Untangling the "F"-word

Keywords: capitalism, discrimination, feminism, genealogy, gender binary, heteronormativity, ideology, imperialism, intersectionality, liberalism, patriarchy, prejudice, socialism, transgender

Whether or not you consider yourself a feminist as a matter of personal identity, ...pective, or both, in women's and gender studies courses you will ...pectives because these seek to understand and explain inequali... r. Fundamentally, feminism is about liberation from gender discrimination and other forms of **oppression**. For some people, this means securing equal rights within marriage, education, waged work, politics, law, or the military. For others, it means changing these institutions to create a secure and sustainable future for all. Still others focu... or transforming the **gender binary**, the assumption that everyon... of two categories labeled male or female. Sociologist Judith Lorb... : "the long-term goal of feminism must be . . . the eradication of gender as an organizing principle of . . . society" (p. 355) (see the box feature "Gender: What's in a Name?").

For many people, feminist thinking offers compelling ways to understand their lives, and feminist projects and campaigns have mobilized millions of people in the United States for over a century. Although serious gender inequalities remain, feminist theorizing and activism have achieved significant gains. Women in the United States have won the right to speak out on public issues, to vote, to own property in our own names, to divorce, and to have custody of our children. Women have been

Gender: What's in a Name?

In recent years, **transgender** individuals and activists have challenged, unsettled, and transformed understandings of gender together with others who identify as gender variant, nonbinary, or gender nonconforming. They have opened up the possibility of gender fluidity as a site of experimentation or a source of personal authenticity. As a result, increasing numbers of people are not interested in identifying with what they see as rigid gender categories.

At an institutional level, gender is more fixed, though this is changing to some extent with the legalization of same-sex marriage, for example, and some states are issuing gender-neutral ID cards. However, most people in the USA live according to a male/female binary, some adamantly so. Others may not pay much attention to this issue unless gender markers are missing or ambiguous.

We note that people are using the language of sex and gender very differently and mean different things by these terms. In this book, we straddle and bridge various gender paradigms and perspectives. We use *LGBTQI* (lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, and intersex) as a shorthand term for the range of people who question or repudiate heteronormativity, which we discuss more fully in Chapters 3 and 4. We use *woman* and *women* to include anyone who identifies as or is identified as female. This may include those who identify as queer, femme, butch, lesbian, gender nonconforming, and trans, as well as heterosexual and **cisgender** women (those whose **gender identity** is the same as they were assigned at birth). Please keep these definitions in mind as you read on and understand that definitions currently in use –both in this book and in the wider society– may change or be discarded in favor of new terminology. Definitions are always being contested and challenged as people's thinking and practices develop.

emphasis on freer, not free: medical progress is far from equal for men vs. women.

able to attend college, become professionals, and learn skilled trades. Developments in birth control and reproductive technologies mean that women are freer to decide if and when to have a child. Also, changing social expectations mean that we can choose whether to marry and how to express our gender and sexuality. Gender-based violence, though still widespread, is now discussed openly. In 2017 and 2018, Hollywood celebrities, Congressional staffers, media workers, farmworkers, students, fashion models, and athletes spoke out about long-standing patterns of sexual harassment as part of the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements, which reverberated around the world (see Reading 59). *Time* magazine named these "silence breakers" as its 2017 Person of the Year. Some of the high-profile men named have faced real consequences: they have been forced to resign, fired, or prosecuted for these crimes.

These feminist movements illustrate shifts in public opinion and what is considered appropriate for women—in all our diversity—and for men or people who are male-identified. However, the term *feminism* carries a lot of baggage. For some, it is positive and empowering. For others, [illegible] images of females who do not shave their legs or are considered [illegible] dominant US standards of beauty. Some assume that feminists are [illegible] bians, or man-haters, or all of the above. Feminist ideas and goals have been consistently distorted, trivialized, and mocked by detractors. [illegible] y, suffragists who campaigned for legal rights for women, including [illegible], were caricatured as "mannish," "castrators," and "home-wr[illegible]ater, *Time* magazine published no fewer than 119 negative articles on feminism between the early 1970s and the mid-1990s (Jong 1998).

recall: bell hooks' silence on reform feminism.

don't forget internal trivializing of feminism thru. white fem., TERFs.

Antifeminist ideas continue to be a staple of right-wing talk shows and social media sites. In a well-known example, Rush Limbaugh maintained that "[f]eminism

was established to allow unattractive women easier access to the mainstream of pop culture" (Media Matters 2015). Feminists are ridiculed and written off as complaining, angry, and humorless. When [illegible] gender-based violence—battering, rape, sex[illegible]ism, living in poverty, or aging without [illegible]g critics who are out to destroy men and [illegible]t. In our society, most women are socialized to care for men and to spare their feelings, but acknowledging institutional inequalities between females and men as a group is very different from "man-bashing." Many women are pushing back by critiquing antifeminist social media and calling out antifeminist perspectives (see, e.g., Cohn 2018; Lawrence and Ringrose 2018).

The claim that we are now living in a postfeminist era is part of the opposition to feminism. It involves a complex maneuver that recognizes the need for feminism in the past but declares that this is now over because it has been successful. Media critic [illegible] argued that even though "women's achievements, or their desire [illegible]mply part of the cultural landscape" (p. 9), many contemporary [illegible]n are

> images of imagined power that mask, even erase, how much still remains to be done for girls and women, images that make sexism seem [illegible] feminism is now utterly pointless—even bad for you. ([illegible]

In this chapter, we introduce feminist ideas fro[illegible] highlight the diversity, breadth, and richness of femin[illegible] We hope this will help you to think about how you de[illegible] to you.

FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND FRAME[illegible]

Many historians and commentators have divided U[illegible] feminist movements into distinctive periods, described as waves. In this formulation, "**first wave feminism**" denotes efforts to gain legal rights for women, including the right to vote, dating from the 1840s to 1920. "**Second wave feminism**" refers to the feminist theorizing and organizing that flourished in the 1960s and 1970s. The next generation, in the 1990s, described themselves as "**third wave" feminists**. Some rejected what they knew of the feminism associated with their mothers' generation; others emphasized continuities with earlier feminist work (see, e.g., Dicker and Piepmeier 2003; Findlen 1995; Labaton and Martin 2004).

Defining historical periods is highly selective, focusing attention on certain events or perspectives and downplaying or erasing others. The wave metaphor suggests both continuity and discontinuity with the past as feminists have shaped and reshaped theoretical understandings for their generation, circumstances, and time in history. Also, this approach makes complex movements seem much neater and more static than they really are. Historians Kathleen Laughlin and colleagues (2010) noted: "The [illegible]e perception of a 'singular' feminism in which gender is [illegible]f analysis" (p. 77). It leaves out large areas of women's [illegible]th-century movements of women workers in the New

England textile mills, or Black[1] women's opposition to slavery and lynching, and their struggles for economic improvement. As well as focusing on gender discrimination,

it's important to acknowledge that some cultures did support women; assuming that all women were

disenfranchised is euro-centric and neglects the existence of other cultures (cultures that, ironically,

were historically deemed uncivilized. (e.g. Iran!)

Native American Antecedents

Among many possible pathways into US feminist thought, we chose Paula Gunn Allen's article about the "red roots of white feminism" (Reading 1). She discusses centuries-old practices that gave Native American women policy-making power in the Iroquois Confederation, especially the power to decide matters of peace and war. She lists various Native American principles that overlap with feminist and other progressive ideals: respect for women and their importance in society, respect for elders, an egalitarian distribution of goods and **power**, diverse ideas about beauty, cooperation among peoples, and respect for the earth. She emphasizes the importance in her community of knowing your ancestry and argues that all "feminists must be aware of our history on this continent"—a history that varies for different social and racial groups.

Legal Equality for Women

In the mid-nineteenth century, white middle-class women involved in the antislavery movement began to ar stems of inequality based on race and gender. In 1840, ady Stanton met at the World Anti-Slavery Conven ately opposed to slavery and were shocked to find that women delegates were not allowed to speak at the convention (Schneir 1994). The irony of working against the system that enslaved people of African descent while experiencing discrimination as women prompted them to work for women's rights. In 1848, they called a Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York, where Stanton lived. Stanton drafted the Declaration of Sentiments (Reading 2), modeled after the nation's foundational Declaration of Independence. This document, which was read and adopted at the convention, rallied women and men to the cause of legal equality for US women, and this issue was fiercely debated in newspapers, at public meetings, among churchgoers, in women's organizations, and at dinner tables nationwide.

important to note that even after white women earned right to vote, black women's rights were still neglected.

Following the Civil War, three constitutional amendments—the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments—granted all men the right to vote but still allowed states to deny the vote to women. Suffragists split over whether to support the Fifteenth Amendment that enfranchised Black men. The American Woman Suffrage Association supported it and decided to campaign for women's suffrage state by state. Wyoming was the first territory to allow women the right to vote in 1869. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony did not support it. Rather, they formed the National Woman

[1] When referring to people, we use *Black* rather than *black*. Black is an identity forged in the context of struggles for self-respect. It replaced *Negro* in a particular moment of self-assertion and carries that history with it. Capitalized, it's a proper noun, a name; lowercase, it's just an adjective. *White* does not carry the same connotations, except in the case of White racist organizations. So, because of the history of racism and race relations in the United States, white and black are not equivalent.

Suffrage Association and worked for a constitutional amendment granting votes for women. In 1920, seventy-two years after the Seneca Falls convention, the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution stopped states from denying women the right to vote. This success had taken enormous effort, focus, and dedication. It spanned the lives of generations of leaders and activists and included public education campaigns, lobbying, mass demonstrations, civil disobedience actions, arrests, and hunger strikes (see [illegible]).

change can only come about through discomfort and.

destruction of outdated systems.

[illegible] for [illegible] of **liberalism**, a theory of individual freedom with roots in seventeenth-century European ideas, especially the writings of political philosopher John Locke. Liberalism has been central to US political thinking since the founding of the nation, although political and legal rights were originally limited to white men who owned land and property. Achieving greater equality among people in the United States has been a long, uneven process marked by hard work, gains, and setbacks—and a process that is far from complete. (Some key events are detailed in the box feature "Milestones in US History: Institutionalizing and Challenging Social Inequalities.")

Milestones in US History: Institutionalizing and Challenging Social Inequalities

1565 Spanish settlers established the first European colony in what is now the state of Florida and called it St. Augustine.

1584 Walter Raleigh founded Virginia, an English colony, at Roanoke Island.

1605 A Spanish settlement was established at what is now Santa Fe, New Mexico.

1607 Captain Christopher Newport of the London Company established an English colony at Jamestown, Virginia.

1619 A Dutch "man of war" sailed into Jamestown harbor with twenty Africans on board; the captain sold his human cargo to the colonists.

1691 The first legal ban on interracial marriages was passed in Virginia. Subsequently, other states prohibited whites from marrying Blacks; marriages between whites and Native Americans, Filipinos, and Asians, were also forbidden.

1776 The Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, written mostly by Thomas Jefferson and asserting that "all men are created equal."

1787 In order to ratify the Constitution of the United States, the 13 states negotiated a compromise. Southern states were allowed to count three out of every five enslaved people in determining the number of representatives to Congress, even though they were excluded from the electorate. In a second compromise, the agreement that created the Senate gave less populous states more power than they would have had otherwise. These agreements enabled Southern senators to use their power to preserve slavery before the Civil War and Jim Crow during and after Reconstruction. Indian people were not counted for the purpose of Congressional representation because the US government designated the tribes as nation-like entities with whom they had to negotiate, as with foreign powers.

1820 Missouri entered the Union as the twelfth slave state "balanced" by Maine as the twelfth free state. Slavery was banned in the Louisiana Territory (purchased from France in 1803 for approximately $15 million).

1830 Congress passed, the Indian Removal Act, which moved all Indian tribes from the southeastern United States to land west of the Mississippi River and granted them rights to these new lands "in perpetuity."

1834 The Department of Indian Affairs was established within the War Department to monitor the creation of reservations for Indian tribes. The Department was later transferred to the Department of the Interior as the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

1848 The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican-American War (begun in 1846). It

established the Rio Grande as the international boundary; ceded Texas to the United States together with Arizona, California, Nevada, and New Mexico; and guaranteed existing residents their land, language, culture, and US citizenship.

The first Women's Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York. Delegates issued a Declaration of Sentiments, listing inequities faced by women and urging that women be given the right to vote (see Reading 2).

1857 In *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, the Supreme Court argued that as an enslaved man, Dred Scott was not a citizen and therefore had no standing to sue his master for his freedom even though he had been living in free territory for four years. To grant Scott's petition, the Court argued, would deprive his owner of property without compensation, violating the Fifth Amendment. This invalidated states' rights to determine whether slavery should be banned.

1863 Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation freeing slaves in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

1864 US military forces terrorized Indian nations. Navajo people endured the "long walk" to imprisonment at Fort Sumner (New Mexico Territory). US troops massacred Cheyenne warriors (supported by Kiowa, Apache, Comanche, and Arapahoe warriors) at Sand Creek.

1865 Following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the Civil War was ended after four years. Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau, responsible for relief to former slaves and those made destitute by the war. The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution officially ended slavery and involuntary servitude.

1869 The first transcontinental railroad was completed. Chinese workers, allowed into the country to work on the railroad, experienced increased discrimination and "anti-Oriental" hysteria.

1870 Congress ratified the Fifteenth Amendment, which enfranchised Black men but permitted states to deny the vote to all women.

Julia Ward Howe issued a Mother's Day Proclamation for peace.

1877 Ordered off their land in Oregon, the Nez Percé tribe attempted to flee to Canada, a trek of 1,600 miles, to avoid war with US troops. They were forced to surrender 40 miles short of the border and sent to Oklahoma, where many died.

1887 Congress passed the Dawes Act, providing for the dissolution of Indian tribes and division of tribal holdings among the members. Over the next fifty years, white settlers took nearly two-thirds of Indian land holdings by deceit and intimidation.

1896 In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court validated a Louisiana law requiring Blacks and whites to ride in separate railroad cars. The law had been challenged as a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment's right of equal protection, but the majority opinion held that "separate but equal" satisfied the constitutional requirement. This decision led to a spate of segregation laws in southern states. From 1870 to 1900, twenty-two Black men served in Congress, but with the introduction of literacy tests, poll taxes, grandfather clauses, and white primaries, none were left by 1901.

1898 The United States declared war on Spain and acquired former Spanish colonial territories: the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. Congress also approved US annexation of the Hawaiian Islands.

1919 Suffragists were arrested in Washington, DC for blocking sidewalks during a demonstration in support of women's right to vote.

Fifteen thousand Black people marched silently down New York's Fifth Avenue, protesting lynching and discrimination against Blacks.

The Jones Act granted full US citizenship to Puerto Ricans and the right to travel freely to the continental United States.

1920 The Women's Suffrage Amendment (Nineteenth Amendment) barred states from denying women the right to vote.

1924 The Indian Citizenship Act extended citizenship to Native Americans, previously defined as wards of the US government. As late as 1952, some states still denied Indians voting rights.

1935 The National Labor Relations Act protected the right of workers to organize into unions.

The Social Security Act established entitlements to government assistance in the form of pensions and health benefit programs.

1941 Congress declared war on Japan, Italy, and Germany.

1942 President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, permitting military authorities to evacuate 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry (mostly US

citizens) from West Coast states and incarcerate them in isolated locations.

The Bracero Program permitted Mexican citizens to work in agricultural areas in the United States on a temporary basis and at lower wages than US workers.

1945 World War II ended after the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

1954 In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court reversed its *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision and declared that segregated schools were inherently unequal. In 1955, the Court ordered the desegregation of schools "with all deliberate speed."

1963 The Equal Pay Act mandated that men and women doing the same work must receive the same pay.

To gain public support for a comprehensive civil rights law, 250,000 people participated in a March on Washington.

1964 Congress passed the most comprehensive Civil Rights Act in the history of the nation. Under Title VII, employment discrimination was prohibited on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

1965 The Voting Rights Act ended the use of literacy tests as a prerequisite for voting.

1972 Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment and sent it to the states for ratification. It had been introduced in every session since 1923.

1973 The Rehabilitation Act (Section 504) prohibited discrimination against people with disabilities in programs that receive federal financial assistance.

1975 The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act guaranteed children with disabilities a free, appropriate public education.

1982 The Equal Rights Amendment failed, being ratified by thirty-five rather than the required minimum of thirty-eight states. Subsequent efforts to revive this campaign have not been successful.

1990 The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibited discrimination on the basis of disability by employers, public accommodations, state and local governments, public and private transportation, and in telecommunications.

1994 The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act legislated mandatory life imprisonment for persons convicted in federal court of a "serious violent felony" and who had two or more prior convictions in federal or state courts, at least one of which was a "serious violent felony" (the "three strikes" law). The other prior offense may be a "serious drug offense." States adopted similar laws.

1996 The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act replaced families' entitlement to government assistance with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a time-limited work-based program.

The Defense of Marriage Act forbade the federal government from recognizing same-sex or polygamous marriages under any circumstances and stipulated that no state, city, or county is required to recognize a marriage between persons of the same sex even if the marriage is recognized in another state.

2001 The Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (USA Patriot Act) greatly increased law enforcement agencies' powers of detention, search, and surveillance. It permitted expanded use of secret searches and allowed financial institutions to monitor daily transactions and academic institutions to share information about students.

2015 A Supreme Court ruling allowed same-sex marriage in all 50 states.

2017 President Trump signed executive orders that restricted entry of refugees to the United States and citizens of various Muslim-majority countries, including Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

2018 New immigration guidelines separated children from parents or other adults at the US-Mexico border. This included families applying for asylum. Due to immense public pressure, these guidelines were suspended after more than 2,300 children had been separated from their parents (see Reading 44).

Primary source: A. Hernandez (1975, 2002). Also see the box feature "A Timeline of Key U.S. Immigration Law and Policy" in Chapter 3.

Liberal feminism is part of this liberal tradition and explains the oppression of women in terms of unequal access to political, economic, and social institutions (see, e.g., Eisenstein 1981; Friedan 1963; Steinem 1983). Much feminist organizing in the United States—including campaigns for women's rights to vote, to divorce, to enter un for political office, and to train for combat—has on this view. You may hold liberal feminist opinions it. Despite the disclaimer "I'm not a feminist . . . ," the al pay" is a liberal feminist position. Liberal feminism may be criticized because it accepts existing institutions as they are, only seeking equal access for women within them. However, as the decades-long campaign for women's legal rights shows, this goal should not be underestimated given the strength of **patriarchy**, or male dominance, as a system of power.

ing 3). As Black feminists and lesbians, Collective members found many white feminists too focused on male domination at the expense of oppressions based on race and class. Group members did not advocate equal rights for women within current institutions but argued for the transformation of the political and economic system as essential for women's liberation. They defined themselves as **socialists** and believed that "work must be organized for the collective benefit of those who do the work and create the products, and not for the profit of the bosses," as argued by German philosophers Frederick Engels and Karl Marx during the 1840s (shortly before the Seneca Falls convention). Collective members offered a strong critique of **capitalism** and **imperialism** and stood in solidarity with liberation struggles then being waged in colonized nations of Africa and Asia. Such transnational feminist thinking is both relevant and necessary today to understand the impacts of the global economic system, a point we take up in later chapters.

Socialist feminism views the oppression of women in terms of two interconnected and reinforcing systems: patriarchy and capitalism (see, e.g., Federici 2012; Hennessy e post–World War II ing of socialist thinking re people experience

Theoretical perspectives that integrate gender with other systems of inequality have become known by the shorthand term **intersectionality**. For African American women, this has a long history. From the 1830s onward, Black speakers and writers like Frances E. W. Harper, Maria Stewart, and Sojourner Truth explicitly linked oppressions based on race and gender (Guy-Sheftall 1995). More recently, organizer and writer Linda Burnham (2001) noted that

> Black women's experience as women is indivisible from their experiences as African Americans. They are always "both/and," so analyses that claim to examine gender while neglecting a critical stance towards race and class inevitably do so at the expense of African American women's experiences. (p. 1)

An emphasis on intersectionality is not solely the prerogative of women of color. Since the writings of Aphra Behn in the early 1600s, some white women have been concerned with race and class as well as gender. White feminists worked against slavery in the nineteenth century; they organized against lynching and the activities of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s and 1930s; and they participated in labor movements, the welfare rights movement, and the civil rights movement of th[illegible] (see, e.g., Bush 2004; Frankenberg 1993; Pratt 1984; Rich 1986c; Seg[illegible]tional approach is central to women's and gender studies, as exemplified by the readings in this book and in our overview essays.

"not all white women are oppo"

Many media accounts of "second wave" feminism have ignored or erased alliances among women across lines of race and class. They have focused on the thinking and [illegible] ni[illegible] spotlight, like Betty [illegible] (1[illegible]ulates among [illegible]ou[illegible]histories show the limitations of th[illegible], e.g., Ba[illegible]andall and Gordon 2000; Laughlin et al. 2010; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981; Roth 2003; Springer 2005; B. Thompson 2002). Unfortunately, students and activists who do not know this history also repeat inaccurate versions of feminism as the province of white middle-class women and erase the feminist thinking and organizing by a whole generation of women of color. Mathangi Subramanian, whose parents immigrated to the United States from India, had assumed that feminism was a white, Western thing, incompatible with her South Asian American identity, and wondered, "What does feminism have to do with *me*?" (Reading 4). She was excited to discover the intersec[illegible]s like Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003b; al[illegible]'amilies and religion and food and history" an[illegible]

But even in acknowledging that ~not all white women are bad~ it's crucial to amplify Black voices. Even in our class! White women (incl. myself) may have

progressive and intersectional POVs, but we have to shut up sometimes.

I think some of this has to do with the idea that feminism has some component of entitlement to it that may not be positively regarded and is associated with the role & stereotype of a privileged white woman.

Queer and Trans Feminisms

Like members of the Combahee River Collective, many feminist writers and activists of the 1970s and 1980s were lesbians who rejected what Adrienne Rich (1986a) called "compulsory heterosexuality." Literary critic Michael Warner (1999) introduced a related term—**heteronormativity**—the belief that heterosexuality is the normal and natural way to express sexuality. Lesbians and gay men challenged this view, as did those who reclaimed the word *queer*, which had been used as a hateful term to oppress lesbians and gay men. This revamped notion of *queer* emphasized fluidity, experimentation, and playfulness, and it generated new political movements like ACT UP and Queer Nation (see, e.g., Gage, Richards, and Wilmot 2002; Nestle, Howell, and Wilchins 2002; Rodríguez 2003). The development of gay and lesbian studies and queer theory has influenced women's and gender studies over the past twenty years, especially in analyzing heteronormativity. Also, trans individuals and activists have challenged, unsettled, and transformed understandings of gender.

Loan Tran questions whether gender still matters and, if so, what it means these days when "technological, linguistic, and cultural shifts are allowing us to think about gender in a way that was unimaginable just a few decades ago" (Reading 5). They (Loan Tran's

I like identifying as a woman and the solidarity and femininity that comes with it and I do think there are behavioral and physical cliffs btwn cis men & wmn.

however, this perspective could also arise from my bias that supports the notion that men can't be feminine / I want some parts of being a woman

for myself that male-identifying folk can't have — where is the line btwn. wanting a solid gender identity (non-fluid) & upholding reinforced norms?

THE FOCUS OF WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

Women's studies programs in United States date from the early 1970s and grew out of the vibrant women's liberation movements of those times. Early courses had titles like "Women's Liberation," "The Power of Patriarchy," and "Sexist Oppression and Women's Empowerment." Texts often included mimeographed articles from newsletters and pamphlets because there was so little material available in books. Over the years, scholars and activists have generated new understandings about gender with extensive bodies of literature and hundreds of programs in the United States and around the world, including Master's and PhD programs. Some departments have shifted their emphasis to women's and gender studies, or to women's, gender, and sexuality studies. Interdisciplinary fields like gay and lesbian studies, queer studies, ethnic studies, masculinity studies, cultural studies, and media studies have all shaped and benefitted from gender scholarship, as have older disciplines like literature, history, and sociology. As authors and editors, we draw on a wide range of sources to illustrate the breadth and vitality of women's and gender studies today.

The readings in this chapter provide a tiny sampling of the richness and diversity of US feminist thought. Over the generations, feminist writers and activists have drawn on their life experiences and beliefs in human liberation, evolving new perspectives that were often shocking at the time. Some arguments put forward by earlier generations might seem self-evident these days, but it is important to consider them in context. Earlier feminist thought provides foundations for current thinking and practice, which will also develop and change as others make their contributions to this ongoing endeavor.

These introductory readings are also in dialogue with those in the rest of this book. A key issue that links feminist thinking and movements internationally is violence against women in its many forms. This includes the #MeToo movement (Reading 59), Mexican women's protests against the killing of young women in the border region (Reading 30), West African women's efforts to heal from the turmoil and sexual violence of war (Reading 49), and those working to support Syrian refugees (Reading 47). Another theme concerns environmental justice: women in South India campaigning to stop Coca-Cola from plundering local water supplies (Reading 55); indigenous women in Latin America opposing mining, logging, and big dams that destroy their lands and livelihoods (Reading 39); and international organizations that are developing feminist principles for a just economy (Reading 60).

For students, women's and gender studies courses provide perspectives on individual experience and on other college courses in ways that are often life-changing. Many students report that these courses are both informative and empowering. Critical reading and integrative thinking, which are emphasized in women's and gender studies, are important academic and workplace skills. Graduates go on to work in business, community organizing, education, electoral politics, feminist advocacy projects, filmmaking, health, international policy, journalism, law, library work, publishing, social and human services, and more (see, e.g., Berger and Radeloff 2011; Luebke and Reilly 1995; Stewart 2007).

Women's and gender studies started as a critique of scholarship that ignored gender or treated women in stereotypical ways. It sought to provide missing information, new theoretical perspectives, and new ways of teaching. This kind of study can evoke strong emotions because you may be deeply affected by topics under discussion. Readings and class discussions may make you angry at the many forms of gender oppression, at other

students' ignorance or lack of concern, or at being female in a male-dominated world. You may be challenged to rethink some of your assumptions and experiences as well as your views on various issues.

Most feminist teachers do not use what Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970) called the "banking method" of education, common in many fields, where students are like banks and teachers deposit information—historical facts, dates, definitions, formulae—and withdraw it in quizzes and exams. Regardless of its relevance for other subjects, this method is not appropriate for women's and gender studies, where students come into class with life experience and views on many of the topics discussed. As students, you are familiar with opinions circulating in social media, for example, or how your spiritual community views matters you care about. In women's and gender studies classes, you are encouraged to reflect on your experiences and to relate the readings and class discussions to your own life. At the end of each chapter, we raise questions and suggest activities to help do this. We believe that you should understand how your experiences are connected to wider social and historical contexts so that you are part of your own system of knowledge.

Although not always explicit, education has always been a political matter: who has been allowed to learn, and what kinds of learning (basic literacy, skilled trades, or abstract thinking) are deemed appropriate for differe
important goals in US women's education concerned
to have access to the same curriculum, and to be adı
sions. Beyond this, feminist thinking has called ir
of knowledge itself, with its focus on white, male, e
to be universal, as we discuss in Chapter 2. As wom
continue to build their scholarly work and academic
position within academia, challenging male-domin
misunderstandings about feminism and women's a
puses and in the wider society. We consider three
at the related topic of men in women's and gender

it is a privilege and an ignorance to claim to not be political, regardless of what you study. Everything afforded to us has been afforded at the expense of someone before us who couldn't afford it.

maybe, but someone has to do it! It is easier than studying astrophysics, but remember why you can study astrophysics; remember why women could

Myth 1: Women's and Gender Studies Is Ideological

Some people assume that women's and gender studies is feminist propaganda, not "real" scholarship. They may believe that such courses are too "touchy-feely" or constitute extended gripe sessions against men. Feminist i
arisen from women's life experiences and from we
crimination. One example is the fact that, on averag
year-round work are 77 percent to 80 percent of wh
that women earn between 77 and 80 cents (depending on age) for every dollar earned by men. For African American women, this is 63 cents—and for Latinas, 54 cents—compared to white men (AAUW 2018). Knowledge is never neutral, and in women's and gender studies, this is made explicit.

launch rockets & photograph black holes.

Given its movement origins, the field has valued scholarly work that is relevant to activist concerns. Women's and gender studies courses seek to link intellectual, experiential, and emotional forms of knowing with the goal of improving everyone's lives. This is a rigorous endeavor, but it differs from much traditional scholarship, which values abstract knowledge, narrowly defined, as discussed in Chapter 2. By contrast,

women's and gender studies scholarship places a high value on breadth and connectedness. This kind of rigor requires broad understandings grounded in diverse experiences and the ability to make connections between insights from different perspectives.

To some people, feminism is more than an area of study. It is a cause to believe in because it provides cogent ways to understand the world, which may be personally empowering. In the face of egregious gender-based discrimination, it may be tempting to blame everything on "the patriarchy" or "rich white men" without taking the trouble to read or think critically. Students who do this are being anti-intellectual; they limit their own understanding and inadvertently reinforce the notion that women's and gender studies is anti-intellectual.

Myth 2: Women's and Gender Studies Is Narrow

Women's and gender studies seeks to understand and explain the significance of intersecting inequalities based on gender, race, class, dis/ability, sexuality, age, national origin, and so on. Feminist analyses provide a series of lenses to examine many topics and contribute to a long list of academic disciplines, from anthropology to ethnic studies, history, law, literature, psychology, and more. Feminist scholarship is on the cutting edge of many fields and raises crucial questions about teaching and learning, research design and methodologies, and theories of knowledge. Thus, far from being narrow, women's and gender studies is concerned with thinking critically about the world in all its complexity, as illustrated in this book.

Myth 3: Women's and Gender Studies Is a White, Middle-Class, Western Thing

Many notable scholars, writers, and activists of color identify as feminists. Among them are Julia Alvarez, Gloria Anzaldúa, Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Aurora Levins Morales, Nadine Naber, Loan Tran, and others whose work is included in this anthology. They link analyses of gender with race, class, and other systems of power and inequality, as do homegrown feminist movements in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean (see, e.g., Basu 2016; Moghadam 2005; Naples and Desai 2002). As African American writer and cultural critic bell hooks (2000) argued: "there should be billboards; ads in magazines; ads on buses, subways, trains; television commercials spreading the word, letting the world know more about feminism" because "feminism is for everybody" (p. x).

Men Doing Feminism

I understand the need & importance of this, but still feel some element / twinge of defensiveness.

Women's and gender studies classes include a growing number of men, and courses increasingly include scholarly work on masculinities. There is a long history of men's support for women's rights in the United States (see, e.g., Digby 1998; Kaufman and Kimmel 2011; Tarrant 2007; also see Reading 29). Indeed, the changes we discuss in this book cannot be achieved without men's full participation—whether as sons, brothers, fathers, partners, lovers, friends, classmates, coworkers, supervisors, labor organizers, spiritual leaders, teachers, doctors, lawyers, police officers, judges, legislators, and more. Women's and gender studies courses provide a strong grounding for this. Moreover, the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements have prompted discussions of manliness and masculinities, which hopefully will continue.

Because masculinities are socially constructed and highly constrained in this society, as in others, we assume that there is something for men in feminism beyond being allies to women (see, e.g., A. Johnson 2005; Tarrant 2007). People in dominant positions on any social dimension (gender, race, class, ability, nation, and so forth) have obvious benefits, and those with **privilege** may be afraid of losing it. At the same time, such structures of power and inequality are limiting for everyone. Privilege separates people and makes those of us in dominant positions ignorant of important truths. To be able to look others fully in the eye, we have to work to end systems of inequality. This repudiation of privilege is not a sacrifice, we believe, but rather the possibility of entering into genuine community where we can all be more truly human.

COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

In the past forty years or so, there has been a proliferation of popular and scholarly books, journals, magazines, websites, and blog posts on gender issues. When opinion polls, academic studies, government data, public debates, grassroots research, and personal narratives are added, it is easy to be swamped with information and varying perspectives. In making our selections as writers and editors, we have filtered this wealth of material according to four main principles—our particular road map, which provides the framework for this book.

1. A Matrix of Oppression, Privilege, and Resistance

Underlying our analysis is the concept of oppression, which we see as a group phenomenon even though individuals in specific groups many not think they are oppressed or want to be in positions of dominance. Every form of oppression—such as **sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, anti-Arabism, anti-Semitism,** and **able-bodyism**—is rooted in social institutions like the family, education, religion, government, law, and media. Those who are dominant in this society, as in others, use their relative power and privilege to rule, control, and exploit other groups—those who are subordinate—for the benefit of the dominant group.

aka ableism.

Oppression works through systems of power and inequality, including the dominance of certain values, beliefs, and assumptions about people and how society should be organized. Members of dominant groups generally have built-in economic, political, and cultural power and benefits regardless of whether they are aware of, or even want, these advantages. This [illegible] ilege. Those most privileged m[illegible] ntaged by sexism, whereas wo[illegible] ificant differences within these groups based on race, class, dis/ability, sexuality or gender expression.

men get defensive because they claim they don't want their privilege: that's fine, they don't have to want it — but they still have it, use it, and have to be accountable even though we shouldn't be ~man-haters~ or whatever.

Oppression involves **prejudice**, which we define as unreasonable, unfair, and hostile *attitudes* and *judgments* toward people, and **discrimination**, or differential *treatment* favoring those who are in positions of dominance. But oppression reaches beyond individual behavior. It is promoted by every social institution and cannot be fully changed without fundamental changes in institutional practices and **ideologies**—the ideas, at[illegible]ions embody and perpetuate. Our definition of oppres[illegible]rns to participate in oppressive practices, thus helping to [illegible] involved as perpetrators or passive beneficiaries, or they

& some take this clause and run with it, using it to avoid personal accountability.

may direct **internalized oppression** at members of their own group. Oppression results in appropriation and the loss—both voluntary and involuntary—of voice, identity, and agency of oppressed peoples. What examples can you think of to illustrate this?

It is important to think about oppression as a system, at times blatantly obvious and at others subtly nuanced, rather than as an either/or dichotomy of privileged/disadvantaged or oppressor/oppressed. People may be privileged in some respects (e.g., in terms of race or gender) and disadvantaged in others (e.g., class or sexual expression). We use the phrase **matrix of oppression, privilege, and resistance** to describe the interrelatedness of various forms of oppression, the fact that people may be privileged on certain dimensions and disadvantaged on others, and to recognize both oppression and privilege as potentially powerful sources of resistance and change. We note that people of different groups learn what is considered appropriate behavior for them in their families, in school, or from media representations and popular culture. As a result, people may internalize dominant ideas so that we "police" ourselves without the need for overt oppression from outside.

2. From the Personal to the Global

Throughout this book, we make connections between people's personal experiences and wider social systems that we are part of. We use the analytical terms **micro level** (personal or individual), **meso level** (community, neighborhood, or school), **macro level** (national or institutional), and **global level** to make these links. To understand people's experiences or the complexity of a particular issue, it is necessary to look at all of these levels and how they interconnect. Take a personal relationship, for instance. This operates on a micro level. However, both partners bring all of themselves to the relationship. So in addition to individual factors like being funny, generous, or "hot," there are meso-level aspects—like where you live and what high school you went to, which are affected by economic inequalities and segregation in housing—and macro-level factors—like the obvious or hidden ways in which men or white people are privileged in this society. As editors, we make connections between these levels of analysis in our overview essays and have chosen readings that also make these links.

Given the diversity and complexity of US society, we have chosen to focus on the United States in this book. However, we also discuss the preeminence of the United States in the world. This is evident through the dominance of the English language and the widespread distribution of US movies, news media, TV shows, music, books, and websites. It manifests through the power of the dollar as an international currency and the impact of US-based corporations abroad, especially in poorer countries of the Global South. Dominance is also apparent in the broad reach of US foreign and military policy. Students who have lived in other parts of the world often know this from their own experience. We see "nation" as an analytical category like race or gender, and in some places, we refer to gender issues and feminist thinking and activism in other nations. A global level of analysis recognizes that patriarchy, heteronormativity, and militarism are global phenomena, although with differences in practice from nation to nation.

3. Linking the Head, Heart, and Hands

Humankind faces serious challenges if we are to sustain ourselves, our children, *their* children, and the environment that supports all life. Although some women in the United

States have benefited from greater opportunities for education and wage earning, many are now working harder or longer hours than their mothers did, and are under pressure to keep a job and to juggle waged work with caring for a family. Over the past forty years, economic changes and government policies have made many people's lives more difficult. Examples include a loss of factory and office jobs as work has been moved overseas or become automated, government failure to introduce an adequate system of child care or a health care system that benefits everyone, cuts in welfare programs, restrictions of government support to immigrants and their families, and a dramatic increase in the number of people who are incarcerated. Government spending illustrates these priorities. Some states spend more on incarceration than on higher education, for example. A massive 47 percent of the federal discretionary budget is earmarked for military spending, a total of $717 billion for fiscal year 2019 (US Department of Defense 2018). At the same time, thousands of people are homeless, many urban schools lack basic resources, and funding for services from preschool programs to the Veterans Administration has been cut back. Individuals are affected by such policies as they negotiate intimate relationships, raise children, and make a living for themselves and their families.

In the face of these negative economic and political trends, we mention many inspiring projects and organizations to showcase activist work that is often not recognized in the mainstream media. We urge you to find out more about such projects on the Web and to take action yourself. We see collective action for progressive social change as a major goal of scholarly work, especially in a field like women's and gender studies. Doing something about an issue requires us to have an explanation about it, to have ideas for a different way of doing things, followed by action—linking the head, heart, and hands (a theme we will return to later).

4. A Secure and Sustainable Future

Security and sustainability are central issues for the twenty-first century. This includes the personal security of knowing who we are as individuals; having sturdy relationships with family and friends; living free from threats, violence, or coercion; having adequate income or livelihood; and enjoying health and well-being. It also involves security for communities, nations, and our overburdened planet. We see structural inequalities based on race, class, gender, and nation as a major threat to long-term security worldwide because they create literal and metaphorical walls, gates, and fences that separate people and maintain hierarchies among us. We argue that creating a more sustainable future means rethinking materialism and consumerism and finding fairer ways to distribute wealth so that everyone may thrive.

Throughout our discussion, we emphasize the diversity of women's experiences. We assume no easy "sisterhood" across lines of race, class, nation, age, ability, sexuality, or gender expression, but we do believe that alliances built on the recognition and understanding of such differences can make effective collective action possible.

THE SCOPE OF THIS BOOK

This book is concerned with the conditions facing people of all genders and the long-term work of transforming those conditions. In Part I (Chapters 1–3), we introduce examples of feminist thought from the United States; we argue for a theoretical framework

that allows students to understand the significance of gender, race, class, sexuality, dis/ability, nation, and more; and we discuss the role of identity and social location as standpoints for creating knowledge and understanding. Part II (Chapters 4–6) explores women's experiences of their bodies, sexuality, health, and sexualized violence. In Part III (Chapters 7 and 8), we look at what is involved in making a home and making a living, and how opportunities in the United States and abroad are shaped by global factors. In Part IV (Chapters 9–11), we continue to explore concepts of security and sustainability by looking at crime and criminalization, militarization, and the impacts of environmental destruction. Finally, in Part V (Chapter 12), we examine the importance of theories, visions, and actions for creating change, using the head, heart, and hands together.

Throughout the book, we draw on personal narratives, journalists' accounts, government data, scholarly papers, and the work of nonprofit research and advocacy organizations. Our overview essays provide some historical and contemporary context for the readings, which amplify key points. Our overall argument is that improving people's lives in the United States also means directing ourselves, our communities, this society, and the wider world toward a more sustainable future.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

As you read and discuss this chapter, think about these questions:

1. What is your ancestry—biologically, culturally, and intellectually? How would you answer Paula Gunn Allen's question: Who is your mother?
2. How can you learn more about the history of feminist movements? Who will be your teachers? What sources will you use?
3. What does feminism mean to you? Keep your answer, and return to this question at the end of the course.

FINDING OUT MORE ON THE WEB

1. In Reading 1, Paula Gunn Allen mentions Lysistrata. Who was she?
2. In Reading 3, the writers mention Dr. Kenneth Edelin, Joan Little, and Inéz Garcia. Who were these people? Why were they significant?
3. How many Black men held seats in the US Congress in 2000 compared to 1900?
4. Look at how blogs such as Feministing (http://feministing.com) or Quirky Black Girls (http://quirkyblackgirls.blogspot.com) discuss current feminist issues.

TAKING ACTION

1. Find quotes or slogans about feminism that resonate for you.
2. Find a feminist blog you like, and read it regularly.
3. Ask older people in your family or community about their involvement in a social movement.
4. Interview your professors or the staff of your campus women's center to learn about the beginnings of women's and gender studies at your college or university.
5. Join an organization or support a campaign on a feminist issue you care about.

What surprised you when reading and watching the material today? In other words, what did you learn that was new today that you did not know before about feminism, feminists, and feminist movements?

→ surprising to read that the message I've heard about the completely unbridled dominance of white feminism in earlier waves (e.g. wave 1/2 feminism) was not as rampant:
- leads me to think — is the focus on the divisiveness in feminism a divisive tactic in of itself?
- of course it is crucial to acknowledge exclusionary groups who appropriate the 'feminism' label to exclude marginalized communities (women of color, POC overall, trans/nonbinary people) & surround the true, positive idea of feminism with what is essentially bad PR & antifeminist propaganda.

What do you think about Bone's examples of how we can talk about feminism? What are some examples of documentaries, movies, television series, Blogs, etc. that we can name that can help us start conversations and keep conversations going about feminism?

I think just pushing more casually woman-centric content/discussions would help:
- I don't mean that women should be the topic of discussion, because that inherently makes the discussion about not being about men (so, about men).
- I think we need to stop talking about men so much sometimes & I don't mean this in a pick-me way:
  - ↳ I am a woman who sends my boyfriend tiktoks concerning relationship content sometimes.
  - → I also interact with more feminine/female-coded content that algorithms associate with women.
    - ∴ my feed is biased toward content about women with male partners.
  - → acknowledging all of this, I still think the narratives pushed in this content are too male-centric.
    - these all about men/waiting for men/being victims of men/doing something in spite of a man!
  - → just do shit for yourself!!! get a hobby! be a distinct person!
    - further in my defense, content 'for men with female partners' does not center around a notion of dependence on women in a reciprocal way.

This is just one specific example, but I think it still illustrates my point.