

University of Massachusetts- Boston  
Women's Studies  
WOST 392: Women & Activism

Instructor: Chris Bobel, Ph.D.

Office: W-5-009

Phone: 617.287.6781 (with private voice mail)

Office Hours: By appointment until further notice.

I am on campus on Tuesdays, Thursdays and most Wednesdays. NOTE: I NOT available immediately after class (I have to dash to my next class) but I you can usually catch me immediately before class begins.

Email: [chris.bobel@umb.edu](mailto:chris.bobel@umb.edu)

### **Course Objectives:**

In this course, it is my job to help you:

- 1) Become acquainted with selections from the vast and growing body of literature that describes, theorizes and prescribes women and gender-centered activism and learn to critically engage this material
- 2) Apply this knowledge and develop your own critiques of existing activist projects, and
- 3) Construct your own direct action plan around an issue important to you.

### **Required Reading:**

Available at University Bookstore:

- Richards, Amy & Jennifer Baumgardner (2005). *Grassroots: A Field Guide to Feminist Activism*. [ ALSO AVAILABLE ON RESERVE AT HEALEY LIBRARY] **Referred to in syllabus as Grassroots**
- Vivien Labaton & Dawn Lundy Martin ( Eds).(2004). *The Fire This Time: Young Activists and the New Feminism*. [ Available as an eBook-Go to <http://www.lib.umb.edu/ebooks/php> to retrieve] **Referred to in syllabus at FTT**
- Myra Marx Ferree & Ali Mari Tripp (Eds). (2006) *Global Feminism: Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing and Human Rights* [ ALSO AVAILABLE ON RESERVE AT HEALEY LIBRARY] **Referred to in syllabus as GF**
- Selected readings available through UMB Healey Library's eRESERVE SYSTEM. To access these readings, point your browser to: <http://docutek.lib.umb.edu/eres/default.aspx> **Referred to in**

**syllabus as ER. Our class-specific password is REVOLUTION (not case sensitive)**

Search for our course under (WOST 392) and input our class-specific password (revolution). Make sure you have ADOBE ACROBAT READER installed on your computer so you can download PDFs.

### **Attendance, Punctuality, and Participation:**

Because this course is discussion-intensive, your ON TIME attendance and participation is essential (**and counts for 20% of your final grade**). You will be expected to attend each class and keep up with the weekly reading assignments so you've got something learned to say. *I will distribute an attendance sheet in each class at 10 minutes after class begins. If you arrive in class after the sheet has been circulated, you will not be counted as present that day.*

*ALERT: I do reserve that right to fail any student who misses more than 25% of scheduled classes.*

In addition to noting your attendance and punctuality, I will pay careful attention to the quality and frequency of your in-class participation. I am looking for regular, thoughtful, informed contributions which reflect a command of the assigned reading and an ability to make connections BETWEEN readings. At the end of the term, I will invite you to self-evaluate (I will provide a form for this purpose) and recommend a grade for your Attendance, Punctuality and Participation. I will take your recommendation under serious consideration, but the final assessment is my own.

A note on classroom participation: I recognize that a number of factors make it difficult for students to speak up in class. And some of these factors, such as speaking English as a second language, can be daunting. But, I believe that we as a community of learners, can take steps to make the classroom a relatively safe place for EVERYONE to speak up if they want to. We are all familiar with common obstacles to productive classroom dialogue: 1) coming to class unprepared and 2) fear of sounding stupid. But, both obstacles are avoidable: the former if each student keeps up with the reading, the latter if we collectively agree to a few ground rules for democratic discussion.

The rules are as follows:

- No attacks based on individual or group characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, age or English language skills
- No esoteric terms or reference to materials unless they are known to all (or the speaker is equipped to define/explain their relevance).
- No individual or groups of individuals may dominate discussion. If you are talkative and notice that you are taking a lot of "floor time", pause before you speak up and watch to see if someone else might like a chance. It is my job to create balance in classroom discussion, so I will be helping out and encouraging our more quiet classmates to "find their voice."

### **Disability Accommodations:**

Section 504 and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 offer guidelines for curriculum modifications and adaptations for students with documented disabilities. Students may obtain adaptation recommendations from the Ross Center for Disability Services (Campus Center CC2-2010). If you have a disability and require appropriate accommodation, please notify me by the end of add/drop and seek assistance from the Ross Center.

### **Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:**

Below is the University Policy on Academic Standards and Cheating from UMB Undergraduate University Catalog. For further details, refer to the section on plagiarism. I adhere to this policy, so take note.

"The first obligation of students is to pursue conscientiously the academic objective which they have determined for themselves. Students are expected to conform to all regulations of the University, of the College in which they are enrolled, and of the classes in which they are registered. It is further expected that all examinations, texts, written papers or other assignments completed as a part of academic programs are the product of the student's own work and effort.

This means that students may not solicit or use unauthorized material or assistance for their own benefit and may not offer or give such assistance to another student. Every written report or similar class assignment must indicate fully the sources from which the informant used is obtained, and any verbatim quotations or paraphrases must be clearly indicated as such

and properly credited to the source from which they were extracted or adapted."

### **Course Assignments**

Attendance, Punctuality and Participation-----	20%
Direct Action Project-----	35%
Direct Action Project Proposal-----	10%
Direct Action Project Presentation-----	5%
Discussion Questions for Guest Activist-----	5%
Assigned Reading Context-----	25%

**Total Points Possible**\_\_\_\_\_ **100%**

### (Tentative) Course Schedule:

January 29                      Course Overview and Introductions

#### Rolling Up Our Sleeves: *Doing Feminist Activism*

January 31                      Grassroots ix-89

February 5                      Grassroots 91-224

#### *DISCUSS DIRECT ACTION PROJECTS*

#### Feminist Activism Through a Global Lens: A Survey of Issues & Tactics

February 7

#### *DISCUSS GUEST SPEAKER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS*

February 12                      VIDEO: "The Shape of Water" (Bhavani)

GF Chapters 1, 2 and 3

### **DIRECT ACTION PROPOSALS DUE**

February 14                      Guest Activist: Raquel Evita Saraswati

Go to and read:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raquel\\_Evita\\_Saraswati](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raquel_Evita_Saraswati)

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=943745%20&contrassID=2&subContrassID=15&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y>

<http://www.gaylesbiantimes.com/?id=10302&issue=1024>

(discussion questions from students 1-4)

*DISCUSS CONTEXT PRESENTATIONS*

February 19

GF Chapter 4

GF Chapter 6

(context presentations 1 & 2)

*DIRECT ACTION PROJECT PROPOSALS RETURNED*

February 21

GF Chapter 5

Marina Karides "Linking Local Efforts with Global Struggle" (ER)

(context presentations 3 & 4)

February 26

Islah Jad "Claiming Feminism, Claiming Nationalism: Women's Activism in the Occupied Territories"

Sharon Ann Navarro "Las Mujeres Invisibles/The Invisible Women" (ER)

(context presentations 5 & 6)

February 28

Guest Activist: Khitam Eldebi, Palestinian Israeli

and Drama Teacher/Activist

Hanna Herzog "Both an Arab and a Woman"

Gendered, Racialised Experiences of Female  
Palestinian Citizens of Israel" (ER)

(discussion questions from students 5-8)

March 4

GF Chapter 7

GF Chapter 8

(context presentations 7 & 8)

New Century, New Feminism, New Activism?

March 6

Jo Reger "The Search for Contemporary Feminism"  
(I will send you a Word Document)

Nancy Whittier "From the Second Wave to the  
Third: Continuity and Change in Grassroots Feminism"  
(ER)<http://docutek.lib.umb.edu/eres/default.aspx> *Our class-specific  
password is REVOLUTION (not case sensitive)*

FTT Intro

March 11

Vince Carducci "Culture Jamming" (ER)

Video Clips: Walmart: The High Cost of Low Cost

March 13

Dawn Bates & Maureen McHugh "Zines: Voices of  
Third Wave Feminists" (ER)

FTT pp. 42-60

[Tentative] Video: Grrlyshow



(discussion questions from students 9-12)

Go to and Read :<http://www.miscegenerations.com/>

[www.learobinson.com](http://www.learobinson.com)

[www.elizabethwhitney.com](http://www.elizabethwhitney.com)

April 8

Guest Activist: Andi Sutton, Performance Artist

Go to and Read:

[http://squashwalkblog.blogspot.com/2007\\_05\\_01\\_archive.html](http://squashwalkblog.blogspot.com/2007_05_01_archive.html)

Additional reading TBA

(discussion questions from students 13-16)

Tensions Within a Movement: Organizing for LGBTQ Rights

April 10

Robert Rhoads "We're Here. We're Queer. Get Used To It: Gay Liberation at Penn State" (ER)

FTT pp. 181-119

(context presentations 9 & 10)

April 15

Guest Activist: Shane Landrum, Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition

"Gender Pluralisms Under the Transgender Umbrella" (ER)

Visit the following links:

<http://www.masstpc.org/legislation/index.shtml> (background on HB1722)

<http://www.masstpc.org/materials/index.shtml> (MTPC print materials)

<http://www.baywindows.com/index.php?ch=news&sc=glbt&sc2=features&sc3=&id=54949>

(legislative briefing news coverage)

Press Coverage:

<http://www.baywindows.com/index.php?ch=news&sc=glbt&sc2=features&sc3=&id=54938>

[http://www.baywindows.com/index.php?ch=columnists&sc=quest\\_opinion&sc2=&sc3=&id=54946](http://www.baywindows.com/index.php?ch=columnists&sc=quest_opinion&sc2=&sc3=&id=54946)

(discussion questions from students 17-20)

Reform or Revolution? Negotiating Subjectivities in the Pursuit of Change

April 17 FTT pp. 254-278

Jennifer Smith "ONAMOVE: African American Women Confronting the Prison Crisis" (ER)

(context presentations 11 & 12)

April 22 FTT pp. 107-149

FTT pp.166-180

(context presentations 13 & 14)

April 24 FTT pp. 3-18

Selden Holt "Survivor-Activists in the Movement against Sexual Violence" (ER)

(context presentations 15 & 16)

*DISCUSS DIRECT ACTION PROJECT NARRATIVES & PRESENTATIONS  
(draw due dates)*

April 29 FTT pp. 220-253

Lisa Sun-Hee Park "Navigating the Anti-Immigrant Wave" (ER)

(context presentations 17 & 18)

May 1

FTT pp. 150-180

Mary Christmas "No Goddesses, No Slaves: The Sex Workers' Rights Movement Through a Pro-Choice Lens" (ER)

(context presentations 19 & 20)

May 6

Direct Action Presentations (1-6)

May 8

Direct Action Presentations (7-13)

May 13

Direct Action Presentations (14-20)

## Assignment Descriptions:

### Direct Action Project: TOTAL VALUE—50%

This project, the most significant assignment for the course, will require you to research a women's or gender issue of your choosing, design a coherent agenda to effect change in some measurable way, perform at least one direct action described in your plan, and evaluate the experience and impact of that intervention. Your project must incorporate a **rationale** for why you selected the series of tactics you did and present it in the context of the activism we've studied throughout the term. To this end, reflect on the readings, films and guest speakers we've encountered in the class and note how the various activists justified and evaluated their own choices.

The Direct Action Project has 3 components:

#### 1) 2 PAGE Proposal [DUE FEBRUARY 12<sup>th</sup> ] Value -10%

I want to know:

- What is your issue?
- What can you tell me about it? NOTE: This is NOT a research paper on your selected issue (at least not in the traditional sense). However,

- I do expect a thorough-enough summary of key elements of your selected issue that helps me understand why this is something that must be addressed and why it must be addressed now (a well-written introduction should accomplish this).
- What do you hope to accomplish? Be specific. "Achieve world peace" or even "Ensure abortion access for all women" are both dangerously unrealistic given your time frame and immediate resources.
- Try:
- Raise public awareness about X.
  - Initiate legislative change regarding Y.
  - Raise funds for Z.
  - Stage a boycott regarding Q.
- How will you accomplish this goal? Specifically, what series of tactics do you propose to meet your goal? WHICH piece of your plan do you plan to enact this semester?
  - Describe your target audience and where you will find it.
  - What is your timeline? Lay out your objectives *including your plans for writing your paper due in early-mid May.*

I will provide feedback to shepherd you through your process. **Your project may not go forward until I've approved your proposal.**

## **2) Project Narrative (Value--35%) Page length: 10 pages.**

This narrative builds on the proposal submitted earlier. Revise the proposal flesh out the detail, tell me what you ultimately did and evaluate your work. What worked? What didn't? And what is your analysis of the choices you made and their impact? I am looking for evidence of self-reflexivity here. Are you a thoughtful activist that draws on the wealth of knowledge generated by activists past and present? Or do you just plow ahead and hope for the best? Papers that explicitly draw on the work of others will be duly rewarded. I want to see you BUILD on the work of the activists we've studied. From whom or what do you draw inspiration? From whom or what did you learn what NOT to do? What cautionary tales did you heed? And, who else experienced the particular challenges you encountered? Show me the linkages between and the departures from YOUR direct action and the activism of others.

## **3) 5 Minute Presentation (Value-5%)**

You will be expected to present to the class a synopsis of your project (including, minimally, your rationale for chosen tactics, the tactics you ultimately chose and the outcome of your work). We will reserve time for Q and A (and your responses to questions will also be evaluated). I will cut you off at 5 minutes so practice ahead of time.

**DUE DATE FOR BOTH NARRATIVE AND PRESENTATION:** Either May 6, May 8 or May 13—we will randomly draw numbers to determine individual due dates.

**Context Presentations:** (Value-25%) **DUE DATE:** On date reserved for your selected reading (see sign up sheet to be circulated in class)

Once the add-drop deadline has passed, I will circulate a sheet listing several assigned readings. Select a reading that captures your interest. Your responsibility is to:

- 1) Read the selection carefully
- 2) Take notes as you read paying attention to particular features that contextualize the piece---time period, locale, organizations, individuals, related initiatives, etc.
- 3) Conduct research (and yes, you may use the World Wide Web, but be SMART about it) to help you fill in the details lacking in the piece. Your job here is to find information that will help your classmates understand the piece more fully. For example:
  - Is an organization mentioned but its history is inadequately described? Find out this history.
  - Is a key initiative mentioned but its impact never addressed? Find out what happened.
  - Is a key figure introduced and it would be helpful to know what else s/he has done since? Look it up.
  - Is the particular social context important to understanding the emergence of an activist effort, but we are likely unfamiliar with the place, time or issue? Lay it out for us.
- 4) Organize the fruits of your research and present them to the class in no more than 10 minutes. I will evaluate the strength of your research based on your verbal presentation, so be prepared, efficient and yet, thorough. I will bring a timer and cut you off at 10 minutes. Be prepared!

**Guest Speaker Discussion Questions:** (Value-- 5%) DUE DATE: On date reserved for selected guest speaker (see sign up sheet to be circulated in class)

This assignment requires you to:

- 1) On a sign up sheet I will circulate post the close of add-drop, select a guest speaker that captures your interest.
- 2) Study carefully the materials assigned for the day of your selected guest speaker's visit in the context of the class more broadly and compose thoughtful discussion questions. I will reward questions that show evidence of complex engagement current with the issues, debates and tensions explored in class and the ability to make connections between them and the particular activist and her/his work.
- 3) Write **three** questions and submit them to me (typed) on the day of the guest speaker's visit.
- 4) Ask at least one of your questions during the Q and A following the guest speaker's presentation.