

WST 498:B2
Feminism and Sexual Assault
Thurs 1-3:50 pm, 14-25 Tory

Professor: Lise Gotell (lise.gotell@ualberta.ca)
Ph: 492-0326

Office: 14:23 Tory
Hours: Tues/Thurs. 11-12

**“Policy about course outlines can be found in s.24.3 of the University *Calendar*.”
(GFC 29 SEP 2003).**

Course Description:

This course considers the range of conceptual, theoretical and political strategies that feminists have deployed to confront sexual coercion. Historically, and indeed until at least the 1970s, rape was nearly impossible to prove and, in both law and public consciousness, the category of the rapeable women was strictly delimited (even if evolving). Second wave feminist activisms and analyses succeeded in calling attention to the pervasiveness of sexualized coercion and insisted on drawing connections between rape and gendered power. These interventions were instrumental in instigating a series of important legal reforms and in breaking the silence around rape and sexual assault. By the 1980s and 1990s, however, a backlash had emerged, manifesting itself in the media, in academic analyses and in law. While its sites were dispersed, its message was coherent – that feminism had grossly exaggerated and in fact, manufactured a rape crisis. We currently live in the wake of this backlash, at a time in which our theoretical and political strategies require complex rethinking. Moreover, both the intransigence of rape and the tendency for legal and psychological discourses to depoliticize sexualized violence are defining features of the current era.

It is the broad purpose of this course to engage students in the process of rethinking our antirape strategies. Indeed if, as Mardorossian has argued in her recent and controversial essay in *Signs*, rape has become the “taboo subject of feminist theory today,” this rethinking is both urgent and necessary.

The course considers a range of topics, including: analyses of rape in the 18th and 19th centuries; the sexuality versus violence debate within second wave feminism and the limitations of second wave feminist analyses; the backlash against feminist analyses of sexualized coercion; race and rape; current theoretical controversies and strategies of resistance; rape and militarism; and the legal construction of sexual assault.

Course Materials:

- Course pack available at bookstore
- Ejournal articles available through Academic Search Premier

Mark Distribution:

Participation and Attendance	5%
Resistance Exercise/Response Exercise (April 7)	5%
Discussion Question Assignment	5%
Research Paper Abstract (Feb 17)	15%
Conference Talk (Mar 17)	5%
Research Paper (Mar 31)	30%
Test (Apr 17)	35%

Participation [5%]:

Class participation included regular attendance, respectful listening and informed participation. This is a seminar course and students are expected to be able to discuss readings.

Resistance Exercise/Response Exercise [5%] Due April 7:

In a course where we will spend a great deal of time confronting the persistence of sexualized violence and the inadequacies of past strategies, there is an urgent need to focus on resistance and to think about resistance in new and creative ways. For this assignment, you need to engage in an act of resistance. Resistance to sexualized violence can take multiple forms, including political activism, feminist organizing, creative writing, a piece of art, a photograph. You need to submit a two page double spaced paper explaining your act of resistance and relating it to issues that have been raised in the class.

Or

Write a 2 page response to any class reading. Briefly summarize the author's assertions and discuss the strengths or weaknesses of the author's arguments.

Discussion Assignment [5%]:

Along with another class member, prepare a discussion exercise related to the week's seminar topic. The discussion exercise will take place at the beginning of each class and will be used as a means of entering the seminar topic. You might want to isolate a key question raised by the readings. You might want to bring an overhead or copies of a magazine or newspaper article that relate/s to the seminar topic. You might want to show a video clip intended to provoke discussion. We will spend the first 20-25 minutes of class on the discussion exercise. The format will alternate between a go-around in which each class member makes a brief contribution and small group discussions. **Sign up in class Jan. 13.**

Research Paper: [Abstract 15%] Feb. 17, Conference Talk [5%] Mar 17, Paper [30%] Mar 31

These assignments are intended to give you a taste of the activities [outside teaching] that dominate the lives of your feminist professors.

You are required to define and research a topic related to the theme of rape/sexual coercion. Your research may explore in more depth a topic we cover in the course. It may also analyze one of the myriad of issues that is not covered [some examples, self-defense as a strategy of resistance, the rape crisis centre movement, therapeutic responses to sexual violence, educational strategies].

After completing preliminary research, **write a 350 word abstract of your research paper** defining the title and topic, the objective of the paper, theoretical perspectives employed, the central argument and the manner in which you intend to proceed with your analysis. Attach a bibliography (including at least 10 sources not on the course outline) to abstract and submit to conference organizer [me] by **Feb. 17**.

I will organize papers into panels.

You are to present your paper in our International Women's Day Feminism and Sexual Assault Conference held in class on **March 17**. **Each panel member will have no more than ten minutes to summarize the arguments and findings of their research.**

After each Panel, there will be time for discussion, critiques and comments.

Using insights raised in my response to your abstract and in conference discussions to deepen your analysis, write a **12-15 page paper**. **Research papers are due March 31 – I will be in my office to receive papers between 1-4 pm. No class is scheduled that day.**

- Length: 12-15 pages typed, double-spaced (lengthy indented quotes, single spaced), 12 point font, 1.25" top and bottom margins, 1" left and right margins
- Type: argumentative; develop and support a thesis
- Reference Style: MLA with bibliography
- Sources: use course materials and at least 10 other sources (books or articles) in completing this research essay. Materials from the web can be used in addition to these 10 academic sources.

Penalties for Late Assignments:

Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day (without a doctors note or some other documented reason). Extensions need to be arranged at least one week in advance. Papers will not be accepted by email without permission. Late papers can be handed in to me or to 13-15 Tory, where they will be date stamped.

Papers will be graded using the following criteria:

- Did it address all requirements of the assignment?
- Was the material presented clearly and coherently?
- Were arguments well supported and defended?
- Was good use made of sources?
- Was the paper referenced in a consistent manner?
- Was the approach used innovative?

- Was attention paid to style: sentence structure; paragraph structure; grammar; spelling?

Women’s Studies Program Grading Scale

Excellent	A+	94-100%
	A	88-93%
	A-	82-87%
Good	B+	78-81%
	B	74-77%
	B-	70-73%
Satisfactory	C+	66-69%
	C	62-65%
	C-	58-61%
Poor	D+	54-57%
Minimal Pass	D	50-53%
Fail	F	0-49%

Academic Honesty:

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.ualberta.ca/secretariat/appeals.htm) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.” (GFC 29 SEP 2003)

In this course, plagiarism will be treated seriously. As the University of Alberta Code of Student Behaviour states,

No student shall represent another’s substantial editorial or compositional assistance on an assignment as their own.

No student shall submit in any course or program of study, without the written approval of the course instructor, all or a substantial portion of any academic writing, essay, thesis, research report, project assignment, presentation or poster for which credit has been obtained by the Student or which has been or is being submitted by the Student in another course or program of student in the University or elsewhere.

No Student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the Student's own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, project, assignment, presentation or poster in a course or program of study.

Online resources at the University of Alberta can help you to avoid plagiarism. A useful resource is the Truth in Education website.

<http://www.ualberta.ca/studentservices/tie>

Jan. 13 ***Introduction***

Jan. 20 ***Campus Sexual Assault Centre Workshop: Dealing with (Studying) Rape***

- Susan J. Brison, "Surviving Sexual Violence: A Philosophical Perspective," in S.G. French, W. Teays and L.N. Purdy, *Violence Against Women: Philosophical Perspectives*, (Ithaca: Cornell, 1998), p. 11-26 (course pack)
- Rebecca Campbell, *Emotionally Involved: The Impact of Researching Rape*, (Routledge: New York, 2002), ch. 2, pp. 37-64 (course pack)

We are studying something from which we have no immunity. Emotions necessarily interrupt the process of researching and studying rape. As feminist scholars, we need to recognize that emotions important resource in this process. The retreat into what Brison has called cool intellectualism is a kind of distancing strategy – a way of not knowing, reflecting the desire to separate ourselves from what is unfortunately a central aspect of gender relations. In this class, guided by counsellors/educators from the sexual assault centre, we will reflect upon what it will mean to us to take up the difficult topic of sexual violence.

Jan. 27 ***Historical Perspectives***

- Patricia L. N. Donat and John D'Emilio, "A Feminist Redefinition of Rape and Sexual Assault: Historical Foundations and Change," *Journal of Social Issues*, 48:1, 1992, pp. 9-22 (course pack).
- Constance Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice: Women and the Law in Nineteenth-Century Canada*, (Toronto: Women's Press, 1991), ch. 3, "Rape," pp. 81-111 (course pack).
- Maria Bevacqua, "Historical Roots of Rape Consciousness," from *Rape on the Public Agenda*, (Boston: Northeastern UP, 2000), pp. 19-26 (course pack).
- Karen Dubinsky, "Sex, Shame and Resistance: The Social and Historical Meaning of Rape," in *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, pp. 13-34 (course pack).

Historically, rape illuminates gender relations in their rawest most brutal forms – yet at same time, rape has meant different things at different moments in history, shifting with standards of sexual conduct, gender relations, class and race contexts. In this class we

will interrogate the dominant constructions of rape and women's strategies of resistance in nineteenth century Canada.

Feb 3 ***Second Wave Feminism: Violence and Sexuality*****

- Ann J. Cahill, *Rethinking Rape*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), ch. 1, "Feminist Theories of Rape: Sex or Violence," pp. 15-49 (course pack).
- Sujata Moorti, *Color of Rape: Gender and Race in Television's Public Spheres*, (Albany: State University of New York Press), ch. 2, "The Feminist Subject of Rape," pp. 39-70 (course pack).
- Nadya Burton, "Resistance to Prevention: Reconsidering Feminist Antiviolence Rhetoric," in S.G. French, W. Teays and L.N. Purdy, *Violence Against Women: Philosophical Perspectives*, (Ithaca: Cornell, 1998), p. 11-26 (course pack).

Second wave feminist analyses of rape resulted in new understandings of rape and the social hierarchies that underpin it. Yet as Cahill argues, second wave analyses and in particular, divergent definitions of rape as primarily violent or as primarily sexual, were reductive. Moorti and Burton emphasize their gender essentialism and failure to theorize resistance. In this class we will analyze the strengths and weaknesses of second wave contributions to rape theorizing.

Feb. 10 ***Backlashes and Feminist Responses (From Evolutionary Biology to Roiphe)***

Film: the Date Rape Backlash

- M. Suzanne Zeedyk, "Epistemological Bases of Theoretical Coercion," *Psychology, Evolution and Gender*, 2:3 (December 2000), pp. 325-336, *available online through Academic Search Premier or by request, as attachment from prof.*
- Lynne Segal, "Nature's Way?: Inventing the Natural History of Rape," *Psychology, Evolution and Gender*, 3:1 (April 2001), pp. 87-93, *available online through Academic Search Premier or by request, as attachment from prof.*
- Richard Orton, "Date Rape: Critiquing the Critics," *Journal of Sex Research* 31:2 (1994), pp. 148-152, *available online through Academic Search Premier or by request, as attachment from prof.*
- Charlene L. Muehlenhard, "Are Rape Statistics Exaggerated? A Response to Criticism of Contemporary Rape Research," *Journal of Sex Research* 31:2 (1994), pp. 144-147, *available online through Academic Search Premier or by request, as attachment from prof.*
- Maria Bevacqua, *Rape on the Public Agenda*, (Boston: Northeastern UP, 2000), pp. 181-193 (course pack).
- Film: *Date Rape Backlash*

The post-second wave backlash seen in relation to strengths of movement against rape, in particular, to the successes of second wave feminist analyses and activism, to the changes it has achieved and to the anxieties these changes have produced. This backlash must also be seen in relation to the analytic weaknesses of the second wave. The anti-anti rape position has exploited some of the weaknesses of second wave feminist analyses that feminist internal critiques have also exposed. In this class we will critically interrogate two significant sites of anti-anti-rape backlash: the work of self described feminist pundits like Roife and the controversial book, *A Natural History of Rape*.

Feb. 17 ***Beyond the Backlash: Contemporary Theorizations of Resistance (Research Abstract Due)***

- Carine M. Mardorossian, "Towards a New Feminist Theory of Rape," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (2002) 27: 3, 743-775, available online through Academic Search Premier or by request, as attachment from prof.
- Sharon Marcus, "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention," in Judith Butler and Joan Scott, *Feminists Theorize the Political*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 385-403 (course pack).
- Nina, Philadelphoff-Puren, "The Right Language for Rape" *Hecate*, 2003, Vol. 29 Issue 1, p. 47-59 available online through Academic Search Premier or by request, as attachment from prof.

In this class, we will begin to examine post second wave feminist antirape theory, focusing on the theme of resistance and in particular, Marcus' and Philadelphoff-Puren's contributions to a postmodern feminist theory of rape resistance. Mardorossian is highly critical of postmodern feminist theorizations of rape resistance. In this class, we will explore the question "how should we theorize resistance?"

Feb. 24 ***Reading Week***

Mar 3 ***Beyond the Backlash: Survivor Discourses***

- Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray, "Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (1993) 18: 2, pp. 260-290, available online through Academic Search Premier or by request, as attachment from prof.
- Jane Doe, *The Story of Jane Doe*, Toronto: Random House, 2003, selections.
- Susan Brison, "On the Personal as Philosophical," in *Aftermath*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002, pp. 23-35 (course pack).

Alcoff and Grey call attention to the connections between "breaking the silence" and Foucault's concept of confessional. As they argue, bringing things into realm of discourse is not necessarily liberating as this may work to inscribe claims into hegemonic structures with docile self-monitory bodies who submit themselves to authority of experts. We will explore the danger of the confessional for rape survivors. We will also explore the radical potential of survivor discourses, using Jane Doe's narrative as an example.

Mar. 10 ***Beyond the Backlash: Racializing Rape***

- Sherene H. Razack, "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2000, pp. 91-130, available online through Lawsource or by request, as attachment from prof.
- Sujata Moorti, *Color of Rape: Gender and Race in Television's Public Spheres*, (Albany: State University of New York Press), review ch. 2, "The Feminist

Subject of Rape,” pp. 39-70 and read “The Right of Sight is White,” pp. 71-112 (course pack).

The predominant gaze framing social, legal and cultural understandings of rape is simultaneously white, masculine and imperialist. Much feminist antirape theorizing has failed to interrogate and in fact, reinforced the whiteness of the predominant perspective. In this class, we will explore the implications of racializing rape. How does this enrich feminist analyses of sexual violence?

Mar. 17

Feminism and Sexual Assault Student Conference **

Mar. 24

Rape and Militarism

- Lynda Boose, "Crossing the River Drina: Bosnian Rape Camps, Turkish Impalement and Serb Cultural Memory," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (2002) 28: 1, pp. 71-96, available online through Academic Search Premier or by request, as attachment from prof.
- Clara Bingham, "Inside the Air Force Academy Rape Scandal," *Vanity Fair*, Dec. 2003 (course pack).
- Jennifer Turpin, "Barbie in the War Zone," *Social Alternatives* (2003) 22:2, pp. 5-6 available online through Academic Search Premier or by request, as attachment from prof.
- Debra Bergoffen, "February 22, 2001: Toward a Politics of the Vulnerable Body," *Hypatia* (2003) 18:1, read 116-124 available online through Academic Search Premier or by request, as attachment from prof.
- Film: *Rape: A Crime of War*

In this class we will explore the strengths and weaknesses of differentiating wartime and genocidal rape and "everyday rape." Does this distinction contribute to an "orientalization" of sexual violence? Do approaches that analyze the co-construction of militarism and masculinity offer us a way of avoiding the problems inherent in the binary: wartime and genocidal rape vs. everyday rape?

Mar. 31

Essay Due – no class – hand in to me in 14-23 Tory 1-3 pm.

Apr 7

Sexual Assault in Law

- Wendy Larcombe, "The 'Ideal' Victim V Successful Rape Complainants: Not What You Might Expect," *Feminist Legal Studies* 10 (2002), 131-148 (course pack).
- Elizabeth Comack and Gillian Balfour, "Whacking the Complainant Hard," in *The Power to Criminalize*, Fernwood, 2004 (course pack).
- Lise Gotell, "The Discursive Disappearance of Sexual Violence" (will be emailed)

In this class, we will explore the construction of rape in legal discourse and analyze the legal mechanisms deployed to discredit complainants. All of the articles point to changes in the legal construction of the "ideal victim." What are these changes?

Apr 14

Review