



Feminism, Gender and Sexuality in Performance

Spring 2017 Honors Seminar

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THEA-UT 801.002 – 4 Credits
Tuesdays 9:30-12:15

This honors seminar examines how theories of gender and sexuality inform contemporary theatre and performance and how theories of performance, in turn, deepen our understanding of gender and sexuality. The course will trace the history of third wave feminism and its legacy through works of theatre and performance art by paying close attention to the movement's embrace of diversity and inclusion. We will look at how third wave feminism (and beyond) engages issues of race, class, sexual liberation, transgender rights, social media, globalization, and work. Our areas of inquiry will center on productive moments of disagreement: the sex wars, radical feminism versus transgenderism, Anglo-American feminism versus French feminism, "lean in" liberal feminism versus socialist feminism.

Has feminism become, in the words of Nancy Fraser, "the handmaiden" of capitalism? How we do reclaim it? Key ongoing debates informing the course are the politics of perception, privilege, the reclaiming of derogatory terms (#nastywoman), and the glass ceiling.

Contemporary feminist plays will be studied alongside popular culture and performance art. Playwrights include Caryl Churchill, Hélène Cixous, María Irene Fornés, Sarah Kane, Young Jean Lee, Suzan-Lori Parks, Sarah Ruhl, and others. We will compare the popular icons of feminism-for-consumption (Barbie, Beyoncé, Taylor Swift) with subversive performance artists such as Hannah Wilke, Lorraine O'Grady, Riot grrrl, Guerrilla Girls, and Pussy Riot. Secondary readings will be drawn from Judith Butler, bell hooks, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sarah Ahmed, Monique Wittig, and others.