

Canadian Feminism: Contexts and Critiques

An interdisciplinary examination of the growth and theory of feminism in Canada, with particular emphasis on political philosophy, history, sociology, psychology, and literature. The course will address issues of both content-- what's Canadian about Canadian feminism? what's feminist about Canadian feminism?--and method: how does one "do" feminist scholarship?

Instructor: Dr. Susan Jackel, Canadian Studies, Arts 306 (432-5086).

Required Texts

- Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn, eds., Feminism in Canada (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982).
 Linda Kealey, ed., A Not Unreasonable Claim (Toronto: Women's Press, 1979).
 Nellie McClung, In Times Like These (1915; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972; introduction by V. Strong-Boag).
 Mary O'Brien, The Politics of Reproduction (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).
 Richard J. Evans, The Feminists (London: Croom Helm, 1977; rev. ed. 1979).

Recommended Texts

- Marylee Stephenson, ed., Women in Canada (2nd ed., Toronto: General Publishing, 1977).
 Gwen Matheson, ed., Women in the Canadian Mosaic (Toronto: Peter Martin, 1976).
 [Bonnie Campbell et al., eds.,] Women Unite! (Toronto: Women's Press, 1972).
 Maureen Fitzgerald, et al., eds., Still Ain't Satisfied! Canadian Feminism Today (Toronto: Women's Press, 1982).
 Carol Lee Bacchi, Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).
 Ramsay Cook and Wendy Mitchinson, eds., The Proper Sphere: Women's Place in Canadian Society (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976).
 Joan Turner and Lois Emery, eds., Perspectives on Women in the 1980's (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1984).
 V. Strong-Boag, True Daughters of the North: Canadian Women's History, An Annotated Bibliography (with Beth Light; Toronto: OISE Press, 1980).
 Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, The Double Ghetto: Canadian Women and Their Segregated Work (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978).
 Jill Vickers and June Adam, But Can You Type? Canadian Universities and the Status of Women (Ottawa: CAUT/Clarke Irwin, 1977).
 Jeanne L'Esperance, The Widening Sphere: Women in Canada, 1870-1940 (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1982).
 Le Collectif Clio, L'histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles (Montreal: Les Quinze, 1982).
 Margrit Eichler, The Double Standard: A Feminist Critique of Feminist Social Science (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980).
 Janet Radcliffe Richards, The Sceptical Feminist (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980; Penguin, 1982).
 Relevant journals: RFR/DRF, Signs, Atlantis, Canadian Woman Studies, Women's Studies International Quarterly, Quest, etc.

Course Outline -- 1 (* denotes duplicated copy; everyone read)

- Sept. T/11: Introduction: objectives, definitions, procedures, expectations.
- R/13: Including us in: scholarly treatments of the female experience, the Canadian experience. Readings:
Ruth Pierson and Alison Prentice, "Feminism and the Writing and Teaching of History," in Miles and Finn, eds., Feminism in Canada [FC].
*Deborah Gorham, "Defining the History of Feminism," CHA paper, 1981.
Richard J. Evans, The Feminists.
*Janet Radcliffe Richards, The Sceptical Feminist, pp. 13-19, 173-9.
- T/18: From metatheory to grass roots: framing a continuum of theory. Readings:
*Mary O'Brien, "Feminist Theory and Dialectical Logic," in Nannerl Keohane et al., eds., Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology (Chicago, 1982), pp. 99-112; rpt. from Signs, Vol. 7, No. 1, Autumn 1981.
Wayne Roberts, "Rocking the Cradle for the World: The New Woman and Maternal Feminism, Toronto, 1877-1914," in Linda Kealey, ed., A Not Unreasonable Claim [NUC].
- R/20: Feminist theory and method. Readings:
*Joan Kelly, "The Doubled Vision of Feminist Theory," in Judith Newton et. al., eds., Sex and Class in Women's History (London, 1983), pp. 258-70.
*Thelma McCormack, "Good Theory or Just Theory?", Women's Studies International Quarterly, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1981, pp. 1-12.
Jill Vickers, "Memoirs of an Ontological Exile," [FC].
- T/25: Mapping a scholar in action. Readings:
Nellie McClung, In Times Like These (1915; rpt. Toronto, 1972); introduction by Veronica Strong-Boag, pp. vii-xxii.
*V. Strong-Boag, "Cousin Cinderella: A Guide to Historical Literature Pertaining to Canadian Women," in Marylee Stephenson, ed., Women in Canada (Toronto, 1973; rev. ed. 1977), pp. 245-273.
*V. Strong-Boag, "The Roots of Modern Canadian Feminism," Canada: An Historical Magazine, Vol. 3, No. 2, Dec. 1975, pp. 22-33; rpt. in B. Hodgins and R. Page, eds., Canadian History Since Confederation (Toronto, 1979), pp. 398-408.
*V. Strong-Boag, "Canadian Feminism in the 1920's: The Case of Nellie L. McClung," Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1977, pp. 58-68.
*V. Strong-Boag, "Mapping Women's Studies in Canada: Some Signposts," Journal of Educational Thought, Vol. 17, No. 2, August 1983, pp. 94-111.
- R/27: Feminism in Edmonton in the early 1900's: the case of Emily Murphy. Readings: any one of the following books by Murphy:
Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad (1901); Janey Canuck in the West (1910)
Seeds of Pine (1912); Open Trails (1914); The Black Candle (1922).
Hope Byrne Sanders, Emily Murphy, Crusader (Janey Canuck) (Toronto, 1945).
Carol Bacchi, Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918 (Toronto, 1983), pp. 52-3, 111, 119, 128.

Course outline -- 2

- Oct. T/2:
R/4: The roots of modern Alberta feminism: student presentations of critiques of articles and theses on Alberta women (see list on assignment sheet). Written summary and critique, 6-10 typewritten pages (1500-2500 words) due Oct. 9.
- T/9: Confronting the gatekeepers: women in the higher professions.
Jill Vickers, But Can You Type? Canadian Universities and the Status of Women (Toronto, 1977); or
Jill Vickers, "Women in Universities," in Gwen Matheson, ed., Women in the Canadian Mosaic (Toronto, 1977), pp.
Margaret Gillet, We Walked Very Warily: A History of Women at McGill (Montreal, 1981).
V. Strong-Boag, "Feminism Constrained," NUC.
- R/11: Visiting speaker, Jill Vickers; discussion of feminist theory and method (cf. "Memoirs. . ."), women in academic life. Readings:
* Winston Collins, "Women in Academe," Chatelaine, July 1984, pp. 38, 40, 70-74.
*Hilda Neatby, "Are Women Fulfilling Their Obligations to Society?", in Michael Hayden, ed., So Much to Do, So Little Time: The Writings of Hilda Neatby (Vancouver, 1983), pp. 45-59 (speech to the Canadian Federation of University Women in 1952; Neatby chaired a Canadian Association of University Teachers Committee that reported on the status of women in Canadian universities in 1966).
- T/16: Ideology and the nation state in French Canada.
*Susan Trofimenkoff, "Nationalism, Feminism, and Canadian Intellectual History," Canadian Literature, No. 83, Winter 1979, pp. 7-20.
Susan Trofimenkoff, The Dream of Nation (Toronto, 1982), ch. 12, 14.
*Lionel Groulx, "The Role and Traditions of the French-Canadian Family," in Susan Trofimenkoff, ed., Abbe Groulx: Variations on a Nationalist Theme (Toronto, 1973), pp. 100-121.
*Jean Le Moyne, "Woman and French-Canadian Civilization," etc., in Convergences (Montreal, 1961; trans. Philip Stratford, Toronto, 1966), pp. 59-104.
- R/18: Feminism and national liberation in Quebec. Readings:
*Donna Cherniak and Allan Feingold, "Birth Control Handbook," in Women Unite! (Toronto, 1972), pp. 109-113.
*Susan Trofimenkoff, "Feminism, Federalism and the Independence of Quebec," The Dream of Nation, ch. 20.
Yolande Cohen, "Thoughts on Women and Power," FC.
- T/23: Literature and consciousness: Quebec. Readings:
Gabrielle Roy, Bonheur d'occasion (1945; trans. The Tin Flute, 1947).
Marie-Claire Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel (1965; trans. A Season in the Life of Emmanuel, 1966).
Ann Hébert, Le temps sauvage (1967); Kamouraska (1970; trans. 1973).
Claire Martin, Dans un gant de fer (1965), La joue droite (trans. In An Iron Glove, 1968, 1973; The Right Cheek, 1968, 1975).
Thérèse Casgrain, Une femme chez les hommes (1971; trans. A Woman in a Man's World, 1972).
Jovette Marchesault, La saga des poules mouillées (1981; trans. The Saga of the Wet Hens, 1983).

Course outline -- 3

- R/25: Literature and consciousness, continued. Readings:
Madeleine Gagnon, "My Body in Writing," FC
Margaret Atwood, The Edible Woman (Toronto, 1969).
- T/30: Growing up different in Canada: immigrant, native and visible minority women. Readings:
Laura Salverson, Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter (1939; rpt. Toronto, 1981.)
Maria Campbell, Half-breed (Toronto, 1973).
Joy Kogawa, Obasan (Toronto, 1981).
- Nov. R/1: Lesbian identity. Readings:
Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," Signs, Vol. 5, No. 4, Summer 1980, pp. 631-60.
Ann Ferguson et al., "On 'Compulsive Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence': Defining the Issues," Signs, Vol. 7, No. 1, Autumn, 1981; also in Keohane et al., eds, Feminist Theory, pp. 147-188
*Patricia Rooke, Public Figure, Private Woman: Same-Sex Support Structures in the Life of Charlotte Whitton," International Journal of Women's Studies, Vol. 6, No. 5, Nov. -Dec. 1983, pp. 412-28.
Jane Rule, Desert of the Heart (1964); Lesbian Images (1975).
- T/6: Jeri Dawn Wine, "Gynocentric Values and Feminist Psychology," FC.
Angela Miles, "Ideological Hegemony in Political Discourse," FC.
- R/8: Visit by Veronica Strong-Boag; discussion of women, internationalism and peace.
- T/13, R/15: Mary O'Brien, The Politics of Reproduction.
- T/20: Canadian feminism: an interim report (general class discussion).
- R/22, T/27, R/29; Dec. T/4: Presentation of student papers.

- Dec. R/6: Canadian feminism: conclusions, suggestions for further research.

Papers due.

NOTE: In lieu of a final examination, students will prepare a detailed critique of the course, with concrete suggestions for improvement. A two-hour meeting of the class will take place during the regularly-scheduled examination period (Dec. 19, 12:00-14:00) for oral presentation and discussion of these critiques. Students will then complete a short course evaluation form. Students will receive their unofficial grades for the course before this final session, and nothing said or written in the course evaluation can or will affect the grade. However, failure to participate in the evaluation, without adequate reason for absence, will result in an automatic penalty of .5 GPA assessed against the recorded unofficial grade.

Events to note: Exhibition of The Widening Sphere: Women in Canada, 1870-1940 at Ring House Gallery, Oct. 16-Nov. 12.

Production of The Fighting Days (on Nellie McClung and the Beynon sisters) by Prairie Theatre Exchange at the Kaasa Theatre, Jan. 8-19, 1985.

In her bibliographic essay "Cousin Cinderella," Veronica Strong-Boag writes: "More important today are theories. . . [that] incorporate within an explanatory analytical framework those influences which the earlier schools merely described" (*Women in Canada*, p. 247). Strong-Boag also remarks critically of Byrne Hope Sanders' biography of Emily Murphy that it "is among the few useful, but often conceptually inadequate, studies of the [suffrage] leadership" (*ibid.*, p. 267).

The assignments in this course are designed to explore the central scholarly question of the relation between the collection of facts, their description, and the construction of an analytic and explanatory framework adequate for their interpretation. The objective is to exercise and sharpen our capacity for criticism, both of the work of others and of our own work.

The readings in this course will stimulate many questions, but we may begin with several that arise from Strong-Boag's remarks. What constitutes "useful" research, "conceptually adequate" interpretation? Why is it "more important today" that we have scholarship that is informed by theory, rather than being "merely" descriptive? More important for whom? Is description always innocent of theory?

Some further questions: Is "feminist scholarship" a contradiction in terms? What are the distinguishing characteristics of a feminist criticism? Is "Canadian feminism" a contradiction in terms? What are the distinguishing characteristics of feminism in Canada? In understanding the experience of Canadian women and men, what is the role of theory, and how is it related to the historical, political, economic and social circumstances of our daily life?

The first assignment, due Oct. 9 at class time, requires each student to look critically at selected published writings, most though not all with some pretensions to scholarship, pertaining to Alberta women. Topics are listed on a separate sheet; the list is not exhaustive, and additional suggestions are welcome. In some, the primary emphasis is on the adequacy of the information assembled: is the research thorough? How reliable are the conclusions? Other topics raise questions of method: How was the information gathered and interpreted? Would other methods have produced different conclusions? A third concern is theory: to what extent are you aware of an "analytical explanatory framework," an attempt to establish a relationship between the specific circumstances under study, and broader theories of human behaviour? (1500-2500 words)

The second assignment, due no later than Dec. 6 at class time, of 3000-4500 words, will present research and analysis on a topic developed in consultation with the instructor and congruent with the subject-matter and objectives of the course. Students are encouraged to suggest topics of interest to them, and to submit a one-paragraph statement of their proposed topic no later than October 23. Some suggestions for your consideration are listed on a separate sheet.

Grading: Assignment 1, 20%; major paper, 50%; class participation, 30%.

Choose one of the following combinations of publications and comment on their empirical, conceptual, and methodological adequacy as a means of understanding the experience of Alberta women. Comment also on the degree of feminist consciousness in the writer(s), and where relevant, on the degree of concern for the precise definition of "feminist" and "feminism."

1. Anne B. Woywitka, "A Pioneer Woman in the Labour Movement," Alberta History [AH], 26 (1), 1978, 10-16; Warren Caragata, Alberta Labour: A Heritage Untold (1979).
2. Michael Bliss, "Pure Books on Avoided Subjects: Pre-Freudian Sexual Ideas in Canada," in Michiel Horn and R. Sabourin, eds., Studies in Canadian Social History (1977), 326-347; Terry L. Chapman, Sex Crimes in Western Canada, 1890-1920, Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1984.
3. Wendy Mitchinson, "The WCTU: 'For God, Home and Native Land': A Study in Nineteenth-Century Feminism," in Linda Kealey, ed., A Not Unreasonable Claim (1979), 151-67; Nancy Sheehan, Temperance, the WCTU, and Education in Alberta, 1905-1930, Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1980.
4. Eliane Leslau Silverman, "In Their Own Words: Mothers and Daughters on the Alberta Frontier, 1890-1929," Frontiers, 1977, 27-44; Silverman, The Last Best West: Women on the Alberta Frontier, 1880-1930 (1984).
5. Christine van der Mark, In Due Season (1947; rpt. 1979); Aritha van Herk, Judith (1978).
6. Byrne Hope Sanders, Emily Murphy, Crusader (1945), 213-59; Una MacLean, "The Famous Five," AH, 10 (2), 1962, 1-4; Eleanor Harman, "Five Persons from Alberta," in M. Q. Innis, ed., The Clear Spirit: Twenty Canadian Women And Their Times (1966), 158-78; Jean Cochrane, Women in Canadian Politics (1977), 45-51.
7. C. M. MacKinlay, The Honorable Irene Parlby, M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1953; Barbara Villy Cormack, Perennials and Politics: the Life Story of Hon. Irene Parlby, LL.D. (n.d.)
8. Jean Burnet, Next-Year Country: A Study of Rural Social Organization in Alberta (1951), 16-33; Seena B. Kohl, Working Together: Women and Family in Southwestern Saskatchewan (1976); Elizabeth B. Mitchell, In Western Canada Before the War: A Study of Communities (1915; rpt. 1981), 45-63.
9. James Gray, Red Lights on the Prairies (1971); Judy Bedford, "Prostitution in Calgary, 1905-1914," AH, 29 (2), 1981, 1-11.
10. Catherine L. Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada (1950; rpt. 1973), 48-83; Sheilagh Jameson, "Give Your Other Vote to the Sister," AH, 15 (4), 1961, 10-16; Paul Voisey, "The 'Votes for Women' Movement," AH, 23 (3), 10-23.

CANST 401 Topics, continued.

11. Frances Anita Puffer, Friendship and Commitment in a Voluntary Association: The University Women's Club of Edmonton, M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1966; Herbert C. Northcott, "Who Stays Home? Working Parents and Sick Children," International Journal of Women's Studies, 6 (5), 1983, 387-94.
12. Howard Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta (1982), 17-60; Terry L. Chapman, "Early Eugenics Movement in Western Canada," AH, 25 (4), 1977, 9-17; Patricia Rook and R. L. Schnell, "Charlotte Whitton and the 'Babies for Export' Controversy, 1947-48," AH, 30 (1), 1982, 11-16.
13. L. J. Wilson, "Educational Role of the United Farm Women of Alberta," AH, 25 (2), 1977, 28-36; Leslie May Robinson, Women and the Farm Movement in Alberta, 1909-1925, Ph.D. thesis, University of Calgary, 1981.
14. Elise Corbet, "Women's Canadian Club of Calgary," AH, 25 (3), 1977, 29-36; Corbet, Alberta Women in the 1920's: An Inquiry into Four Aspects of their Lives, M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1979.

CANST 401 Topics for second assignment, due Dec. 6, 1984 (3000-4500 words).

- (1) Do a feminist critique of a standard text used in undergraduate courses in Canadian history, political science, economics, anthropology, or sociology.
- (2) Research a current Alberta women's group not conspicuous for its feminist consciousness: for example, the Women's Institute, the Women's Canadian Club, the Junior League, Alberta Federation of Women United for Families, Women of Uniform. In the light of your research--history, purposes, membership, current activities--were your preconceptions about this group confirmed or changed?
- (3) Compile a history of women staff and students at the University of Alberta from 1908 to 1945.
- (4) Write a review essay on Women Unite! (1972), Mother Was Not a Person (1972), Women in Canada (1973; 2nd ed., 1977), Women in the Canadian Mosaic (1976), and Still Ain't Satisfied! (1982), tracing the development of feminist consciousness in Canada over that decade.
- (5) For a projected Biographical Dictionary of Canadian Women, compile one major entry or several shorter ones on women inadequately treated in existing reference works.
- (6) Relate the work of a major Canadian feminist theorist or scholar (for example, Mary O'Brien, Dorothy Smith, Margrit Eichler, Veronica Strong-Boag) to research or theory coming from other countries.
- (7) Using the model of Monique Dumais' study of the mother in Quebec society (CRIAOW Paper # 5), analyse the image of the mother either in Canadian fiction (at least six books or authors) or in two or three mass-circulation magazines.
- (8) Do a multidisciplinary exploration of the position of native, immigrant or visible-minority women in Canadian society.
- (9) Assess Geraldine Finn's claim in Feminism in Canada, p. 301, that "One of the essential strengths of the theoretical framework presented in these pages is that it indicates and can support the developing identification of and challenge to heterosexism in male-stream and much feminist thought."
- (10) Is the concept of a women's culture likely to advance or retard the women's movement? Drawing on the work of at least three Canadian scholars who employ this concept, argue for or against this approach.
- (11) A topic of the student's devising, discussed with and approved by the instructor.