PACS 690
Women in Oceania
Theory, Culture, Feminism

Image of Takeua Tekiaben from Tabiteuea, Kiribati

Thursdays 2:30-5:00pm
Moore 203

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Note: this syllabus is an initial guide for the on-going development of a course on Pacific women and is subject to change.
Course Description

Women’s issues are rarely the focus of Pacific studies and in most disciplines approached as a “specialty” area. In this course we will centralize the scholarship, voices and experiences of women across the region and consider how an attention to women’s lives challenges a number of epistemological assumptions in the academy. Because of different colonial experiences, ideas about “traditional” gender relations, and the ways in which power, race, class, culture, sex and gender produce different kinds of subjectivities, the movement to empower women under the banner of “feminism” has been problematic in the Pacific. We will thus consider the different ways in which women see themselves as members of gender, cultural and ethnic groups and the tensions that Pacific women have with western feminist discourses. Keeping in mind that there are multiple “feminisms,” we will engage these approaches across a number of disciplines as we look at women’s experiences in the US, the Pacific Islands, Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia.

Some of the major themes we deal with are cultural identities, inter-subjectivity, the politics of difference, narrative and theory, patriarchy, representation, feminist research methods, human rights and activism. Ultimately, it is hoped that through creative in-class exercises, discussion and critical feedback on the readings, we might consider how feminist approaches contribute productively to the project of Pacific studies.

In a course such as this, discussions may become sensitive and especially when dealing with personal experiences. It is important that students respect each other’s differences. While the class must stay open to critique and dialogue, personal attacks of any kind will not be tolerated.

Course Assessment

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>10 weekly response papers and leading class discussion</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and in-class exercises</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation on research topic</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper (due May 15)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Weekly response papers to the readings should be no less than 4 double-spaced pages or about 1200 words.

In-class exercises will include small group discussions, writing and peer reviews on the theme: “Women’s Stories.” A template for peer reviews will be provided. These exercises will culminate in the submission of a short paper on a woman of the student’s choice (mother, grandmother, teacher etc) and assessed as part of class participation. These stories are not limited to the Pacific context.
Research papers may be on any of the course themes or more specifically on a women’s group or women’s issues in the Pacific. It should be approximately 12 double-spaced pages or about 3500 words.

All weekly response papers, essay and research papers may include portions of creative writing and have visual or audio components in the form of film, photos, art, (collage, painting etc), or music. In-class presentations may involve the same as well as performance. All creative components must be based on seminar readings or films and comment on the themes of the course. Creative components must also be open to critical feedback from peers and the instructor.

During week 1, students should sign up to present for 2 sessions: one to lead discussion on the readings and the second to present their research topic. Attendance is mandatory but if you must, you should have a very good excuse for missing class (provide doctor’s certificate etc).

**Required Texts (available from the UH bookstore)**


Additional readings will be assigned and handed out throughout the semester and we will also watch several films in class. Please see the end of this syllabus for a list of recommended resources for research and further reading.

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1. Week 1, Jan 16

*Introductions, discussion of course, critical reading and respectful peer review*

Includes a discussion of major themes in women’s studies, gender issues, different kinds of feminism and the Pacific context.

2. Week 2, Jan 23

*Feminism and women’s studies in and beyond Oceania*

bell hooks, excerpts from *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*, 2000.

In-class film: Atu Emberson Bain’s *In the name of Growth*, 2000

3. Week 3, Jan 30

**Indigenous women and the politics of difference**

Introduction to *Bitter Sweet*, 2000: 11-16.

4. Week 4, Feb 6

**Women and cultural identities**

Short readings by Jane Flax, Luce Irigary and Monique Wittig in *Women’s Studies Essential Readings*, Stevi Jackson et al. eds. 1993: 20-24
Lourdes-Marie Prophete, “Feminist Musings on the No.3 Train,” in *Colonize This!* Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman, eds. 2002: 170-181.

In class film: YWCA’s *Pacific Women: Building a Middle Road*, 1997.

5. Week 5, Feb 13
**Women Writing Culture**


6. Week 6, Feb 20

**“Homework” and Feminist Ethnography**

Dorinne Kondo, Introduction to *Crafting Selves*, 1991.

7. Week 7, Feb 27

**Multiple and situated subjectivities**


8. Week 8, March 6

**Representations of Women**


In-Class Film: Tracey Moffatt Nice Colored Girls, 1987.

9. Week 9, March 13

**Women in History**


10. Week 10, March 20

**Women’s roles and work**


In-class Film: Fem’Talk: Not just Sweet Talk, 2001 fem’LINK pacific.

11. Week 11, April 3

Women, health and education


12. Week 12, April 10

On “the Network”: Fiji women’s activism

Annelise Riles, The Network Inside Out, Chapters 2,3,5 and 7.

13. Week 13, April 17

Postcolonial Feminisms

Cristina Tzintzun, “Colonize This!” in Colonize This, 2002: 17-28.
14. Week 14, April 24

**Pacific Women Poets and writers**
For this session we will also read poetry by Grace Meera Molisa and Haunani-Kay Trask in class.

Sia Figiel, “The Fat Brown Woman,” from Terenesia, poetry and spoken word by Teresia Teaiwa and Sia Figiel.
---Colonized Peoples: poems, 1987
---Night is a Sharkskin Drum, 2002.

Guest speaker: Professor Haunani-Kay Trask

15. Week 15, May 1

**Pacific Women Filmmakers**

This week we will watch and discuss two films in class and students should watch the third on reserve in the Wong library. If students wish to write their weekly paper on these films they should watch at least one in advance at Wong.

Merata Mita, Patu! 1983.

For Spring 2003, this week will not be on film and will be facilitated by Dr. Heather Young Leslie from the UH Manoa Anthropology Dept. She will discuss her research experiences in Tonga and her paper: “Maternal Obligation, Modernity and Medicine in the Tongan Ethnoscape.”
16. Week 16, May 8

**Feminist approaches to Pacific Islands Studies**

This session will be followed by an end of semester celebration!


**Not included Spring semester: Politics and Development**


**Some Useful Readings:**

*Frontiers*, A Journal of Women’s Studies, online at [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/fro/](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/fro/)
*Women’s Studies International Forum*, online, follow directions from this link: [http://www.sciencedirect.com/web-editions?](http://www.sciencedirect.com/web-editions?)
Diane Bell and Shelley Schreuner, ed. *This is My Story: the use of oral sources*, 1990.
---Maternities and Modernities: colonial and postcolonial experiences in Asia and the Pacific, 1998.
Trinh T. Min-ha, Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism, 1989.
Shirley Randall, ed. Ni-Vanuatu role models: successful women in their own right, 2002.
Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, Mana Wahine Maori: selected writings on Maori women’s art, culture and politics, 1991.
Haunani-Kay Trask, From a Native Daughter, 1996.

Note: there is also a fairly large body of literature on domestic violence particularly in Melanesia. See Joanna Jacob—Plan B Paper, Pacific Islands Studies, 2002-- for a bibliography of this important issue.

Template for peer review of in-class writing: “Women’s Stories”

A helpful strategy when doing impromptu writing is to pick a woman you would like to write about and then “paint a picture” with words. Describe the person, a scene, landscape, sounds, emotions, the movement of bodies and so on. You might want to find a metaphor or device that illustrates the influence this woman had on your life. Think about whether or not you want to write in the first or third person. You might also have multiple voices and intersperse your writing with pidgin or other languages. It is up to you.

Suggestions for comments from readers (not necessarily in this order):

1. Overall impression
2. Effectiveness of narrative strategy (meaning the “voice” in which the author writes)
3. What the reader learned from the piece
4. Questions left in reader’s mind
5. Images invoked by the story
6. Suggestions for improvement