

Course Syllabus

[Jump to Today](#)

Theories of Feminist Architecture

Columbia University GSAPP

History/Theory Seminar

Tuesdays, 11am-1pm, 200 Buell

Bryony Roberts

Although feminist causes have gained greater visibility and popular appeal in recent years, the meaning of feminism is increasingly contested. Expanding awareness of the fluidity of gender identity and sexuality, as well as intersectional understandings of race, class, and gender have challenged previous definitions of feminism and methods of action. In this moment of cultural instability, this seminar takes stock of past and present feminisms and discusses different models of agency for architecture in pursuit of inclusion and equality.

Foregrounding change over time, the course introduces students to foundational texts from Second Wave and Third Wave Feminism and fosters discussions on how and why these discourses have transformed. Readings by Jane Rendell, Judith Butler, Audre Lorde, and Susan Stryker emphasizes awareness of the interdependent conditions of gender, race, class, and sexuality. Exploring the implications for architectural discourse and practice, students examine architectural theorists, historians, and practitioners who have found agency through writing architectural history, planning cities and buildings, introducing alternative material practices, and restructuring the architectural design process. Every discussion of these undertakings in historiography, planning, materiality, and process addresses the specific historical contexts in which these projects emerged. The goal of the course is for students to develop critical, historical views of existing discourses and to gain exposure to the wide range of available discursive, projective, and material tools of engagement.

While primarily focused on texts, the course addresses modes of agency in architecture and therefore involves discussion of theoretical positions relative to design practices and methods.

SCHEDULE

January 22 – Introduction

General introduction to course topic, assignments, and expectations

Discussion of different historical and contemporary definitions of feminism

January 29 – Feminisms: Overview and Terminology

- select weeks for presentations by end of class

Required Reading:

Rendell, Jane. "Gender," and "Gender, Space, Architecture." In *Gender, Space, Architecture*, edited by Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden, 15-25, 225-239. London: Routledge, 2000.

Stratigakos, Despina. "Why is the World of Architecture So Male-Dominated?" <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-stratigakos-missing-women-architects-20160421-story.html>

Stryker, Susan. "An Introduction to Transgender Terms and Concepts." In *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008): vii-29.

https://books.google.com/books?id=XcQ_BAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

February 5 – Second Wave: Women's Movement

With guest presentation by Andrea Jeanne Merrett

Required Reading:

Simone de Beauvoir. "Introduction." In *The Second Sex*. xv- xxix. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976 [1949].

Friedan, Betty. "The Problem That Has No Name." In *The Feminine Mystique*, 15-32. New York: Norton, 1963.

Thompson, Becky. "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 28:2 (2002), 337-360.

Optional Reading:

Combahee River Collective. "A Black Feminist Statement" (1974)

<http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>

"National Organization of Women (NOW) Statement of Purpose" (1966)

http://www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/gna/Quellensammlung/10/10_nowstatementofpurpose_1966.htm

Syfers, Judy. "I Want a Wife," (1971)

<http://www.columbia.edu/~sss31/rainbow/wife.html>

February 12 – Intersectionality: Race, Class, Sexuality, Ableness

Required Reading:

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43:6 (1991): 1241-1299.

Donna Haraway, "Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective" *Feminist Studies* 14(3): 575–599, 1998.

Lorde, Audre. "The Masters Tools will Never Dismantle the Master's House." In *Gender, Space, Architecture*, edited by Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden, 53-55. London: Routledge, 2000.

Optional Reading:

Cho, Sumi, Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams, & McCall, Leslie. "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis," *Signs*, 2013; 38(4): 785-810.

Choo, Hae Yeon & Ferree, Myra Marx. "Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research: A Critical Analysis of Inclusions, Interactions, and Institutions in the Study of Inequalities," *Sociological Theory*, 2010; 28(2): 129-149.

Hamraie, Aimi. "Designing Collective Access: A Feminist Disability Theory of Universal Design." *Disability Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 33, No. 4 (2003).

<http://www.dsqsds.org/article/view/3871/3411>

Hartsock, Nancy. *The Feminist Standpoint: Toward a Specific Feminist Historical Materialism*. 1983.

hooks, bell. *Feminism Is For Everybody*. Cambridge: South End Press, 2000.

hooks, bell. "Future Feminist Movements." *Off Our Backs*, Vol. 20, No. 2, (February 1990), p. 9

Ortberg, Mallory. "Suffragettes Who Sucked: White Supremacy and Women's Rights," *The Toast* 21 April 2014

<http://the-toast.net/2014/04/21/suffragettes-sucked-white-supremacy-womens-rights/>

Rankine, Claudia. *Citizen: An American Lyric*. 21-55. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2014.

Prado de O. Martins, L. "Privilege and oppression: towards a feminist speculative Design." <http://www.drs2014.org/media/654480/0350-file1.pdf>

February 19 – Gender Trouble: Naturalism, Performativity, and Gender Abolitionism

Required Reading:

Butler, Judith. "Chapter 1: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 3-44. New York: Routledge, 1999 [1990].

Optional Reading:

Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" *Theatre Journal* 40(4): 1998, pp. 519-531.

Firestone, Shulamith. *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*. London: Women's Press, 1979.

Martin, Emily. "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science and Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles." *Signs* 16(3): 485-501, 1991.

Sedgwick, Eve. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Bey, Marquis. "Enough of this TERF war, it's time to debunk some transphobic arguments," *Fembot Magazine* 8. October 2015

<http://fembotmag.com/2015/10/08/enough-of-this-terf-war-its-time-to-debunk-some-transphobic-arguments/>.

West, Candace, Zimmerman, Don H. Doing Gender, *Gender and Society*, 1987; 1(2): 125- 151.

February 26 – Rethinking Architecture: Program

Required Reading:

Hayden, Dolores. "What Would A Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work." In *Gender, Space, Architecture*, edited by Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden, 266-281. London: Routledge, 2000.

Wigley, Mark. "Untitled, the housing of gender." In *Sexuality & Space*, edited by Beatriz Colomina, 327-389. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997.

Optional Reading:

Colomina, Beatriz. "Excerpts from 'The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism.'" In *Gender, Space, Architecture*, edited by Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden, 314-320. London: Routledge, 2000.

Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981).

Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984).

Ethel Baraona Pohl, Anna Puigjaner, César Reyes Nájera, "Blurring the Kitchen Work Triangle" in Volume 33 Interiors.

Torre, Susana. "Claiming the Public Space: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo." In *Gender, Space, Architecture*, edited by Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden, 140-145. London: Routledge, 2000.

March 5 – Rethinking Architecture: Historiography

With guest presentation by Mary McLeod

Required Reading:

Buckley, Cheryl. "Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design." In *Design Discourse: History, Theory, Criticism*, edited by Margolin, V., 251-261. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989. - in "Designer as Feminist" PDF, p. 4-16

McLeod, Mary. "Everyday and 'Other' Spaces." In *Gender, Space, Architecture*, edited by Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden, 182-202. London: Routledge, 2000.

Optional Reading:

Feminist Art and Architecture Collaborative, "Counterplanning from the Classroom,"

Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Vol. 76 No. 3, September 2017; (pp. 277-280)

Offen, Karen. "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach." *Signs* 14:1 (1989): 119-157.

Scott, Joan Wallach. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *American Historical Review* 91:5 (1986): 1053-1075.

March 12 – Rethinking Architecture: Materiality

Required Reading:

Bryan-Wilson, Julia. "Queer Handmaking." In *Fray: Art and Textile Politics*, 39-105. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009

Bloomer, Jennifer. "Big Jugs." In *Gender, Space, Architecture*, edited by Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden, 371-384. London: Routledge, 2000.

Optional Reading:

Auther, Elissa. *String Felt Thread*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009

Bryan-Wilson, Julia. *Fray: Art and Textile Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017

Parker, Rozsika. *Subversive Stitch*. London: I.B. Taurus, 2010

Holliday, Kate. "Unraveling the Textile in Modern Architecture." *Studies in the Decorative Arts*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Spring–Summer 2009), pp. 2-6

March 19 >>Spring Break<<

March 26 – Rethinking Architecture: Care and Maintenance - will need to reschedule day & time

Required Reading:

Tronto, Joan. "Beyond Gender Difference to a Theory of Care." *Signs*, Vol. 12, No. 4, Within and Without: Women, Gender, and Theory (Summer, 1987), pp. 644-663.

Marche, Stephen. "The Case for Filth," *The New York Times, Sunday Review*, December 7, 2013.

Optional Reading:

Parrenas, Rhacel Salazar. *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2001.

O'Brien, Ruth. "Other Voices at the Workplace: Gender, Disability, and an Alternative Ethic of Care." *Signs*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter 2005), pp. 1529-1555

Sample, Hilary. *Maintenance Architecture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016.

Tronto, Joan C. *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*, New York: Routledge, 1993, 61-156.

Ukeles, Merle. "Maintenance Art Manifesto" (1969)

https://www.queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles_MANIFESTO.pdf

April 2 – Rethinking Architecture: Process

With guest presentation by Lori Brown

Required Reading:

Brown, Lori. "Introduction." In *Feminist Practices: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Women in Architecture*, 1-16. London: Routledge, 2011.

Feminist Architectural Collaborative. "The Incubator Incubator." *Harvard Design Magazine* Winter 2018

Rendell, Jane. "Feminist Architecture from A to Z." Accessed August 5, 2018,

<https://www.readingdesign.org/feminist-architecture-a-z/>

Optional Reading:

Brown, Lori, ed. *Feminist Practices: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Women in Architecture*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Rendell, Jane. "Architecture and Interdisciplinarity." *Building Material*, No. 19, Art and Architecture (Autumn 2009), pp. 10-17

"Precarity Pilot – making space for socially- and Politically- engaged Design Practice". Modes of Criticism 1 - Critical, Uncritical, Post-critical [online] february 2015.

<http://modesofcriticism.org/precarity-pilot/> [accessed march 26th 2017]

April 9 – No class

April 16 – New Waves: Posthumanism, Xenofeminism

Required Reading:

Haraway, Donna. "Introduction," in *Staying With The Trouble*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Hester, Helen. "What is Xenofeminism?" in *Xenofeminism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.

Optional Reading:

Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York; Routledge, 1991), pp.149-181

Haraway, Donna. *Staying With The Trouble*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

April 23 – Conclusions

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Reference Texts:

Reference texts are available on reserve at Avery Library.

Agrest, Diana, Patricia Conway, and Leslie Kanes Weisman, ed. *The Sex of Architecture*. New York : Harry N. Abrams, 1996

Auther, Elissa. *String Felt Thread*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999 [1990].

Brown, Lori, ed. *Feminist Practices: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Women in Architecture*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Bryan-Wilson, Julia. *Fray: Art and Textile Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017

Colomina, Beatriz. ed. *Sexuality & Space*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997.

Coleman, Deborah, et al., ed. *Architecture and Feminism*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996.

Haraway, Donna. *Staying With The Trouble*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Hooks, Bell. *Feminism Is For Everybody*. Cambridge: South End Press, 2000.

Parker, Rozsika. *Subversive Stitch*. London: I.B. Taurus, 2010

Rendell, Jane, et al., ed. *Gender, Space, Architecture*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Contemporary collectives, practices, and online platforms:

Architexx

Atelier d'architecture autogérée

Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation

Bulletin Broads

Crunk Feminist Collective

Equity by Design

FATALE

Feminist architecture collective

Feminist Art and Architecture Collaborative

Girl Uninterrupted

Madame Architect

Muf Architecture / Art

Mycket

Parlour

Precarity Pilot

Rebel Architette

Jane Rendell's Situated Design at the Bartlett School of Architecture

Women's Center for Creative Work

Women In Architecture

XYX Lab at Monash University

COURSE INFORMATION

Contact

Bryony Roberts - bryony@bryonyroberts.com

Course Meetings

Tuesdays, 11am-1pm

Course Structure

Weekly seminars will include close textual analysis of the reading assignments and discussions. Students are expected to complete weekly reading assignments, to participate actively in weekly discussions, and to complete all assignments.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students should gain a critical understanding of historical and contemporary feminisms. Through discussions and assignments, students are expected to improve their abilities to analyze texts, articulate their ideas and construct compelling arguments.

Grading

Students are graded using the standard GSAPP metric:

HP (high pass)	= a superior level of work
P (pass)	= an acceptable level of work
LP (low pass)	= work that meets minimal standards
F (fail)	= work that is unsatisfactory

Grading rubric:

- Attendance and active participation in reading discussions - 30%
- Position paper - 1000-word paper presented verbally in class - 30%
- Final project - 2000-word paper - 40%

Deadlines

Students must attend all class sessions and deliver all assignments on time. Deadlines are not negotiable. If a student is ill and unable to attend class or deliver an assignment, they must email the instructor ahead of time and include a doctor's note.

Reading Assignments and Discussions

Weekly reading assignments are listed in the syllabus as "required reading." Other optional reading material is included for those seeking further information on each topic. Students are expected to complete the reading assignments and to participate actively in class discussions. Students should not only absorb information from the readings, but also develop the ability to critical reflect on and develop arguments about the texts.

Articles are available as scanned pdfs on Dropbox and books listed in the optional readings are available in Avery Library.

Assignments

Position paper

Each student writes one position paper in response to one of the required readings during a week of their choice. Selections of weeks and topics are made at the beginning of the semester. Position papers are presented verbally in class during class discussion when the reading is addressed.

The position paper is 1000 words long (approx 6 minute verbal presentation). The paper takes a position in relation to the reading, and constructs an argument in favor or against the central thesis of the given text. The paper is not a summary of the article, or a biographical description of the author. Instead it presents a critical, thoughtful response to the text, informed by research and specific examples to make an argument. Presented verbally, the paper is intended as a prompt for further discussion and debate among the classmates.

Final paper

Students select two texts discussed in class that outline opposing positions on a theme. For example, whether gender is natural or performative, whether decorative arts are empowering or confining to women, whether the ethics of care is liberating or essentializing, etc.

Students respond to the debates outlined in the texts, and develop their own position on the topic. The paper is not a summary of the two texts. Instead the paper begins with a strong thesis position, which states the student's position, and supports that thesis through specific examples from the text and from research.

The final paper is 2000 words and must include specific references and quotations from at least two texts on the syllabus.

Final paper is due by end of day on May 9, emailed to bryony@bryonyroberts.com