “much more innocent time”
- “Airing dirty laundry” creates “more division than it solves”
- Have to recognize power as individuals to affect others
 - Recognizing role and benefits from systems

April 11 Transformative Justice:

Story of transformative justice in an activist community where the male, “aggressor”/assaulter, ended up being the center of attention because of a fear of isolating him.

How did Diane feel? Why was Tom given so much time and space, when much of the healing is needed on the survivors side and accountability needs to be held up on the perpetrators side.

Was Tom held accountable? Goals: Learn about consent, Diane's safety, Tom's past history, accountability of past history, Tom's hard to Diane and community, and acts of restoration for Diane and community.

What Does it Feel Like When Change Finally Comes?

Activists can't be sole operators and healers in transformative justice, outside experts, like social workers and therapists, need to be included for real change, accountability, and healing.

April 18th Emergent Strategy

Intro: Brown defines "emergent strategy" as:

- A way of describing the adaptive and relational leadership model found in the work of Black science fiction writer Octavia Butler and others
- Plans of action, personal practices, and collective organizing tools that account for constant change and rely on the strength of relationship adaptation.

Adrienne Marie Brown

Social Justice Movement Facilitator

Pleasure activist: being safe and respected in sexual practices we choose

Healer & Doula

Writer & Artist

Sci-fi as a medicine of possibility

Principles of Emergent Strategy:

"What we pay attention to grows"

The way the natural world solves its problems:

Fractal

Adaptive

Interdependence and decentralization

Non-linear and iterative

Resilience and transformative justice

Creating possibilities

Fun gossipy aspect to feminist conflict and we can bond around this, but what does it mean that this is a bonding thing?

The idea of the impossible, what would it be like to embrace that?

What we do at small scales as implications at larger scales, intentionality in our actions, what we do locally translates to our success regionally nationally and globally

Week 12: April 25th

“The Left Hand of Darkness”

By Ursula K. Le Guin

Smillie’s reaction to this piece: “awkward dated reconstruction of gender”

Le Guin gives an opportunity to understand how someone reimagined gender in a completely new world in 1969.

No race per say, everyone is brownness and critics question why it didn’t tackle more of the race inequality question, is more of a post-race kind of mentality.

“The Future of Bodyminds, Bodyminds of the Future”

Sami Schalk

Issues of privilege and oppression in speculative fiction:

- future worlds in which difference is not entirely erased but is allegorized
- stories that take place in future after struggles with ableism, racism, sexism, classism

Bodyminds: a sociopolitical constituted and material entity that emerges through both structural contexts and also individual experience.

Hyperempathy: a congenital disability

The limits of totalizing approaches:

- 1.ignoring/erasing hyperempathy as disability
- 2.reading it negatively as a disability
- 3.positive readings and passive ableism;hyperempathy as a gift and a power
- 4.metaphorical approach

In Butler’s story it’s important that Lauren’s disability isn’t immediately visible because in story it could be used against her and for the reader helps to both show the reality that all disabilities are not visible and not they don’t have to be tied to someone’s identity to exist.

Week 14: May 9th

Born in Flames

Thoughts on the movie-

- Still relevant today :(
- Being complacent after progress - in the "post-movement" society
- Optimistic or pessimistic? Both?
 - Sad to see the socialist/feminist revolution be portrayed in such a conflicted state
 - BUT good to see that all the sides of the movement to be able to unite under a common goal after Morris's death and following events
- Notable moments in the movie
 - Covering up the death of inmates
 - Themes from 9/11- taking out the media transmitter to stop broadcast NOT an act of terrorism
 - Armed conflict - once violence starts in conflict, it's hard for it to stop
 - Embracing the women's army and how it dealt with race
 - Self-defense not discussed
 - Or is it? The right to defend themselves mentioned
 - SURPRISE - penis