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.
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**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam (1500 words)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation (20 minutes max., 1500 words)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final essay (2500-3000 words)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**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

- **Wednesday, January 29**
Week 2  Women's Rights, Economics and Politics II

Monday, February 3  NO CLASS TODAY

Wednesday, February 5

Week 3  Women's Rights, Race and International Issues

Monday, February 10

Wednesday, February 12

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

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


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

Monday, March 2

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

Week 9  Feminism and Experimental Literature I – Mina Loy

Monday, March 23

Wednesday, March 25

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