

Feminism in Action  
WGST 3850.01/ WGST 3850.H01/ POLS 3850.01  
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Saint Louis University  
M/ W 3:10-4:25 pm  
Brouster 040

Instructor: Dr. Mary Maxfield (she/they)  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION** This course addresses feminist activism on a wide range of issues (including domestic violence, rape, education and health care), and in a variety of forms (including writing, theater, public protests and coalition building). It gives students the opportunity to study the scholarship of activism and to participate in feminist action.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

By coming to class prepared, curious, openminded and prepared to contribute to our classroom community you will, by the end of the semester, achieve the learning objectives:

- x Understand the range of issues feminists address through activism;
- x Identify and draw from examples of feminist friendly strategies for effecting change
- x Engage in an activist project analyzing a problem well and developing appropriate, effective forms of activism, thinking both practically and creatively;
- x Engage your classmates (and their knowledge and skills, of course) in devising and carrying out your project, and, in turn, contribute your feedback and skills to their projects;
- x Read more thoughtfully, speak more confidently, and write more comfortably, in a variety of formats; and
- x Better envision yourself as an empowered, effective feminist/ activist: one who knows their strengths and weaknesses, and can assess and use available resources to contribute to the building of a better, more just, more feminist world.

**REQUIRED MATERIALS & CANVAS**

There is no required textbook for this class, but students are expected to print articles/sign materials to class.

This course has a Canvas site that is available through MySLU. Canvas will be used in the following ways:

- x Required readings: Articles will be posted, usually as PDF files or web links. Students should print articles and bring them to class.
- x All handouts and assignments, including a copy of this syllabus, are available on Canvas.
- x Written assignments will be submitted through Canvas.
- x Announcements and important links will be posted on Canvas.

## GRADING

PARTICIPATION (10%)  
POST-IT ACTION ( 5%)  
SIDEWALK CHALK ACTION  
DISCUSSION LEADS  
REFLECTIONS (25%)  
ACTIVIST PROJECT ( 40%)  
PEER SUPPORTPROJECT (10%)  
COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROJECT

Attendance: Attendance is necessary in this class. Students can miss 3 classes throughout the course of the semester, without penalty. Additional absences will lower your participation grade. Students who are having difficulty with attendance are encouraged to contact the instructor as soon as possible and remain in active communication to determine reasonable accommodations.

Participation: Attendance is key, but participation goes beyond your presence in the room. Participation means reading materials in advance and bringing them to class, listening to your classmates, and making your own contributions to discussions. It means listening with curiosity and keeping an open mind, taking notes, and asking questions of your peers. Participation is about making this class different than it would be if you, specifically, were not a part of it.

Discussion Leads: Throughout the semester, students will rotate leading the discussion on the case study assigned for that day. Two students will be assigned per day, each responsible for half of the required components, as well as one discussion question (two discussion questions). Students will be expected to provide an overview of the activist/ action, including information about 1) the vision and values, 2) the people involved, 3) the tactics used, 4) the scale of the action (individual, interpersonal, institutional, etc.) and its 5) impact, as well as to offer 6) at least one discussion question. Each student will be responsible for leading discussion two times during the semester.

Personal Reflections: Personal reflections are short, written reflections that invite you to reflect on your own experience as a feminist/ activist. These short, written reflections ask you to consider your own experience in conversation with assigned sources and larger themes related to feminism in action. You are required to complete 5 of the 5 assigned personal reflections.

Mini -Actions: Mini-actions offer creative opportunities to take feminist action inspired by a particular case study. For example, you might [x, y, or z]. Students are also welcome to propose an

alternative mini-action in advance of the deadline. Students are required to complete in each unit.

Post-It Action: The post-it action is an informal, low-stakes opportunity to engage in feminist activism. Each student will be given 10 post-it notes and be asked to

- 1) Do some feminist activism. Use them creatively, politically, and in a way that reflects your own feminist commitments.
- 2) Take pictures or make a short video that shows how you used the post-its.
- 3) Get some feedback from 2 or more people who saw your post-its. What did they think? What was their takeaway?
- 4) Write a reflection about what you did, in approximately 2 substantial paragraphs. How and why did you choose to use the post-its as you did? What impact were you hoping for? What impact did they have? What mini-lessons a) about feminist activism, and b) about yourself as an activist, can you gather from this little exercise?
- 5) Submit your written reflection and your pictures/ video through Canvas before class on Sep. 7th.
- 6) Share briefly about your experience in class on Sep. 7

Community Support: Each student is expected to spend 5 hours engaging in feminist action (broadly defined) outside of SLU. This could include community service/ volunteering, event support, participant observation, or other activities. You might opt to volunteer at a festival, attend a protest, visit a museum exhibit

- x Stage 1: The Problem [~2 page paper](Due Oct 3) ±5%
- ~~x Stage 2: Imagining Alternatives [~2 page paper](Due Oct 17) ±5%~~
- x Stage 3: Learning from Others [~2 page paper](Due Oct 31) ±5%  
[Add an element of community action]
- x Stage 4: The Action (Due Nov 14) ±5%
- x Stage 5: The Final Paper [6-8 pages] (Due Dec 5) ±10%
- x Stage 6: Presentation (Due Date TBD)

# Stage 6: ■

- x Each student will present their project in a showcase of Feminism in Action presentations that will be open to the WGS community and friends. Presentation times will vary based on the number of students, but will be announced in advance (likely about 6 minutes per person.)

Peer Support Project (10%): This assignment gives you an opportunity to earn credit for work you do in support of classmates or other community members. You can create a poster, graphics or photography for someone, helping set up an event, participating in a brainstorming meeting, editing a brochure, etc. The total amount of time on your ally project(s) should be 5 hours and the support you provide must support action. /F4 1

- x You are encouraged to use any necessary accommodations provided through Disability Services. If you have disability accommodations you plan to use, please bring them to the  
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- x You can come to regularly scheduled office hours in person or set up an appointment for another time.

... YOU DESERVE RESPONSES.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

All readings/ assignments should be completed ahead of class for the day they are listed. This schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and on Canvas.

Personal Reflections: 3 (of 5) required.

Action Reflections: 12 (of 17) required.

### UNIT 1: FOUNDATIONS

W Aug 24 Intro to Class/ Each Other/Community Guidelines

M Aug 29 ) HPLQLVP V :KDW LV LW" :KDW <sup>3</sup>FRXQWV´"

x Readings <sup>3</sup>'HILQLQJ )HPLQLVP´ 2IIHQ

x Assignments

- o % ULQJ VRPHWKLQJ WR FODVV WKDW \RX FRQV literally anything<sup>2</sup> a meme, a song, a book, a pin, an item of clothing, etc<sup>2</sup> but it should be something that you can show to the class and connect to feminism´ DV \RX XQ.GHUVWDQG LW
- o Personal Reflection: Your Definition of Feminism

W Aug 31 \$FWLYLVP :KDW LV LW" :KDW <sup>3</sup>FRXQWV´"

x Readings <sup>3</sup>:KDW &RXQWV DV \$FWLYLVP" 7KH 5ROH RI , &KDQJH´ 0DUWLQ HW DO

x Assignments

- o Personal Reflection 2Your Definition of Activism

M Sep 5 NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)

W Sep 7 The Personal Is Political: Developing a Feminist Consciousness

x Readings Living a Feminist Life [excerpts] (Ahmed)

x Assignments

- o PostIt Activism Project Due

M Sep 12 NO CLASS

Schedule a 1on-1 meeting with Dr. Maxfield to discuss your feminist action ideas.

W Sep 14 NO CLASS

Schedule a 1on-1 meeting with Dr. Maxfield to discuss your feminist action ideas.

## UNIT 2: INTERSECTIONS

- M Sep 19 LGBTQIA+ Activism: The St. Louis Queer Support Helpline (SQSH)  
x View [3\\$ & R Q Y H U V D W L R Q Z L W W D 6 U W L E Q J Y D L W @ H R @ 6 4 6 +](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3$&RQYHUVDWLRQZLWWD6UWLEQJYDLW@HR@646+)  
Founding, Mission and Programs)  
o Note: the earlier section of the video on common LGBTQIA+ terminology is recommended for students ~~will~~ fit useful, but not required.  
x Explore the SQSH website: <https://www.thesqsh.org/mission>  
x Discussion Lead 1 (Vision/ Values, People, and Discussion Question): TBD  
x Discussion Lead 2 (Tactics, Scale, and Discussion Question): TBD
- W Sep 21 Lesbian Activism: [: R P \ Q \ V 0 X V L F 0 R Y H P H Q W](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v:RP\Q\V0XVLF0RYHPHQW)  
x [5 H D G 3 % \ 7 K H 7 L P H , \\* R W W R : R P E V W R F N ' 0 R U U L V](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v:5HDG3%\7KH7LPH,*RWWR:RPEVWRFN'0RUULV)  
x Discussion Lead 1 (Vision/ Values, People, and Discussion Question): TBD  
x Discussion Lead 2 (Tactics, Scale, and Discussion Question): TBD
- M Sep 26 Trans Activism: Trans Poetry  
x Femme in Public excerpts (Menon)  
x [3\\$ORN90HQRRQ\)DVKLRQ\V\\*HQGHUOHVV\)XWX](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v:3$ORN90HQRRQ)DVKLRQ\V*HQGHUOHVV)XWX)  
x Discussion Lead 1 (Vision/ Values, People, and Discussion Question): TBD  
x Discussion Lead 2 (Tactics, Scale, and Discussion Question): TBD
- W Sep 28 NO CLASS
- M Oct 3 Disability Activism: Disability Visibility Project  
x Watch the Heumann Perspective interview with Alice Wong (~9 minutes):  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_vdeeR5D0So](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_vdeeR5D0So)  
x Explore the Disability Visibility Project website  
x Watch at least 1 DVP interview of your choice:  
<https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/category/dvp-interviews/>  
x Discussion Lead 1 (Vision/ Values, People, and Discussion Question): TBD  
x Discussion Lead 2 (Tactics, Scale, and Discussion Question): TBD  
x Feminist Action: Stage 1: The Problem due
- W Oct 5 Fat Activism: The Fat Underground  
x Life in the Fat Underground (Fishman)  
x Fat Liberation Manifesto (Fat Liberation)  
x Discussion Lead 1 (Vision/ Values, People, and Discussion Question): TBD  
x Discussion Lead 2 (Tactics, Scale, and Discussion Question): TBD

## UNIT 3: VIOLENCE

- M Oct 10 Police Violence: Say Her Name

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFQANLY  
x ([SORUH WKH ³6D\ +HU 1DPH´ ZHEVLWH  
x



x Discussion Lead 2 (Tactics, Scale, and Discussion Question): TBD

M Nov 7 Reproductive Justice: Abortion  
x 5 HDG 3 & DOOLQJ - DQH' . LQJ  
x Discussion Lead 1 (Vision/ Values, People, and Discussion Question): TBD  
x Discussion Lead 2 (Tactics, Scale, and Discussion Question): TBD

W Nov 9 Activist Speed Dating  
x 2.5 min on your project what you need, what you can offer

M Nov 14 Reproductive Justice: Sex Education  
x /LVWHQ WR 3\$ 9HU\ 6SHFLILF 0DU\ 3RSSLQV' a  
x Explore the Scarleteen website.  
x Discussion Lead 1 (Vision/ Values, People, and Discussion Question): TBD  
x Discussion Lead 2 (Tactics, Scale, and Discussion Question): TBD

#### UNIT 5: CULTURE AND LAW

W Nov 16 Sport & Education Inequity: Title IX  
x 5 HDG 3 7LWOH ,; DQG +RZ :H \*RW ,W' 6DQGOHU  
x Discussion Lead 1 (Vision/ Values, People, and Discussion Question): TBD  
x Discussion Lead 2 (Tactics, Scale, and Discussion Question): TBD

M Nov 21 Feminist Action: Stage 4: Action Due

W Nov 23 NO CLASS

M Nov 28 Riot Grrrl  
x Watch The Punk Singer (80 min)  
x Discussion Lead 1 (Vision/ Values, People, and Discussion Question): TBD  
x Discussion Lead 2 (Tactics, Scale, and Discussion Question): TBD  
x Ally/ Co-Conspirator Project Due

W Dec 14 : R P H Q T V \* H Q G H U 6 W X, 3pm-4:30pm P S R V L X P  
Present(7-8 min) & and attend at least two panels

\*Note: The 16<sup>th</sup> opportunity for an Action Reflection has been removed. If you need another action reflection to meet the required, you can complete it on any action of your choice and submit on Canvas by 12/5. you map a bathroom for the BBAP, you only need to complete 10 action reflections.