

**Women's Studies 253**  
**The Psychology of Activism: Gender, Race and Engagement**

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**Instructor:** Nicola Curtin

Office: 3266 East Hall

Office hours: Thursday 1-2pm or by appointment.

E-mail: [nicurtin@umich.edu](mailto:nicurtin@umich.edu) (please put "WS 253" in the subject line). E-mail is the best way to reach me; please give me 24 hours to respond to your e-mail.

Course website: <http://ctools.umich.edu> (WOMENSTD 253 001 W09)

TuTh 10:00AM - 11:30AM, B110 MLB

**Course Research Consultant:** Beth Strickland

Contact information: Office: 214-E (in Graduate Library)

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-3pm, Wednesdays 3-4pm

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**Course Objectives:**

This seminar explores social/political activism and political engagement in the US context, drawing upon readings in psychology, women's studies, political science and sociology as well as case studies from the Global Feminisms Archive, and other sources. We will examine specific recurring themes throughout the term such as intersectionality, identity, social position and the challenges and rewards of identity politics.

The emphasis will be on how psychological processes and engagement are shaped by gender, with careful consideration of social context (history, social and cultural location) and individual differences (including not only personality, but also race, sexuality, class, etc.).

We will meet two times each week. The first class-section will be divided into two portions: a 30-50 minute lecture, followed by 40-60 minutes of discussion; the second class-section will be a facilitated discussion with both large and small group activities (with lecture as needed). Discussions will often focus on applying the materials to a "case study," chosen as a means of thinking about the theories, models or concepts learned that week in the life of a "real" person. Additionally, case studies provide a framework for constructively critiquing the week's readings as they apply to different people (particularly groups often overlooked in mainstream research).

At the end of the course you should understand the complex roles that gender, race, sexuality and other factors play in both individual engagement and social movements, and be able to identify and apply different theories and issues in the psychology of political engagement and social activism. Additionally, you should be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these theories as they apply to people in the real world.

**Grading:**

You must complete all of the requirements in order to pass the course:

Attendance/Participation: 10% (28 points)

Weekly Reflection Papers: 20% (56 points)

Midterm: 25% (70 points)

Paragraph description of final paper: 5% (14 points)

Final Paper: 30% (84 points)

Final Presentation: 10% (28 points)

**Required Readings:**

Course pack: Available at Dollar Bill Copying, 611 Church Street, 734-260-3425

Segrest, M. (1994). *Memoir of a race traitor*. Boston: South End Press. Available at Shaman Drum, 313 S. State Street, 734-662-7407

**Electronic Resources:**

Global Feminism Archives (selections below): <http://www.umich.edu/~glblfem/us.html>

Deep Blue: <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/55692>

**Course requirements**

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. An excused absence is one that is occasioned by illness or another significant, unavoidable circumstance. Please notify me as soon as possible (preferably *before* missing class) via email about such an absence, and plan to provide official, written documentation for your absence. In case of illness, a letter from a doctor is required for an excused absence. In case of family emergency, an obituary or medical note is required. If there are any circumstances that may affect your ability to be in class, please inform me within the first two weeks of classes. **You are responsible for all the information covered in class (including announcements) whether or not you are in attendance.**

Please note that unexcused absences (lacking written documentation) and/or excessive tardiness will be subject to penalty, significantly lowering your participation grade. Each student is allowed *one* “free” unexcused absence. Any additional unexcused absence may result in downgrading your *final grade for the course* by 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g. from a B+ to a B). That said, please advise me of any known conflicts in advance, including religious holidays, athletic events, and performances. *If you expect to have an excused absence from class (e.g. a religious holiday or a scheduled athletic event), please notify me within the first two weeks of the term.*

**Participation:** Please come prepared to engage fully and respectfully; having read, and reflected upon, the weekly readings. Participation includes attendance, thoughtful contributions to discussion (via oral participation), active listening, and some short, in-class, writing assignments.

*Grading Guidelines for Oral Participation:***“A” Range**

- consistent, constructive, considerate participation
- comments/questions critically engage readings, lectures, and concepts
- ideas are substantive, providing major insights and direction for the class
- demonstrates exceptional preparation and consistently on-task
- actively engages the comments/questions of other students and the instructor
- guides the conversation but does not dominate discussion
- a leader in both large-group discussion and small-group activities

**“B” Range**

- thoughtful/insightful contributions, but less consistent (doesn't speak regularly) -OR- consistently contributes, but not engaging with material critically/analytically
- usually prepared, on-task and contributing relevant information
- often initiates dialogue or answers questions
- demonstrates active listening and turn-taking
- still considerate

“C” Range

- inconsistent participation in frequency and substance
- comments rarely engage with the material analytically
- satisfactory preparation, but not always on-task
- participates in discussion when others initiate
- demonstrates active listening
- still considerate

“D” Range

- very little or no verbal contribution to large-group discussions
- inadequate preparation or rarely on-task
- inconsiderate or inappropriate behavior
- -OR- frequent absences make it difficult to evaluate verbal participation

*Note:* I realize that some people feel less comfortable or confident speaking up in discussion section. If this applies to you, please let me know in person or via email. We can always talk through your ideas during office hours and discuss strategies that may help you with verbal participation during discussion section.

**Weekly Reflection papers:** Each week you will be required to write a 1-page (single-spaced) reaction/reflection paper, on any **one** reading from that week. This can include anything that you particularly liked/disliked about the reading, reflections on the reading, how it seemed connected to other readings for the course, or questions/critiques you may have had. These are to be handed in, in-person, at the start of class, every Tuesday. I will NOT accept a reflection paper by any other means without discussion in advance (i.e. you have an excused absence that I know about in advance). **You are responsible for 12 such reaction papers across the course of the term. No reflection papers are due the week of April 14<sup>th</sup> (or the 21<sup>st</sup>). You may choose one other week not to complete a reflection paper.**

**Case Studies:** On some weeks, we will have a “case study” example from the Global Feminisms Archive. You are required to either read the transcript and/or watch the video on the interview for the woman we will be discussing that week. We will be referencing the case studies in our discussions and they are considered part of the course requirements. The transcripts and the videos can be found on the deep-blue website, which we will be learning how to access (the URL for each interview is also provided below). **Please note that you will be asked about the case studies in the mid-term, so be sure to watch the videos/read the transcripts during the term, and not at the last minute.**

**Midterm:** The mid-term will be a take-home essay exam. You will be given one week to respond to two essay questions (you are expected to write at least 2-3 pages for each essay), using knowledge/concepts learned in the course.

**Final Paper: Activist Profile (8-10 pages)** Apply the concepts we have learned in the seminar to an activist of your choosing and do an extended case-study. Pick one activist (any time-period/location) and apply 2-3 theories/models from the course to explain her/his engagement in activism (you may use one outside theory, only with my permission), paying close attention to the role(s) of gender, race, class, sexuality and/or other important identities. You must use at least one “primary” source on the activist [i.e. their (auto)biography or an extended interview with them] for your paper. I encourage you to make use of the Global Feminisms (GF) interviews in your project (if you do use the GF archive, you may select two activists and do a compare/contrast. This is an option only if you use this archive). Note: It is very important to provide *contextual* background for your activist (i.e. when they were active, in what movement, what their relationships to other members of the movement was or may have been) as a part of

your paper. You should think of yourself as a psychological detective, trying to figure out what might have motivated this person to become involved in his/her cause (paying close attention to the role of gender, race, class, sexuality etc., as appropriate). I encourage you to pick an activist whose story you find compelling, or who is involved in a movement you feel passionate about. Another challenge may be to examine someone engaged in a cause you don't understand or personally endorse/agree with. **Further instructions to follow later in the term.** By the third week of classes (Thursday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>), you need to have selected an activist to profile, and received approval (via e-mail) from me for that selection.

### General Requirements

- You must incorporate at least 3 outside sources (i.e. readings not required for the course) related to your topic (**hints:** you may consider the suggested readings, or look at the references included in articles we read for the course)
- 8-10 pages, double spaced (excluding cover-page and references)
- 12-point font, 1-inch margins all around
- Must use standardized referencing format (i.e. MLA or APA)

**Paragraph description of final paper: DUE March 5<sup>th</sup>** This is a one-paragraph description of your final paper project:

Describe the activist you have chosen to profile and at least one of the theories you plan on using. You should provide a short socio-historical context for your individual [i.e. when/where they were/are active, their family background, social position and any relevant social identities you plan to discuss] and how you see the theory you have selected as being particularly appropriate for examining this person's activist engagement.

**Final Presentations:** You will be required to make a 5-10 minute presentation of your final paper (no shorter than 5 minutes and no longer than 10). This presentation will be given in either poster or power-point format. You are encouraged to have fun and be creative with this requirement! If you have a different form of presentation in mind, please talk to me about it and get my permission in advance.

**Reading:** This is a challenging course and, as such, the reading will be heavy (usually about 50, but up to 100, pages a week). You are expected to complete all of the required reading for each week. Often, there will be optional readings (indicated by double asterisks \*\*). These are readings that: (1) you are not required to do, as I will cover the important "take home" points in sufficient detail in lecture (though of course you are encouraged to read them if you have the time/inclination), or (2) I won't cover in lecture, but that may be of interest or useful for you in the final paper. All of these readings will be on the C-Tools site, in the "Supplemental Readings" folder.

## Course Policies

### **Paper/Exam Submission policy**

1. If you submit papers late, you will be penalized 10% every 24 hours, unless there are special circumstances that I have previously approved in writing.
2. Students are required to turn in the term paper at the beginning of class on **DATE TBD**.
3. I will unfortunately not be able to accept resubmissions. If you are uncertain about your idea or a rough draft of your paper, I would be happy to give you my comments ahead of time, or to meet with you to discuss your paper or ideas. I will read drafts of your final paper— so long as you give me at least a week to give you feedback, so plan accordingly.

**Special circumstances:**

Please contact me by email within the first two weeks of class if you have any special circumstances that might affect your attendance, participation and/or comfort in class. These may include (but are not limited to) having a certified disability, involvement in upcoming religious observances, or speaking English as a second language. If you are especially uncomfortable with participating verbally, you must also contact me within the first two weeks of class, and we can make alternative arrangements for your participation. Please note that you will still be expected to come to class and pay attention.

**Plagiarism:**

“Plagiarism is representing someone else’s ideas, words, statements, or other work as one’s own without proper acknowledgment or citation. If you are ever unsure, please ask. For information on plagiarism and proper citation, please visit:

<http://www.lib.umich.edu/handouts/plagiar.pdf> -or-  
<http://www.lib.umich.edu/acadintegrity/students/index.htm> -or-  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>

**Finally:**

I look forward to working with you this semester, and I welcome your feedback! Never hesitate to ask questions. Please contact me if you require special accommodations due to religious practices, documented learning disabilities, physical requirements, medical needs, and so on.

**Readings**

**January 8<sup>th</sup>**

**Introduction and Course Overview**

**January 13<sup>th</sup> & January 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Gender, race and engagement: Barriers to participation**

**January 13<sup>th</sup> - Overview: What is activism?**

**Readings:**

Corning, A. F., & Myers, D. J. (2002). Individual orientation toward engagement in social action. *Political Psychology*, 23(4), read only page 703-707 (right to “Study 1”) and then the discussion section, p. 723 – 725, and look at the measure on page 709.

Bickford, D. M. & Reynolds, N. (2002) Activism and service-learning: Reframing volunteerism as acts of dissent. *Pedagogy*, 2(2), read pages 229- middle of 232 and page 238-241 (section called “Activism and consciousness raising”).

**January 15<sup>th</sup>:**

**Meeting with Beth Strickland, Women’s Studies Librarian, to discuss how to use Deep Blue and library search engines for final paper. NOTE WE MEET AT The Shapiro Undergraduate Library, room 4059 [also called the ULIC (University Library Instruction Center), on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Library ]**

**Case Study: *Sista II Sista*** (pay particular attention to how they answer the question about being activists) <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/55718>

**January 20<sup>th</sup> & January 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**Gender, race and engagement: Barriers to participation**

Burns, N. (2005). Finding gender. *Politics & Gender*, 1(1), 137-141.

Stewart, A.J., & McDermott, C. (2004). Gender in psychology. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 55, p. 531-537 only (section on intersectionality).

Caiazza, A. (2005). Don’t bowl at night: Gender, safety and civil participation. *Signs*, 30(2), 1607-1631.

Verba, S., Burns, N., & Schlozman, K.L. (1997). Knowing and caring about politics: Gender and citizen engagement. *Journal of Politics*, 59 (4), 1051-1072.

\*\* Lien, P. (1998). Does the gender gap in political attitudes and behavior vary across racial groups? Comparing Asians to whites, blacks, and Latinos. *Political Research Quarterly*, 51(4), 869-894.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU NEED TO RECEIVE APPROVAL (VIA E-MAIL) FOR THE ACTIVIST YOU WILL PROFILE IN THE FINAL PAPER BY THURSDAY, JANUARY 22<sup>nd</sup>**

<p><b>January 27<sup>th</sup> &amp; January 29<sup>th</sup></b>  <b>Gender, race and civic engagement: Meaning and consequences</b></p>
<p>Hardy-Fanta, C. (1997). Latina women and political consciousness: La chispa que prende. In C.J. Cohen, K. B. Jones &amp; J. C. Tronto (Eds.), <i>Women Transforming Politics: An alternative reader</i> (pp.223-237). New York: New York University Press.</p> <p>Cole, E. R., &amp; Stewart, A. J. (1996). Meanings of political participation among Black and White women: Political identity and social responsibility. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 71, 130-140.</p> <p>Gilkes, C. T. (2007). If it wasn't for the women... African American women, community work, and social change. In Segal &amp; Martinez (Eds.) <i>Intersections of gender, race and class</i> (pp. 453-463).</p> <p>**McAdam, D. (1992). Gender as a mediator of activism experience: The case of Freedom Summer. <i>The American Journal of Sociology</i>, 95, 1211-1230.</p> <p><b>NOTE: Tuesday, January 27<sup>th</sup> is the last day for students to drop or add classes without getting permission, as well as to elect a course pass/fail</b></p> <p><b>Case Study: Loretta Ross</b></p>
<p><b>February 3<sup>rd</sup> &amp; February 5<sup>th</sup></b>  <b>Identities and activism: An Introduction</b></p>
<p>Lorde, A. (1984). Age, race, class and sex: Women redefining difference. In <i>Sister Outsider</i>, pp. 114-123). Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press.</p> <p>Erikson, E.H. (1959/1980). Group identity &amp; Ego Identity. In <i>Identity and the Life Cycle</i>, pp. 18-the middle of page 25 and 94- the bottom of 100. New York: W.W. Norton &amp; Company. <b>Pay particular attention to Erikson's definition of identity on p. 22</b></p> <p>Simon, B., Loewy, M., &amp; Stürmer, S. (1998). Collective identification and social movement participation. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 74(3), 646-658.</p> <p>**Bernstein, M. (2005). Identity politics. <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>, 31, 47-74.</p> <p><b>Case Study: Andrea Smith</b> (pay close attention to her discussions of identity politics)  <a href="http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/55717">http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/55717</a></p>
<p><b>February 10<sup>th</sup> &amp; February 12<sup>th</sup></b>  <b>Identities and Activism</b></p>
<p>Anzaldúa, G. (2007) La Conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a new consciousness. In Segal &amp; Martinez (Eds.) <i>Intersections of gender, race and class</i> (pp. 405-411).</p> <p>Vandiver, B. J. (2001). Psychological nigrescence revisited: Introduction and overview. <i>Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development</i>, 29(3), 165-173.</p> <p>Selections from <i>Restoried Selves: Autobiographies of queer Asian/pacific American activists</i> (pp. 29-35, 47-52,127-130).</p> <p><b>MIDTERM HANDED OUT AT THE END OF CLASS ON THE 12TH</b></p> <p><b>Case Study: Holly Hughes</b>  <a href="http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/55721">http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/55721</a></p>

**February 17<sup>th</sup> & February 19<sup>th</sup>**  
**Identities and Activism**

Cavin, S. (1990). The invisible army of women: Lesbian social protests, 1969-1988. In G. West & R.L. Blumberg (Eds.), *Women and social protest*, pp. 321-332. New York: Oxford University Press.

Irvine, J. M. (2007). A place in the rainbow: Theorizing lesbian and gay culture.

Smith, P. M. (1971). In Segal & Martinez (Eds.) *Intersections of gender, race and class* (pp. 411-428).

Jones, T. C. (2002). Characteristics of a group of lesbian and gay radical street activists. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services: Issues in Practice, Policy & Research*, 14(4), 39-54.

Konik, J. & Stewart, A. (2004). Sexual Identity Development in the Context of Compulsory Heterosexuality. *Journal of Personality*, 72(4), 815-844.

**MIDTERM DUE FEBRUARY 20<sup>TH</sup> @ 5PM**

**March 3<sup>rd</sup> & March 5<sup>th</sup>**  
**Generations and Activism**

Duncan, L. E. & Agronick, G. S. (1995). The intersection of life stage and social events: Personality and life outcomes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 558-568.

Stewart, A.J. & Healy, J.M., Jr. (1986). The role of personality development and experience in shaping political commitment: An illustrative case. *Journal of Social Issues*, 42(2), 11-31.

\*\*Mannheim, K. (1952). The problem of generations, In *Essays on the sociology of knowledge* (pp. 276-320). New York: Oxford University Press.

**Final paper paragraph description due, March 5<sup>th</sup>, start of class**

**March 10<sup>th</sup> & March 12<sup>th</sup>**  
**Group Consciousness**

King, K.R. (2003). Do you see what I see? Effects of group consciousness on African American women's attributions to prejudice. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 27(1), 17-30.

Gurin, P., Miller, A.H., & Gurin, G. (1980). Stratum identification and consciousness. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 43(1), 30-47.

Henderson-King, D.H. & Stewart, A.J. (1994). Women or feminists? Assessing women's group consciousness. *Sex Roles*, 31, 505-516.

\*\* Turner, J.C. (1982). Toward a cognitive redefinition of the social group. In H. Tajfel (Ed.) *Social Identity and intergroup relations*, pp. 15-40. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<b>March 17<sup>th</sup> &amp; March 19<sup>th</sup> Right-wing activism</b>
<p>Braungart, M. M. &amp; Braungart, R. G. (1991). The effects of the 1960s political generation on former left- and right-wing youth activist leaders. <i>Social Problems</i>, 38(3), 297-315.</p> <p>Medvetz , T. (2006). The strength of weekly ties: relations of material and symbolic exchange in the conservative movement. <i>Politics &amp; Society</i>, (34), 343-368.</p> <p>Emler, N. &amp; Stace, K. (1999). What does principled versus conventional moral reasoning convey to others about the politics and psychology of the reasoner? <i>European Journal of Social Psychology</i>, (29), 455-468.</p>
<b>March 24<sup>th</sup> &amp; March 26<sup>th</sup> Extreme Activisms</b>
<p>Blee, K. M. (1996). Becoming a racist: Women in contemporary Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi groups. <i>Gender &amp; Society</i>, 10(6), 680-702.</p> <p>Ezekiel, R. S. (2002). An ethnographer looks at neo-Nazi and Klan groups: The racist mind revisited. <i>American Behavioral Scientist</i>, 46(1), 51-71.</p>
<b>March 31<sup>st</sup> &amp; April 2<sup>nd</sup> Teaching Activism</b>
<p>Case, K. A. &amp; Hemmings, A. (2005). Distancing strategies: White women preservice teachers and antiracist curriculum. <i>Urban Education</i>, 40(6), 606-626.</p> <p>Henderson-King, D. &amp; Stewart, A.J. (1999). Educational experiences and shifts in group consciousness: Studying women. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i>, 25, 390-399.</p> <p>Lopez, G.E., Gurin, P., Nagda, B.A. (1998). Education and understanding structural causes for group inequalities. <i>Political Psychology</i>, 19, 305-329</p> <p>** Freire, P. (1970). <i>Pedagogy of the oppressed</i>. New York: Continuum</p>
<b>April 7<sup>th</sup> &amp; April 9<sup>th</sup> Ally Activism</b>
<p>Mab Segrest - Memoir of a race traitor, part 1 pp 1-175. Note this relatively quick read, but you should still give yourself some time!</p>

**April 14<sup>th</sup> & April 16<sup>th</sup>  
What is everyday activism?**

**April 14<sup>th</sup>: Discussion** Please read the following short description: [http://activism.wikia.com/wiki/Everyday\\_activism](http://activism.wikia.com/wiki/Everyday_activism)

Visit the following websites and think about ways in which it *is* and *is not* encouraging activism. Reflect also on how (or if) assumptions about gender, race, class etc. are reflected in either site:  
<http://www.joinred.com/Home.aspx>  
<http://ww3.komen.org/PromiseShop/>

**April 16<sup>th</sup>:**

Presentations (**Please note that we will be meeting in Lane Hall (2<sup>nd</sup> floor) room 2239 for our poster session presentations**) . Lane Hall is located at 204 S. State Street (between Liberty and Washington streets).

**April 21<sup>st</sup>  
Presentations**

Presentations (Please note that we will be meeting in Lane Hall (2<sup>nd</sup> floor) room 2239 for our poster session presentations) . Lane Hall is located at 204 S. State Street (between Liberty and Washington streets).

**Final Papers Due: Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup> @ 5pm**

\*\*Denotes reading that is not required, but may be of interest to you.