

ENGLISH 553
Term 1 2018-19
Friday 2:30-5:30

Prof. Deanna Kreisel
Office Hours by appt.
Email: deanna.kreisel@ubc.ca

New Feminisms: Materialism and Beyond

Recent ecocritical (and other) theory has taken as a central task the dismantling of the instrumentalist view of the relationship between nature and humankind. Such challenges can be roughly divided into two groups: 1. Heideggerean approaches such as speculative realism and object-oriented ontology (Meillassoux, Harman, Morton) that posit a radically unknowable object which “withdraws” not only from human epistemological mastery but also from other objects; and 2. Spinozist-Deleuzean approaches such as new/vital/feminist materialisms that centralize *matter* as opposed to *object* and favor models of complex systems of relations such as networks and flows. Both sets of approaches are committed to a radical de-centering of human subjectivity and agency and an ethically driven emphasis on nonhuman actants.

In this seminar we will focus on works from the second camp—recent feminist and gender theory that challenges the linguistic and ontological turns in philosophy by arguing for the irreducibility of the material world. We will accompany this reading with plenty of context: authors from the first camp as well as readings from the longer history of feminist theory and criticism.

COURSE READINGS

1. BOOKS

There are six required books, all of which are available at the UBC Bookstore. If you can access electronic versions of these texts you are welcome to use those version(s) instead; please be sure, however, that the editions and pagination are identical to the paper versions.

Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. ISBN: 9780822346333

Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. ISBN: 9780822352723

Elizabeth Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art*. ISBN: 9780822350712

Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin In the Chthulucene*. ISBN: 9780822362241

Jordy Rosenberg, *Confessions of the Fox: A Novel*. ISBN: 9780399592270

Elizabeth A. Wilson, *Gut Feminism*. ISBN: 9780822359708

2. DROPBOX

Other assigned readings, along with any optional readings, will be in the course Dropbox in folders organized by date. (The date given is the date on which we will discuss those readings.) Please do the readings before class and bring the readings with you in some form, either paper printouts or on a laptop or tablet (not a phone). I may continue to add readings to the Dropbox throughout the semester based on how the course discussion takes shape, so please check

each week. Any readings I add will be optional unless I inform you otherwise by email, in which case I will do so at least a week in advance.

PLEASE NOTE: The syllabus lists the *required* readings for that week. If a text is in the folder but not on the syllabus, that means it's optional. Occasionally the syllabus will list a page range but the full text will be in the Dropbox; this means you are required to read only the range given on the syllabus, but I've provided the full text or chapter as an optional supplement.

AND FINALLY: The most up-to-date copy of the syllabus will be in the course Dropbox. Please refer to that copy for the final word on assigned readings and other matters. If I make a substantial change to the syllabus at any time, I will email the class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Annotated Bibliography and Presentation

For each class, beginning on September 27th, one or more students (probably two, based on class size) will prepare an annotated bibliography of supplemental readings for that week's topic, and do a presentation for the first 15-30 minutes of class.

20% of Grade

2. Article Summaries & Class Discussion

Each week everyone will be assigned one chapter or article (there will be more than one person for most chapters) to summarize. Please see the handout "Summarizing Critical Essays" for more information. Your summary will be due before class begins, and should be uploaded to the Dropbox. During class discussion, you will be our class "expert" on the reading that you summarized.

Everyone is expected to come to class thoroughly prepared and to participate in discussion. I realize that some folks are chattier than others, but please do your best within the parameters of your personality and comfort level.

20% of Grade

3. Final Research Paper

Each class member must write a formal research paper (approx. 20 pages), due Friday, December 14th, at 5:00 p.m. by email. **Please note:** If you want to receive your course mark on time, you *must* submit your paper by this date; otherwise, you will need to arrange for deferred standing yourself. If your paper is ultimately later than 1 month past this due date, you will not receive detailed feedback or comments on it (although I will read it carefully and assign a fair grade).

60% of Grade

4. Other Course Business

Please be on time; late entries are disruptive. Food and drink are okay, but nothing loud, smelly, or allergenic. Feel free to get up to use the washroom whenever you need to but please try to be quiet and time your trips appropriately. Because my office is temporarily in the boondocks this year, my office hours will be by appointment in a campus café of your choice. Laptops and tablets (not phones) are allowed in class as means of referring to course readings –

I strongly encourage tablets rather than laptops if possible – but please do not use a laptop to take notes unless absolutely necessary; the typing is distracting to your fellow students (and me). Please keep discussion respectful and be kind to one another.

Priceless

5. Some Final Advice

You should read theory (i.e., all the readings in this course) three times: skim once for overview, read a second time while stopping to take notes, and then read a third time straight through to “cement” the ideas. Note-taking style is a highly personal affair, but you should take notes on class readings in some form; you will not remember the details of the readings even a few days later, and you don’t want to have to re-read everything in order to write your seminar paper. You should also take notes in class (but see above), although the bulk of your notes should be from your own reading of the material. Don’t worry if you don’t understand everything you read – a lot of this material is dense and difficult, and depends on the reader having background knowledge and context that you may or may not have. Don’t panic – that’s why you’re taking this course. ☺ Make notes of points that confused or struck you in some way and bring them up in class discussion. While this is not a formal requirement, I encourage you to come to class with at least three questions or discussion points in mind – you might even write them down in advance. Once we get comfortable working together, I assume that the majority of class time will be discussion, and that discussion should be guided by your interests, questions, confusions, and insights.

For Your Own Benefit

COURSE SCHEDULE

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Week 1, 9/6 | Introduction
Alaimo and Hekman, Intro to <i>Material Feminisms</i> [dropbox]
Coole and Frost, Intro to <i>New Materialisms</i> [dropbox] |
| Week 2, 9/13 | Backgrounds I: General Theory
Deleuze and Guattari, <i>A Thousand Plateaus</i> , Intro and chap. 10 [dropbox]
<i>The Deleuze Dictionary</i> : Affect; Arborescent Schema; Becoming; Body without organs; Deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation; Difference; Intensity; Molar; Molecular; Plateau; Rhizome [dropbox]
Foucault, <i>Security, Territory, Population</i> , Lecture 1 (excerpt) [dropbox]
Agamben, <i>Homo Sacer</i> , Intro [dropbox]
Derrida, <i>The Beast and the Sovereign</i> , Session 12, pp. 325-34 [dropbox] |
| Week 3, 9/20 | Backgrounds II: Psychoanalytic Feminist Theory
Kristeva, “Women’s Time” [dropbox]
Irigaray, <i>This Sex Which Is Not One</i> , chaps. 4 & 11 [dropbox]
Irigaray, <i>The Speculum of the Other Woman</i> , excerpts [dropbox] |
| Week 4, 9/27 | Judith Butler and Performance Theory
Butler, <i>Gender Trouble</i> [dropbox]
Prosser, <i>Second Skins</i> , chap. 1 [dropbox]
Salamon, <i>Assuming a Body</i> , Intro and chap. 4 [dropbox] |

Week 5, 10/4 Cyborg Feminism

Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" [dropbox]
Puar, "I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess" [dropbox]
Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, chap. 5 [dropbox]

Week 6, 10/11 Small group meetings

Class will be divided into small discussion groups where you will read two critical articles of your group's choosing, based on your developing interests. Groups and readings will be arranged the week before.

Week 7, 10/18 Deleuzian Feminist Theory

Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, Intro, chaps. 1 & 9 [dropbox]
Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, chap. 4 [dropbox]
Ahmed, "Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the 'New Materialism'" [dropbox]
Saldanha, *Psychedelic Whiteness*, pp. 21-7 [dropbox]

Week 8, 10/25 OOO and Its Discontents

Harman, "The Well-Wrought Broken Hammer" [dropbox]
Bennett, "Systems and Things: A Response to Harman and Morton" [dropbox]
Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, chaps. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 [book]
Rosenberg, "The Molecularization of Sexuality" [dropbox]

Week 9, 11/1 Ecoisfeministesque

Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*, chap. 1 [dropbox]
Colebrook, *Sex After Life: Essays on Extinction Vol. 2*, chap. 1 [dropbox]
Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, intro and chaps. 1-4 [book]

Week 10, 11/8 The Biome

Wilson, *Gut Feminism*, intro and Part I [book]
Chen, *Animacies*, Intro and Parts I and II [book]

Week 11, 11/15 Darwinian Feminism

Grosz, *Becoming Undone*, Intro and chaps. 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 [book]
Brilmyer, "Darwinian Feminisms" [dropbox]

Week 12, 11/22 NO CLASS: Small group meetings

Hayward, "Spider City Sex" and "Notes on a Starfish" [dropbox]

Week 13, 11/29 Recent Directions

Chan and Luciano, "Has the Queer Ever Been Human?" [dropbox]
Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology" [dropbox]
Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, Intro and chaps. 2 & 3 [dropbox]
Preciado, *Testo Junkie*, Intro and chap. 12 [dropbox]

Week 14, 12/6 Rosenberg, *Confessions of the Fox* [book]