

LT146 Feminism and the Avant-Garde

Seminar Leader: Laura Scuriatti
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Office Hours: Thursdays, 14.00-16.00

Course Description

What we now describe as "first-wave feminism" was a complex and varied international phenomenon, emerging from different political and cultural movements across the world, and focused on equal civil and political rights for women, including the right to vote, to own property, to have equal standing within the family, and to receive equal pay. In the first decades of the twentieth century, this political struggle, with all its contradictions, was also carried out within the major artistic avant-garde movements and by intellectuals and activists working in the areas of art or literary production. The cluster of movements associated with feminism in this period did not only include what we would nowadays consider progressive forces, but also comprised activists advocating social positions for women which relied on conservative notions of sex and race, supporting exclusive notions of emancipation. The course will address the extremely complex panorama of early feminism and reflect on its contradictions in relation to political, social and scientific theories of the time; it will also attempt to draw connections to current debates.

The second part of the course will explore the historical avant-garde's artistic responses to and interventions into the contemporary debated on women rights issues. The relation between forms of living and collaboration peculiar to avant-garde circles will also be addressed in connection with wider-world transformations and expectations regarding the impact of feminism on social and private existence. Among others, students will read texts by Clara Zetkin, Alexandra Kollontai, Rosa Luxemburg, Ellen Key, Valentine de Saint Point, Mina Loy, Dora Marsden, Emma Goldman, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Margaret Sanger, Mary Stopes, Virginia Woolf, Havelock Ellis, Joan Riviere, Otto Weininger, August Bebel, Djuna Barnes, Virginia Woolf.

Requirements

Students are required to attend all classes, to come to class prepared and with the relevant materials and textbooks. Participation consists in contributing productively to class discussion in a respectful manner, and in demonstrating a sound knowledge of the texts assigned.

Please note that in seminars we will work on printed texts: NO COMPUTERS OR TABLETS allowed in class. Texts which are made available in digital format should be printed for use in class.

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

Attendance

Please note that attendance at ALL classes is expected. After two absences students who need to be absent for serious reasons or in order to attend a conference should submit the relevant documentation to the instructor, in order for the absences to be excused.

Please note that Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences, whether excused or unexcused. Students facing the unusual situation of long-term, serious medical or personal emergencies (generally lasting more than two weeks) can request a Leave of Absence, to be approved by the Deans, the Head of Student Life or the Director of Academic Services. Please note that the 30% rule applies even in these cases.

Please consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Assessment and Grade Breakdown

Participation:	25%
Exam (1500 words):	25%
Presentation (20 minutes max., 1500 words):	20%
Final essay (2500-3000 words):	30%

Library and Book Purchase Policies

Most readings will be made available to students in digital or printed form. Students are required to purchase or borrow from the library the following books:

Djuna Barnes, *The Ladies' Almanack*
Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (library copies available)
Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (library copies available)

Schedule

Week 1 Introduction: Early feminisms, Economics and Politics I

Monday, January 27 Introductory session

Readings: Clara Zetkin, "For the Liberation of Women", 1889; "Women's Right to Vote", 1907; Jane Addams, "Women and the State", 1911; Emmeline Pankhurst, "Freedom or Death", 1913; Alexandra Kollontai, "Working Woman and Mother", 1914.

Wednesday, January 29

Readings: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (excerpts), 1898; Emma Goldman, "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation", 1906; Emma Goldman, "The Traffic in Women", 1910; Alexandra Kollontai, "The Social Basis for the Woman Question", 1910.

Week 2 Women's Rights, Economics and Politics II

Monday, February 3 NO CLASS TODAY

Wednesday, February 5

Readings: Rosa Luxemburg, "Women's Suffrage and Class Struggle" and "The Proletarian Woman", 1914; Vernon Lee, "The Economic Dependence of Women", 1908.

Week 3 Women's Rights, Race and International Issues

Monday, February 10

Readings: Mary Church Terrell, *The Progress of Colored Women* (excerpts), 1898; W. E. B. Du Bois, "Damnation of Women", 1919; Alice Dunbar Nelson, "Facing Life Squarely", 1927.

Wednesday, February 12

Readings: Luisa Capetillo, "Mi Opinión", 1911; Clara Zetkin, "In the Muslim Women's Club", 1926; Shareefedh Hamid Ali, "East and West in Cooperation", 1935.

Week 4 Family Issues: Marriage (and Love)

Monday, February 17

Readings: Ellen Key, *Love and Marriage* (excerpts), 1914; Emma Goldman, "Marriage and Love", 1914; Mary Stopes, *Married Love* (excerpts), 1918.

Wednesday, February 19

Readings: August Bebel, *Woman under Socialism* (excerpts), 1904; Ann Taylor Allen, "Feminism, Social Science, and the Meanings of Modernity: The Debate on the Origin of the Family in Europe and the United States, 1860-1914".

Week 5 Motherhood and Birth Control

Monday, February 24

Readings: Margaret Sanger, "Letter to the Readers of *The Woman Rebel*" (1914); Margaret Sanger, "Birth Control: A Parents' Problem or a Woman's?", 1920; Margaret Sanger, "The Morality of Birth Control", 1921.

Wednesday, February 26

Readings: Kirsten Leng, "Culture, Difference, and Sexual Progress in Turn-of-the-Century Europe: Cultural Othering and the German League for the Protection of Mothers and Sexual Reform, 1905-1914"; Nancy Folbre, "Sleeping Beauty Awakes: Self-Interest, Feminism, and Fertility in the Early Twentieth Century".

Week 6 Sexology, Sexuality, Eugenics and the Problems of Femininity

Monday, March 2

Havelock Ellis, "The Sterilization of the Unfit", 1909; Havelock Ellis, "Birth Control and Eugenics", 1917.

Wednesday, March 4

Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character* (excerpts), 1904.

Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as Masquerade", 1929

Week 7 Presentations

Monday, March 9 and Wednesday, March 11

Group presentations: responses to the readings

Week 8 Feminism, Anti-Feminism and the Avant-Garde - Futurism

Monday, March 16

Readings: Valentine de Saint Point, "Manifesto of the Futurist Woman"; "Manifesto of Lust"

Wednesday, March 18

Readings: F. T. Marinetti, "Let's Murder the Moonlight!"; F. T. Marinetti, "Against Love and Parliamentarism".

Week 9 Feminism and Experimental Literature I – Mina Loy

Monday, March 23

Readings: Mina Loy, "Feminist Manifesto", 1914; "Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots", 1914.

Wednesday, March 25

Readings: Mina Loy, "The Effectual Marriage", 1915; Mina Loy, "Havelock Ellis" and "The Library of the Sphinx" (n.d.)

Week 10 Dora Marsden and the small magazine *The Freewoman*

Monday, March 30 and Wednesday, April 1

Readings: articles from the first issues of *The Freewoman*, 1911

SPRING BREAK

Week 12 Feminism and Political Experimental Literature – Lola Ridge

Monday, April 13

FEDERAL HOLIDAY – NO CLASS TODAY

Wednesday, April 15

EXAM

Week 13 Djuna Barnes

Monday, April 20

Readings: Djuna Barnes, *The Book of Repulsive Women* (selection), 1915

Wednesday, April 22

Readings: Djuna Barnes, *The Ladies' Almanack*, 1928

Week 14 Virginia Woolf I

Monday 27 April and Wednesday 29 April

Readings for the week: Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 1929

Week 15 Virginia Woolf II

Monday May 4 and Wednesday May 6

Readings for the week: Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, 1938

Friday May 8, 23:59 hrs: FINAL ESSAY DUE

Monday May 11

Wrap-up session