GLOBAL CAPITALISM, FEMINIST ACTIVISM: PEDAGOGIC AND CURRICULAR INTERVENTIONS FOR U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION

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Global Capitalism, Feminist Activism: Pedagogic and Curricular Interventions for
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This thesis is dedicated to all scholar-activists straddling the boundaries of academia and community, and to those struggling to find themselves intellectually without losing themselves spiritually.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Global Capitalism, Feminist Activism: Pedagogic and Curricular Interventions for U.S. Higher Education
by
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Feminism’s commitment to nurturing antisenst movement for social justice necessitates an analysis of U.S. feminist higher education through a critical lens concerned with global solidarity. My thesis examines institutionalized U.S. feminist education and its current contribution to mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of commonality as a foundation for relationships across difference. It is crucial to discern academic feminisms’ role in challenging or reinscribing U.S. hegemonic ideology through pedagogy and curriculum because it is a prominent location for feminist research and theorizing. It is also proximal to, and at times closely interwoven with, feminist social justice activism within and beyond higher education settings.

First, I examine the growing influence corporations have on universities, and the consequences that capitalist structural shifts have for ideological and pedagogic endeavors concerned with eliminating power differentials on and off campus. Secondly, I outline feminist pedagogy to discern the role of classroom praxis in fostering active commitment to widespread social justice movement. Thirdly, I address theoretical insights to develop a framework necessary for examining transnational perspectives situated within women’s studies core curricula. Specifically, I analyze twenty feminist theory undergraduate course syllabi through a feminist solidarity lens constructed according to Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s comparative feminist studies curricular model, which is premised on a recognition of the constitutive links between the local and the global foregrounding points of connection and disjuncture rather than physical geography or territory. The three themes explored in this work – the university, pedagogy, and core curricula – each uniquely govern feminist higher education and women’s studies’ ability to nurture transnational social justice movement grounded in global solidarity. Indeed, they are linked in that they are the “where,” the “how,” and the “what” associated with academic feminism. Thus, I locate these themes as areas for suggested intervention into U.S. higher education. The ideas presented here are intended to be of some use to other educators in considering how to utilize pedagogy and curricula to nurture and disseminate solidarity-based feminist epistemologies and encourage solidarity-based feminist movement among students while negotiating varied forms of oppression in which we, ourselves, are implicated.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology &amp; Embodiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 CORPORATE THREATS TO CRITICAL PEDAGOGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberatory Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to Social Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Teaching Praxis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 TRANSFORMATIVE FEMINIST PEDAGOGIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Pedagogies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 CURRICULUM FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Women’s Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Theorizing Beyond Nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating Global Perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Solidarity Curricular Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist-as-Tourist Curricular Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist-as-Explorer Curricular Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 CONCLUSION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Feminist projects enacted within U.S. academe produce diverse epistemologies grounded variedly in commitment to social justice locally and globally. This thesis examines institutionalized U.S. feminist education and its current contribution to global solidarity, defined in terms of “mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests as the basis of relationships among diverse communities” (Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders* 7). Feminism’s commitment to fostering antisexist movements for social justice globally necessitates an analysis of U.S. feminist higher education through a critical lens concerned with global solidarity. It is crucial to discern academic feminisms’ role in challenging or reinscribing U.S. hegemonic ideology through pedagogy and curriculum because it is a prominent location for feminist research and theorizing. It is also proximal to, and at times closely interwoven with, feminist social justice activism inside and outside higher education settings.

First, this thesis examines the growing influence corporations have on universities, and the consequences that capitalist structural shifts have for ideological and pedagogic endeavors concerned with eliminating power differentials inside and outside of higher education institutions. Secondly, this work outlines feminist pedagogy to discern the role of classroom praxis in fostering activism committed to widespread movement for social justice. Thirdly, it addresses theoretical insights to develop a framework necessary for the examination of transnational perspectives situated within women’s studies core curricula. Specifically, twenty feminist theory undergraduate course syllabi are analyzed through a feminist solidarity lens constructed according to Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s comparative feminist studies curricular model, which is premised on a recognition of the constitutive links between the local and the global foregrounding points of connection and disjuncture rather than physical geography or territory (*Feminism without Borders* 242). The three themes explored in this work – the university, pedagogy, and core curricula – each uniquely govern feminist higher education and women’s studies’ ability to foster social justice movement
based in global solidarity. Indeed, they are linked in that they are the “where,” the “how,” and the “what” associated with academic feminism. Thus, I locate these themes as areas for suggested intervention into U.S. higher education and elaborate on each in both critique and celebration. Finally, research concludes with suggestions for further inquiry into similar areas. The ideas presented here are intended to be of some use to other educators in considering how to utilize pedagogy and curricula to nurture and disseminate solidarity-based feminist epistemologies and encourage solidarity-based feminist movement among students while negotiating varied forms of oppression in which we, ourselves, are implicated.

**MAJOR QUESTIONS**

- How does the corporatization of U.S. universities impede pedagogic projects grounded in commitment to social justice for global solidarity?
- What role does feminist classroom pedagogy play in fostering student empowerment and commitment to social justice locally and globally?
- Do U.S. women’s studies inclusivity practices such as the integration of transnational perspectives into the core curricula align with feminist solidarity curricular models?
- What can pedagogic and curricular analyses reveal about U.S. academic feminism’s capability to cultivate or obstruct feminist solidarity locally and globally?

**METHOD**

This thesis engages with classic and contemporary works in the fields of both feminist theories and feminist pedagogies as pertaining to U.S. feminist higher education. AnaLouise Keating’s conception of interconnectivity via her notion of “transformational multiculturalism,” as explained in *Teaching Transformation: Transcultural Classroom Dialogues*, is specifically employed in conjunction with canonical works in critical, radical, and feminist pedagogies. Transitioning from U.S based theorizing to transnational feminist pedagogies, Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s, “Under Western Eyes Revisited,” is utilized, as are works of several scholars committed to academic freedom, revolutionary classroom praxis, and transnational women’s studies projects. Lastly, the analyses presented here are greatly informed by insights garnered from implementing some of these ideas in two sections of WMNST 101: *Self, Identity and Society*, and in two sections of SOC 110: *Contemporary*
Social Problems that I taught over the past year at San Diego State University and San Diego City College, respectively.¹

Adequate space is allotted to historically contextualize many of the topics explored here, including the role of higher education in democratic citizenry, critical pedagogy, and U.S. women’s studies. Comprehensive review of the literature appears throughout the various chapters and is conducted to provide background necessary for examining current diverse pedagogic and curricular activities employed by U.S. academic feminism. Pedagogic and curricular trends in women’s studies are viewed through a critical lens cognizant of the contributions and limitations associated with the field based on the constantly evolving nature of feminism enacted within U.S. academe.

The research presented is inclusive of both primary and secondary sources. In addition to academic texts and refereed journal articles, I draw on primary source documents to conduct an analysis of 20 feminist theory undergraduate syllabi designed for women’s studies courses offered between 2006 and 2011. These primary sources were obtained in two ways. First, a call for feminist theory course syllabi was announced through a popular women’s studies listserv to which several respondents replied via email with syllabi attached. Secondly, syllabi were collected from the Internet using Google Search engine, which yielded results available mainly on women’s studies departmental websites affiliated with respective universities. A more detailed description of the method employed for the syllabus analysis appears in Chapter 4, and additional information pertaining to the syllabi can be found in the Appendix. Additionally, this scholarship is interdisciplinary in nature encompassing sociology, education, cultural studies, and others but is grounded in women’s studies.

Furthermore, global financial institutions are referenced to make the necessary linkages between economic globalization and ethical and pedagogic shifts in U.S. higher education. Current events in local and global political and economic spheres pertaining to higher education and social justice activism are utilized to complement the presented

¹ In 2010 I co-taught a section of SOC 11: Contemporary Social Problems with Dr. Sarah Pitcher, professor in the Behavioral Sciences department at San Diego City College.
research. Lastly, my own pedagogic philosophies, grounded in commitment to global solidarity across difference are evident in these pages.

**METHODOLOGY & EMBODIMENT**

Feminist practice as I understand it operates on a number of levels: at the level of daily life through the everyday acts that constitute out identities and relational communities; at the level of collective action in groups, networks, and movements constituted around feminist visions of social transformation; and at the levels of theory, pedagogy, and textual creativity in the scholarly and writing practices of feminist engaged in the production of knowledge.

—Chandra Talpade Mohanty

*Decolonization, Anticapitalist Critique, and Feminist Commitments*

There are innumerable locations from which to begin an analysis of the ways U.S. feminism cultivates or obstructs the development of solidarity for diverse communities situated around the world in this era of increased economic globalization. Drawing from Linda Alcoff’s definition of positionality, which “allows women to use their positional perspective as a place from where values are interpreted and constructed rather than as a locus of an already determined set of values,” (434) I recognize that my social location as a women’s studies graduate student at a state university in the U.S. greatly informs my role as a researcher as well as my interest in academic feminism specifically. Furthermore, my methodology for this project embraces Alcoff’s notion of positionality in that it provides a conceptual framework allowing feminist researchers to “say at one and the same time that gender is not natural, biological, universal, ahistorical, or essential and yet still claim that gender is still relevant because we are taking gender as a position from which to act politically” (433). Indeed, this thesis engages with topics emerging out of the intersection of global politics and higher education that relate directly to women, women’s education, and women’s movement activism. The research presented maintains that while “we are related to all that lives,” the gendered ways diverse groups of women experience various social, political, and economic processes require attention paid to the particular positions we inhabit (Keating 125).

As an educator engaged in feminist pedagogical praxis both inside and outside of classroom environments, I am invested in cultivating feminist epistemologies and activist strategies that resonate with general populations to incite feminist consciousness and the desire for feminist revolution transnationally. In other words, while this project directly
engages with academic feminism and the pedagogic and curricular contributions feminist higher education has for fostering critical awareness among university students, I do not believe that feminist consciousness ignited within academia is in any way limited by academia. Its borders are porous and shifting, and the corridors of the university cannot and do not contain students’ feminist acts. Student identities are also shifting, and those exposed to feminism in academia acquire analytical tools that are carried far beyond higher education environments into diverse arenas in particular communities.

Indeed, liberatory pedagogy is premised on the belief that education may act as a material force for social change; it foregrounds the processes by which teachers encourage students, as empowered subjects, to achieve a deepening awareness of the social realities that shape their lives and discover their own capacity to re-create them (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 15). Accordingly, I hold steadfast to the belief that while educators cannot themselves liberate anyone, they are in a strategic position to invite students to liberate themselves (Darder 557). Thus, my location as a feminist educator is cognizant of students’ complex identities and does not wish undermine the experiential knowledge students bring into the classroom – women’s studies courses are not the sole vehicle for exposure to social, political, and economic processes. At the same time, however, I do believe that women’s studies courses serve to contribute to the potential that higher education maintains for crafting pedagogies of liberation and for extending opportunities for growth to students. Women’s studies curricula that fail to organize along a feminist solidarity analytic fail to take advantage of the moment in which feminist education may prepare students to navigate a twenty-first century political atmosphere increasingly informed by globalization as they embark on lives outside academia.

Additionally, many feminist pedagogic and curricular projects aim to deconstruct supposed “Academic/Real world” divides, and interpret them as a socially constructed, misleading binaries. Challenging such dichotomies may occur through direct exchange between women’s studies programs and larger community building projects that take multiple forms including service-learning and internship opportunities for students, curricular developments that strive to ground the study of women in both material and discursive social
realities, and university/community collaboration for addressing women’s experiences around topics like violence, health, and poverty. Thus situating this research within a context that is deeply aware of the complex ways that academia and community overlap and are inextricably linked to social, political, and economic local and global processes resists overarching claims that academic feminism is inherently exclusionary of actors not affiliated with higher education institutions. Concurrently, a prominent narrative of exclusion is associated with academic feminism, and the history of marginalization for women of color, queer women, and working class and poor women within women’s studies is analyzed here. However, my main premise is that women’s studies is not required to be exclusionary, and academic feminism has potential to directly challenge uneven power differentials should it continue to be “marked by constant interrogation, reflection, debate, and reinscription”; a process to which this thesis contributes (Zimmerman 31).

Furthermore, there is no doubt that the shifting nature of society warrants new, more inclusive ways of approaching the study of women as global capitalism increasingly exploits racialized and sexed bodies in its search for profit globally (Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders* 250). Curricular and pedagogic tendencies that underscore mutuality and accountability across diverse groups differently affected by intersectional, relational, and mutually constitutive forms of oppression enhanced by economic globalization must be nurtured in multiple disciplines. I assert that women’s studies – an (inter)discipline committed not only to crafting epistemologies that begin with women’s experiences but one that does so to incite feminist movement for social justice – is uniquely positioned to

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2 To draw from my own institution for examples, I point to the department of Women’s Studies at San Diego State University. Women’s studies at SDSU centers community engagement through several avenues including a 3 credit course titled, WMNST 598: *Women’s Studies Internship*, in which students (and faculty) work with community organizations like San Diego Women’s History Museum, Young Women’s Studies Club at Hoover High School, San Diego Center for Community Solutions, Planned Parenthood of San Diego and Riverside Counties, South Bay Community Services, Inc., YWCA of San Diego County, and The Center (Lesbian and Gay Men’s Community Center). San Diego State University women’s studies also creates a space on campus for the larger community in part through Feminist Research Colloquia hosted by the department’s Bread and Roses Center. Past colloquia have featured lectures by Loretta Ross, National Coordinator of the women of color reproductive justice organization SisterSong in 2010, and Beverly Bell, founder, Coordinating Committee Member, and Program Coordinator for Other Worlds, a women-driven, multi-media education and movement-building collaborative committed to just structural alternatives for diverse communities in 2011. Recent workshops have also been organized in conjunction with California Latinas for Reproductive Justice and the National Latina Health Organization.
undertake such matters. Therefore, this thesis is a project of hope that critiques U.S. higher education and academic feminism based on a steadfast commitment to the role combined feminist scholarship and activism may take in potentially altering structural and systemic oppression inside and outside of U.S. university settings. In other words, feminist pedagogy and transnational curricula within women’s studies can be interventions into U.S. higher education if they are nurtured along anticapitalist lines in order to confront U.S. hegemony and enliven movement for social justice globally.

While economic globalization is by no means a new phenomenon, the growing role that corporate interests play in university structures is shifting the nature of higher education in the United States. Working from a starting point that takes seriously the potential academic feminism holds for fostering movement for global solidarity, a major task then becomes uncovering to what degree critical, radical, and feminist pedagogical and curricular projects may be permitted to thrive within institutions increasingly impacted by global capitalism. Chapter 2 examines the complex processes associated with the corporatization of the university in order to arrive at a nuanced understanding of the impact neoliberal values have on academic projects that are not committed to heightened productivity for increased profit. Specifically, I examine corporate universities’ threat to democratic citizenship, academic freedom, and scholarship and pedagogy rooted in social justice. For this critique I employ a transnational, anticapitalist feminist framework utilizing aspects of Peter McLaren’s Marxist-humanist theories of revolutionary critical pedagogy while recognizing the limitations of epistemic and pedagogic paradigms that do not position gender at the center of inquiry. Accordingly, my methodology incorporates Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s concept of anti-globalization pedagogy, a strategy that draws on historical materialism and centralizes racialized gender to develop anticapitalist curricular models for solidarity-based feminist education.

Overall, Chapter 2 asserts that higher education is a powerful vehicle for developing critical consciousness and dedication to social justice in university actors and contends that global capitalism serves to impede academic endeavors grounded in what Bell Hooks terms, “engaged pedagogy,” or deep commitment to “education as the practice of freedom” (Teaching to Transgress 13). This work is temporally relevant; capitalist shifts in education are largely due to growing institutional reliance on corporate monies as U.S. state and federal
budgets continue to slash education funding in a time of economic crisis. Engaging in analyses of university corporatization is an intervention into U.S. higher education in and of itself as failure to recognize capitalism’s influence over such institutions serves only to strengthen its hold.

Indeed, this project grew out of commitment to various traditions of liberatory pedagogy put forth by Bell Hooks, Carolyn Shrewsbury, Edén Torres, and AnaLouise Keating, Chandra Mohanty, and many more. Chapter 3 engages directly with the works of these scholars in order to highlight the role that pedagogy plays as an intervention into higher education to cultivate feminist awareness among students. In other words, how does feminist classroom praxis help foster critical consciousness? How might it ignite student desire for social justice and commitment to social justice activism? In order to locate the university as a site where critical consciousness has been fostered throughout modern U.S. history, I start with the U.S. progressive education movement and outline the evolution of mid-twentieth century critical pedagogy. Close attention is paid to teaching philosophies that dismiss “banking concepts” of education and authoritarian professor/student power differentials reproduced there within in favor of pedagogies committed to student development and growth (Freire 72). Beyond the inspirational works of critical pedagogues, the impetus for this research also emerges from my personal experience with the alienating nature of higher education. As a multi-ethnic woman from a poor background currently engaged in graduate study my academic journey has been in many ways painful and empowering. Importantly, it has guided me toward a loving critique of higher education, and this thesis is grounded in commitment to bettering the institution. Thus Chapter 3 is informed by the U.S. feminist slogan, “the personal is political,” and recognizes the relevance of pedagogic tendencies and classroom experiences in discussions of institutional oppression and structural and social change.

By analyzing critical and radical pedagogy and examining the ways feminist pedagogies draw from, critique and enrich these pedagogic traditions, I underscore feminist demands for pedagogies that expand and shift to incorporate the unique ways in which privilege and oppression intersect to inform the classroom experiences of people from a variety of diverse social locations. Chapter 3 holds steadfast to the assertion that relationship politics within the classroom can be a model for communities of learners as they leave
campuses – daily after class and permanently upon graduation – that are applicable to larger social situations. Feminist praxis within the classroom, again, is not limited by academia and academic feminist manifestations are undeniably significant to worldwide movement for feminist solidarity.

Despite the importance of how feminist educators teach, equally significant is what topics feminist educators emphasize in classroom settings. Women’s studies programs and departments in particular have been academic sites in which specific issues that affect certain groups of women are granted legitimacy. This legitimacy is based not only on what women/women’s issues are studied within academia – a process that confers or withholds epistemic value – but also on the presence or absence of certain perspectives within the core women’s studies curriculum, which guides learners’ understanding of the worth and relevancy of certain topics for feminist scholarship and activism within and beyond classroom environments.

While scholarship focused on the presence of transnational perspectives within women’s studies curriculum exists prior to my scholarly intervention, Chapter 4’s analysis of feminist theory undergraduate course syllabi constructed between 2006 and 2011 is a current and direct exploration of the ways in which women’s studies practitioners challenge or reproduce exclusionary curricular tendencies within academic feminism at this particular moment in time. Although this thesis maintains that a syllabus analysis is in many ways limited in examining pedagogic philosophies employed in women’s studies, analyzing transnational perspectives put forth by feminist theory undergraduate in (1) course objectives and (2) assigned reading reveals pertinent information for educators committed to inclusive feminist projects enacted on university campuses. The syllabi serve as primary source documents that illustrate national trends in the construction of women’s studies core curriculum in the United States and therefore the objectives and ambitions of various programs and departments committed to feminist education.

Pedagogues maintain a certain amount of autonomy when designing course syllabi, and course objectives serve as an avenue for illustrating which themes and concepts are deemed worthy of semester-long engagement. Through assigned readings women’s studies practitioners may resist heavy reliance on canonical texts in feminist theory and depart from
hegemonic feminist epistemologies grounded solely in North American/western contexts to highlight the epistemic contributions made by women from diverse parts of the globe.

Overall, Chapter 4 asserts that hegemonic versions of feminist education that center North American/western feminist epistemologies perpetuate western superiority and ignore the complex realities of oppression and resistance for non-western women as well as the relational, mutually constitutive nature of privilege and oppression linked with uneven First World/Third World power differentials, which often result in the existence of certain privileges for western women that are tied to the oppression of women outside North American/western contexts – particularly as economic globalization gains increasing influence over social and political processes world wide.

Additionally, Chapter 4 maintains that women’s studies curricular projects that limit student interaction with non-western feminist epistemologies by simply adding transnational components to unaltered course syllabi organized along North American/western epistemological lines employs a version of ethnocentrism that tokenizes Third World women’s feminisms. Furthermore, women’s diverse forms of agency suffer an erasure due to add-and-stir curricular approaches for integrating transnational perspectives into women’s studies core curriculum. The radical power associated with women’s anticlonial and antipoverty activism are lost once absorbed into a limiting western conceptualization of what constitutes feminist activism, i.e., antisexism projects concerned with bettering the status of women by challenging mainly gender inequality. Bringing transnational perspectives into the women’s studies core curriculum is a necessary part of intervening into U.S. higher education to help cultivate U.S. feminist movement capable of collaborating transnationally to challenge multiple forms of oppression globally.

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3 Here I invoke Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s explanation regarding her use of the signifiers “First World” and “Third World,” within feminist scholarship. She writes, “Terms such as ‘Third World’ and ‘First World’ are very problematic, both in suggesting oversimplified similarities between and among countries labeled thus and in implicitly reinforcing existing economic, cultural, and ideological hierarchies that are conjured up in using terminology” (Feminism without Borders 254). She recognizes the problems associated with relying on these terms, and uses them “because this is the terminology available to us as this moment” (Feminism without Borders 254). I, like Mohanty, use the terms critically throughout this thesis. For more on this see chapters 2, 8, and 9 of Mohanty’s Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity. Additionally, I do not employ “global North” and “global South” despite their availability because these terms are often set against each other to form a binary not inclusive of diversity in class in either geographic location.
While Chapter 4 outlines my methodological approach to analyzing feminist theory undergraduate course syllabi in more detail, my decision to research curricular trends in feminist theory is closely tied to my collusion with Bell Hooks’ concept of “theory as liberatory practice” described in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Hooks, critical of abstract academic theorizing, condemns it as a hierarchical tool of exclusion that contains obscure references and highly jargonistic language in order to silence, divide, and separate diverse groups of people committed to solidarity-based feminist movement across difference (*Teaching to Transgress* 65). She contends that feminists must reconceptualize theory to highlight its liberatory and healing functions, which emerge as we envision the practice of theory as the lived experience of critical awareness, reflection and analysis that occurs as we struggle to make sense of the world around us (61). Accordingly, theory that is accessible to all is crucial to collective struggle to resist oppression and exploitation, and “we must continually claim theory as a necessary practice within a holistic framework of liberatory activism” (69). As a student/teacher invested in radical feminist change inside and outside of higher education, rethinking the delivery, purpose, and power of theory must be central to my academic and life’s work.

Thus, Chapter 4 examines the manifestation of transnational perspectives included in feminist theory undergraduate course syllabi based on recognition of the transformative potential theorizing holds for addressing personal and collective pain rooted in the material realities that accompany structural and systemic oppression. An awareness and understanding of theory’s role in nurturing inclusive feminist movement for social justice across social, economic, and geographic borders also guides this analysis. Feminist theory undergraduate courses create spaces for students to deconstruct interlocking systems of privilege and oppression; they are introduced to analytical tools, including language and reflective praxis, useful for making sense of the social, political, and economic processes that affect us all. Feminist theory courses that fall short of incorporating transnational perspectives limit engaged student praxis – a process grounded in theory, action, and continuous self-reflection that must integrate local and global environments to foster solidarity-based activism that fully honors difference from a place of accountability and mutuality. Theory’s liberatory potential is undermined when transnational, anticapitalist feminist teaching moments slip by to reinforce hegemonic U.S.-centered curricula.
Due to the scope of this project there are many aspects of feminist higher education that could not be examined here. Indeed, pedagogy is an ever-evolving field of inquiry, and the analytic frameworks posited in Chapter 4 could be utilized to discern integration trends for a variety of perspectives crucial to inclusive women’s studies projects. Furthermore, the “Academic/Real World” divide warrants additional attention, and I became increasingly interested in educational praxis “without walls” during the research and writing process. Future research might focus on strategies for classroom praxis that blurs the lines between university and community beyond women’s studies programs’ involvement with local organizations.

Specifically in terms of integrating transnational perspectives into core curricula, women’s studies practitioners might engage with the possibilities of feminist courses designed to incorporate the voices of local immigrant and refugee communities. Aili Mari Tripp writes, “effective feminist action necessitates having accurate, up-to-date information on a situation, including local dynamics, history of the conflict, past and present struggles of women’s and feminist organizations, and an understanding of the different positions taken by various local actors” (306). No doubt the voices of local immigrant and refugee women in the U.S. could contribute greatly to transnational feminist projects organized in academia; lived experience provides a wealth of information unavailable to most educators and might more accurately guide solidarity-based feminist movement strategies emerging on university campuses. Major inquiries surrounding this topic are numerous: how do feminist educators currently reach out to local immigrant and refugee communities? How do the voices of local immigrant and refugee women manifest in classroom settings? Could feminist theory undergraduate course readings shift to include local immigrant and refugee women’s stories? How then, would we have to reconceptualize theory for our students, for ourselves, and for community members?

The possibilities for further inquiry into similar areas are diverse and exciting. And though this work is limited in its scope, it is my hope that the research presented serves to encourage feminist educators in academia to (re)evaluate what we teach, how we teach, and why we teach – all three spheres can become interventions into U.S. higher education that confront growing capitalist influence over academic freedom, the reinscription of patriarchal, racial, and class hierarchy in classrooms and on campuses, and U.S. hegemony reproduced
worldwide. Pedagogic and curricular projects grounded in steadfast commitment to higher education environments that center inclusivity during this movement of heightened global capitalism must be nurtured in the interest of solidarity-based feminist movements for social justice locally and globally.
CHAPTER 2

CORPORATE THREATS TO CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Chapter two explores the complexities of globalization, which pose unique material and philosophical challenges for radical educators dedicated to utilizing critical pedagogical praxis in higher education. The “borderlessness” that accompanies the rise of globalized society facilitates the mobility of everything from technology to financial capital, modes of governance to cross-national political movements (Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders* 173). Epistemic mobility, or knowledge traveling across borders, buttresses critical pedagogical goals occupied with liberatory education as well as the potential that teaching strategies designed to foster critical awareness have for encouraging social justice activism. Global equality incited by the eradication of widespread oppression is more easily envisioned as transnational resistance strategies for solidarity travel across vast distances to nurture campus and community advocacy. Yet the complex effects that economic globalization has on university life require deep analysis by those committed to “education as the practice of freedom” (Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 19). Global capitalism permeates all aspects of the political and economic landscape leaving no social institution untouched. As neoliberal policies intensify around the world, universities in the United States, themselves institutions of higher learning, undergo pronounced functional and ethical shifts that require the implementation of administrations more invested in profit than democratic citizenship.

This chapter engages with the best that critical pedagogical philosophy has to offer in its contribution to the development of critical awareness among higher education learners.  

While maintaining adequate room for growth specifically in its ability to engage with diverse manifestations of personal and political experiences informed by intersections of gender, race, class, etc., critical pedagogy’s main tenets are absolutely essential to the cultivation of

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4 Chapter three of this thesis is thoroughly examines the modern history of critical pedagogy as well current pedagogical trends in higher education.
democratic citizenship within the corridors of U.S. academe (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 16; McLaren 27). Additionally, this research recognizes that U.S. universities are a prominent tool for the reinscription of hierarchy, and are inherently limited in terms of their ability to serve all populations of students adequately. Nevertheless, higher education continues to provide spaces where public dialogue, political engagement, and the envisioning of social equality manifest. The advance of global capitalism as a privatizing mechanism for the university, however, intensifies global capitalism’s dominance over U.S. university campuses, consequently threatening critical pedagogical principles that highlight commitment to academic freedom, dedication to social justice for global equality, and engaged pedagogical praxis informed by the dialectical relationship between theory, practice, and continuous self-reflection. Critical pedagogues who dedicate their teaching and research to the realization of genuine democracy have warranted fears regarding the future of U.S. universities as they become sites where corporate interests enjoy steady progress; the corporatization of the university means trouble for radical higher education and critiquing the phenomena is an important intervention into U.S. higher education.

**Liberatory Education**

A key feature of critical pedagogical philosophy is an unwavering dedication to free intellectual thought and exchange. Recognizing the potential that banking concepts of education have for limiting students’ active engagement in free thought processes, many radical educators forgo traditional teaching methods tied to the dissemination of information for memorization purposes. They disavow common evaluation strategies such as assessment testing and multiple-choice exams that aim to gauge students’ ability to regurgitate.

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5 Class oppression in the United States plays a crucial role in which populations have access to higher education. Tuition rates in the across the country have been rising steadily over the past decade for all institutions, including community colleges and 4-year public institutions. These institutions were originally developed in the mid 20th century to facilitate the education of larger and local populations. Indeed, they remain more likely to serve lower- and working-class students due to significantly lower costs of attendance. Nevertheless, San Diego City College, a 2-year public institution, has increased in-state fees from $473 in 2000 to $814 per semester in 2011. San Diego State University, part of the California State University system, has increased the cost of in-state attendance by $3,000 from $2,201 per semester in 2000 to $5,206 per semester in 2010. This data points to the class challenges lower income students face in attempting to secure formal education in the U.S. Higher income students from the upper and middle classes may experience the pressure of financial constraints due to raised tuition costs, but no doubt to a lesser extent. See “Tuition Over Time, 1999-2010 – Admission and Student Aid.”
information, and instead implement strategies designed to foster critical consciousness. Subsequently, students are invited to more directly engage with their educations and, in turn, their social locations and surrounding environments (Crabtree, Sapp, and Licona 2; Freire 72). Radical educators are undoubtedly informed by a multitude of factors based on their own multiple subject positions, and while these differences should not be overlooked, a commonality among those who favor critical pedagogical praxis is easily recognized. That commonality is characterized by a commitment to encouraging personal growth and well-being in students, an ambition that critical pedagogical theorist Paulo Freire refers to as the realization of one’s “ontological vocation,” or the true recognition of freedom and human completion (47). Similarly, feminist pedagogue Bell Hooks has penned the phrase “education as the practice of freedom” to describe the promise that students’ ability to think and learn in educational environments free of oppressive hierarchy and institutional influence has for self-development in the face of centuries old structures of inequality (Teaching to Transgress 19). Accordingly, free intellectual thought fosters self-actualization, and self-actualization\(^6\) may subsequently lead to freedom, both personal and social.

Educational environments are not limited to classrooms on university campuses. Yet historically the university has served as a vehicle for enlightenment, a space that students may enter to think meaningfully about their experiences in order to develop deeper judgments of their current situations and in turn alter their actions so as to engage more directly as informed citizens in a democratic environment. Thus the university is an institution worthy of analysis for critical pedagogues (Angus 65). Conversely, it is important to note that systems of socio-cultural privilege and oppression deeply embedded in societies around the world greatly dictate not only who is allowed to participate in university life, but which fields of inquiry are worthy of intellectual engagement within the corridors of the academy. This has been true of higher education in the United States, despite the popular U.S. ideology that stresses equal access and opportunity for all peoples. The U.S. university

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\(^6\) Self-actualization can be understood as process of personal, intellectual, and emotional growth requisite to the well-being that accompanies active engagement with the whole of one’s being: body, mind, and spirit. Nurturing self-actualization is crucial for critical pedagogues invested in liberatory education for students, and radical educators must envision their own self-actualization as inherently linked to students’ well being. See Bell Hooks’s Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom.
is a structure itself located within the greater social, political, and economic structures of the nation, and beyond. Social signifiers such as gender, race, and class act as barriers in the lives of students from marginalized subject positions whose limited access to educational institutions results in underrepresentation both on college campuses and in scholarly works produced within.

Furthermore, western narratives regarding rationality and epistemological development dominate, and attribute worth to white masculinist methods of knowledge construction that emphasize objectivity and the presence of empirical evidence. Intellectual contributions of women, people of color, and the poor suffer an erasure from academic cannons, thus further marginalizing even those U.S. university students who overcome barriers to higher education that stem from systemic and institutionalized discrimination (Harding 22; Keating 64). A romantic envisioning of higher education excludes social, economic, and political power differentials. However, a critique of these somewhat utopian notions must not ignore the intellectual growth universities facilitate. The U.S. university’s primary historical function has been to cultivate epistemological advances.

Despite the shortcomings that characterize the university, particularly its inability to embrace the goal of intellectual engagement, personal growth, and active social participation for all desiring populations, the power it holds to nurture free thought and transmit ideas that influence larger society has not gone unrecognized by the general public – both proponents and opponents of inclusive higher education included. Indeed, 1960s U.S. student movement activists organized protests to demand that educational institutions be held accountable for the sway they have over larger socio-political climates. The year 1970 saw massive U.S. student demonstrations protesting the country’s involvement in the Vietnam War and the U.S. invasion of Cambodia (Sorey and Gregory 188). Campus and community members also insisted that universities undergo curriculum reform to create programs and departments that engage with the literatures, histories, and unique situations of underrepresented populations. Such direct action resulted in the development of ethnic studies and women’s studies programs across the country and has secured increased representation for marginalized peoples and their experiences at many institutions of higher education.

Student activism has not been limited to the 1960s United States, and the university has been a hotbed for global student social protest well into the twenty-first century. Perhaps
one of the most well publicized contemporary examples of student movement for social change points to Iran. Students comprised a significant portion of the popular 2009 Green Movement, which erupted when Iranian presidential hopeful, reformist Mir-Hussein Mousavi was defeated in a manipulated election that resulted in the reappointment of incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Monshipouri and Assareh 28). Thousands of demonstrators gathered in front of Tehran University to protest a lack of transparency in Iran’s presidential election as well as widespread human rights abuses carried out by the state. Similar in principle albeit incomparable in terms of government backlash and the violent suppression of dissenting voices, protests held in solidarity with Iranian activists have been organized by U.S. students and community members to push for democratic revolution in Iran and other parts of the Middle East (Slosson). The dissemination of information about political turmoil in Iran at the time of Ahmadinejad’s reelection was “facilitated by constant digital interaction via instant messaging and social-network services such as Twitter and YouTube” (Monshipouri and Assareh 39). Indeed, the role digital technology plays in ensuring immediate communication across vast spaces has been a valuable tool for social change advocates who rely increasingly on the medium for up-to-the second live coverage of events that have been interpreted by on-the-ground activists themselves. Digital communication via social-networking sites and instant messaging has been recognized by national governments as a threat to their political agendas, and, in many cases of popular opposition, administrations have cut off Internet access across entire countries. At the time of writing, the most current reports of Internet shut down involve Libya, a country entering the second full day of Web blackout amidst popular revolt in response to 42 years of leader Muammar Qaddafi dictatorial rule (Bates and Mahanta; Cowie).

In this way, technological globalization supports students, particularly those engaged in movement for social change around the world. New communication technologies make it possible for people to connect with one another instantly, massively, and at relatively low cost (Stromquist 103). Radical educators committed to critical pedagogical practices of liberatory higher education and global solidarity and accountability also benefit from these factors as the free-flow of information and transnational communication create new and exciting opportunities for teaching and learning across borders. For example, globalizing U.S. women’s studies curriculum has broadened northern feminist educators’ understanding
of issues pertaining to women from the global South to facilitate feminist goals concerned with challenging all types of inequality in a move toward worldwide social justice and equality. Yet easy global communication has not been the sole cause for transformation within women’s studies, and globalization does not foster equality in and of itself. Much of the evolution for feminist scholarship and curriculum is a product of Third World feminist work of the late 1980s and 1990s, an era characterized by increased globalization worldwide. Postcolonial feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty critiques the work of western feminists asserting that “assumptions of privilege and ethnocentric universality, on the one hand, and inadequate self-consciousness about the effect of western scholarship on the ‘third world’ in the context of a world system dominated by the West, on the other, characterize a sizable extent of western feminist work on women in the third world” (*Feminism without Borders* 19). Thus within the field of women’s studies, feminists continue to address and challenge cultural hegemony, a negative consequence of globalization, which silences women living, thinking, and working outside dominant epistemological contexts. Credit is due to scholars and teachers who continue to thoughtfully engage with the problems that increased globalization pose for struggles against global systems of privilege and oppression including “western ethnocentrism in the women’s studies curriculum, concerns with further marginalizing or othering non-western women’s experiences, tokenism, and problems of applying western-originated concepts like feminism and gender to non-western contexts” (Hase 93). Constant self-reflection must accompany feminist efforts to globalize women’s studies curriculum in order to account for women’s differences and commonalities, and the fight against systemic sexist, racist, and classist oppression should avoid recapitulating hierarchies of power.

Another facet of increased globalization that has complex consequences for students, faculty, and academic scholarship involves forces emanating from economic globalization trends. On one hand, economic globalization creates opportunities for the development of educational credentials, new careers, and jobs that simultaneously require and facilitate facile movement across national boundaries (Stromquist 103). Upon graduation, students from around the world have the ability to permeate more fluid borders in order to seek employment, and professors may seek tenure at universities almost anywhere. This phenomenon also applies to workers with little or no formal education as migrant laborers
travel transnationally to participate in the building trades and service industries of neighboring countries. These sorts of opportunities become particularly attractive to citizens whose governments are in states of economic crisis or political turmoil or whose infrastructures cannot support adequate employment. Yet the possibilities for labor migration via globalization must be contextualized according to the current global political economy as neoliberal economic policies often result in adverse conditions for workers, limited growth for developing nations, and worldwide ecological degradation (Naples 12). Ultimately, a confluence of factors must be considered when analyzing the impact economic globalization has on world communities with attention paid both to beneficial and harmful outcomes often existing side by side.

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

As economic globalization surges worldwide, global capitalism and the neoliberal policies itforegrounds—the centrality of the market, free trade across porous national borders, and privatization of public institutions and services—also have powerful effects on intellectual freedom in the academy. Receiving mainly public support in the past, U.S. universities are increasingly privatized, relying on private sponsorship and funding to account for a lack of federal monies no longer widely available due to massive nation-wide cutbacks to higher education (Angus 69; Washburn 9). The privatization of the university results in a direct link between knowledge and profit, which complicates the goals and strategies of academics committed to liberatory education for their students. At one time heralded “as institutional sanctuaries for free scholarly inquiry,” U.S. universities’ growing dependence on business support induces a shift in both purpose and function (Gutmann 174; Stromquist 119). Colleges are more sensitive to market needs as research findings are increasingly translated into intellectual property and marketable commodities for economic development (Etzkowitz, Webster, and Healey 21). Mohanty refers to this shift as the “capitalization of knowledge” and calls it “one of the most profound ways that universities serve as catalysts for the onward march of global capitalism” (*Feminism without Borders* 173). The university’s focus on free intellectual thought for personal growth and democratic participation—however limited by institutionalized systems of privilege and oppression—is replaced with capitalist values such as market-driven research and studies conducted to
appease corporate donors. Thought and research dedicated to developing democratic citizenship and social awareness is overshadowed, and critical pedagogical goals are further marginalized by the naturalization of neoliberal philosophies in higher education that create private, individualized citizens out of university populations (Mars 103).

The corporatization of higher education highlights neoliberal values and the naturalization of capitalist objectives for administration, faculty, and students. These principles are particularly relevant to critical pedagogues as they impede active engagement in the search for knowledge. Undoubtedly, knowledge seeking is characterized by one’s commitment to critical inquiry and a desire to engage directly with the critique of received truths and constituted powers (Angus 67). This sort of critical engagement, from which critical pedagogical philosophy draws its very name, justifies academic freedom and nurtures liberatory pedagogy. Centering entrepreneurial principles such as performance assessment emphasizing productivity, competition and the pursuit of wealth, and consumerism obstructs efforts to participate in free academic pursuit. Procedures to assess performance could be devised to gain better understanding of universities’ contribution to the overall improvement of surrounding communities by analyzing how well they are serving differing student populations, yet this is not the case. Common assessment focuses instead on quantitative indicators that pit student against student, professor against professor, and university against university as each competes limited research funds (Stromquist 111). In order to attract external monies faculty and student productivity must respond to issues that external funders,

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7 A well publicized example of the ways in which increased commercialization of knowledge poses challenges for academic freedom on university campuses involves a medical school professor at Brown University, David Kern, in 1996-1997. Through research conducted at Brown’s Memorial Hospital, Kern believed he had discovered a new lung disease linked to air toxins that he first encountered at a Microfibers, Inc. fabric processing plant in Rhode Island. Microfibers Inc. was a major donor to Memorial and two of its family members sat on the hospital’s board. When Kern first attempted to make his research public, Microfibers Inc. threatened to sue, citing a confidentiality agreement he had signed during a brief investigative visit to the company’s factory. Kern asserted that the confidentiality report applied only to the company’s “trade secrets,” and grew increasingly concerned with the health of ten factory workers whose health had been worsening. When Kern turned to Brown University for support, he was told to refrain from publishing or presenting his research – the university would shut down his entire occupational-health program upon his refusal. When Kern proceeded to share his findings out of moral responsibility and dedication to academic freedom, Brown eliminated the program and terminated his teaching and research positions. In late 1997, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention officially recognized the new disease Kern had discovered: flock worker’s lung. For more on academic commercialization at Brown University see Jennifer Washburn’s “Academic Freedom and the Corporate University.”
such as corporate sponsors and business firms, deem important. Faculty in particular must prioritize their research for promotional purposes, which rewards publishing rather than pedagogy, and both populations must refrain from proposing critiques that funders find irrelevant or contrary to their interests (Washburn 10; Cotera 334). Relentless critical inquiry may threaten educators’ academic tenure, and progressive students may find little support for research conducted outside of science, technology, and business disciplines – fields that most readily contribute to economic growth.

Competition is one of the cornerstones of capitalist economic framework, and it continues more and more to inform conceptions of success for those engaged in university life. Operating according to a model in which one’s worth is tied to economic assets, concern over larger social issues – especially global issues – are dominated by values that assert individual efficiency and the procurement of employment opportunities that boast competitive wages (Brooks 49). Furthermore, the free circulation of knowledge within and among educational environments is less prevalent as policies regarding the ownership of information are increasingly commonplace among academics. While intellectual ownership may be logical in terms of ensuring credit for faculty who conduct and publish research, the ultimate purpose of trade-related intellectual property rights is the commercialization of knowledge. University science and technology researchers often stand to obtain significant revenue as results are patented to create new products. And as academic institutions become increasingly secretive with their work, the scientific culture of sharing and exchanging points of view is modified (Stromquist 128). Disclosure of research data under market conditions makes certain that knowledge is only shared with those able to pay for it. In the end, the critical inquiry necessary to engage with questions of democratic citizenship in the pursuit of intellectual self-development and social change, while not completely lost to the corporatization of the university, is increasingly eclipsed by New World Order morality that celebrates achievement and growth only as it intersects with strengthened economic power.

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8 Here I draw from Takis Fotopolous’s definition of “New World Order” that extends the term’s usual meaning, most often invoked to describe political and military level changes that erupted toward the end of the Cold War, to transformation in economic and ethical ideology that emerged out of direct, dialectical relationship with global neoconservative policy-making. See Takis Fotopolous’s “Systemic Aspects of Academic Repression in the New World Order.”
Finally, the spread of global capitalist agenda and its affects on the university is directly tied to consumerism. There is an undeniable presence of businesses on university campuses because institutes of higher education must find corporate sponsors for many of their activities. These sponsors license logos and trademarks for clothing and other goods, and obtain much of their profit by developing advertising agreements with schools that feature their products on university websites and at sporting events (O’Meara 3). The opportunity for students to consume is not limited to knowledge intake, and conspicuous consumption is a normalized aspect of the college experience.

In addition to the adoption of ethical frameworks informed by neoliberal business practices, the naturalization of global capitalist objectives in academia assigns priority to certain subjects over other fields of study. As stated above, disciplines that encourage and contribute to economic progress, i.e. science, technology, and international business programs, thrive at the corporate university. Conversely, fields of study opposed to the corporate university’s profit-driven agenda are disregarded and often threatened with complete elimination (Stromquist xiv). Cultural and ethnic studies programs in the humanities and social sciences that were implemented at universities across the nation in response to impassioned and relentless community struggle in the 1960s, ‘70s and ‘80s fall into this category. These fields grew out of a demand for academic freedom and dedication to critical inquiry, yet they have low market value and thus become targets for universities forced to tighten budgets as the U.S. federal government slashes public funding for higher education. Furthermore, main tenets of research and scholarship in cultural and ethnic studies include commitment to the elimination of various forms of oppression and dedication to the struggle for global justice and equality. Consequently, critical pedagogical principles thrive in these arenas, and students are enabled to evolve as engaged citizens and active participants in the struggle for global democracy (Giroux, “The Attack on Higher Education”

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9 For example, at San Diego State University the group Aztec Sports Properties (ASP) is the multi-media rights holder and sports marketing arm for athletics at the university. The website for ASP describes the various advertising mediums offered to businesses and corporations including corporate recognition, product displays, and temporary signage. It reads, “ASP presents the excitement, color and pageantry of college athletics through advertising, marketing and promotional opportunities. These efforts are aimed at making an impact on your business by reaching the loyal Aztec fans and alumni throughout the region and state of California” See “Aztecs Sports Properties.”
Limiting funding to fields of study that underscore the importance of social justice activism for global accountability and solidarity threatens critical pedagogical goals and radical educators’ transformational efforts. The corporatization of higher education impedes anti-racist feminist movement for the eradication of oppression and disrupts educational environments where critical consciousnesses are fostered.

**COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Critical pedagogy posits an emancipatory philosophy of education, and critical educators labor continuously to ground the politics of education within an existing social framework characterized by deeply entrenched systems of privilege and oppression (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 6). Prominent critical pedagogical theorists Paulo Freire argued the need for the development of a “pedagogy of liberation” in education that can act as a material force for change, a tool to be utilized for societal transformation both inside and outside of the classroom (Freire and Faundez 230). Broadly, critical pedagogues envision social transformation as the elimination of contemporary social problems and an eradication of the negative consequences that oppressive social and economic policies have for marginalized groups. More particularly, critical pedagogues endeavor to foster liberatory pedagogical praxis in educational environments to promote the constant dialectical relationship between theory, action, and continuous self-reflection. This praxis serves as a prerequisite for conscientization, a process by which educators encourage students, as empowered subjects,

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10 At the time of writing, several universities across the United States are cutting funds allocated to institutionalized women’s studies and ethnic studies programs and departments, and some are in danger of being shut down completely. See Howard Bunsis and Gwendolyn N. Bradley’s “Myths on Program Elimination.” These are the fields most often committed to diversity in education and to social justice for underserved populations in and outside of higher education institutions (Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders* 183-185). Furthermore, some state governments have intervened in university curricula to eliminate ethnic studies departments completely. Two examples, among many, of state’s limited fund allocation to ethnic studies and women’s studies: The entire California State University system, composed of 23 campuses, faces between a $500 million and $1.5 billion decrease in state funding. Ethnic Studies programs are among the fields of study underfunded to the point of closure, including the Asian American studies program at California State University Los Angeles. See Mike Taylor’s “Thousands Expected at CSU Budget Protest.” Second, women’s studies at University of Nevada, Las Vegas is among a list programs threatened to be cut should Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval’s proposal for state funding allocation to the Nevada System of Higher Education be accepted by the Legislature. See Maria Ágreda’s “Protesters Pack Regents Meeting, Stage ‘Die In’. ” Examples of state legislation designed to remove programs and departments geared toward diversity and social justice include a state bill titled AZ HB 2281, signed into law in 2010 by Arizona Governor Jan Brewer. The bill is designed to ban ethnic studies, specifically Mexican/Chicano Studies in Arizona public education. See Jessica Calefati’s “Arizona Bans Ethnic Studies.”
to achieve a deepening awareness of the social realities that shape their lives and discover their own capacity to re-create them (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 15; Freire 50).

Conscientization contributes to both personal and social transformation and buttresses the development of student identities informed by principles of justice for freedom and equality. Thus the United States university, as an educational environment where critical pedagogy may be enacted and where conscientization may manifest, serves as a crucial site for students’ democratic engagement (Gutmann 174). Educational environments committed to democratic ideology facilitate the development of a national citizenry invested in the realization of democratic values highlighting social equality, or the actualization of “full participation and inclusion of everyone in a society’s major institutions, and the socially supported substantive opportunity for all to develop and exercise their capacities and realize their own choices” (Young 174). And as the world becomes increasingly globalized, educators dedicated to examining the ways in which privilege and oppression operate further apply critical pedagogical notions of social justice and commitment to active participation in decision-making to geographies beyond the United States for a more encompassing, transnational analysis.11

Indeed, democratic citizenship, propelled by democratic education and informed by globalization, requires that those who actively engage with the major tenets of critical pedagogy address their social realities beyond immediate lived situations. Becoming aware of one’s ability to re-create material conditions informed by power differentials in the name of social equality requires that students proceed with social justice activism aimed at fostering solidarity in ways that extend beyond engagement with fellow classmates and university student bodies, ethnic or cultural groups with which one is affiliated, and grassroots organizations in their communities. Social justice advocates who invoke a critical analysis of various peoples’ diverse situations in order to address exploitation and human suffering must evolve to include every actor on the global stage as social, economic, and political policy intersect to impact all populations.12

11 This topic is taken up in Chapter 4, which examines women’s studies practitioners’ scholarly and pedagogic efforts to transform the hegemonic nature of U.S. feminist higher education and integrate transnational feminist perspectives into the women’s studies core curriculum.

12 Understanding the need for students to develop an awareness of the ways in which privilege and
Despite the negative consequences that global capitalist policy may have for further marginalizing underserved populations economically, globalization provides more space for critical pedagogy, for social justice activism, and for the realization of global solidarity which, according to cultural and educational studies theorist Noah De Lissovoy, can be conceived of as “a more powerful and liberatory organization of human relationships capable perhaps of finally contesting the subjection of sociality to the imperative of accumulation” (194). Active participation in global democracy via liberatory education provoked by dedication to critical pedagogy promises to weaken deeply embedded structures of privilege and oppression that nurture alienation and isolation prompted by individualism and consumer citizenship. The realization of one’s ontological vocation may extend beyond individual humanization to the humanization of collective, global community (Freire 47). Once more, inextricable factors must be taken into account when analyzing the potential that globalization posits for the goals of critical pedagogy and radical educators must interact simultaneously with the negative and positive effects globalization has on a myriad of structural and institutional factors. While this chapter asserts that global capitalism, in particular, is uniquely damaging to critical pedagogical projects aimed at nurturing awareness of interconnectivity, freedom, and justice, the material benefits that the increased spread of employment and capital has for impoverished peoples around the world cannot be undermined or ignored.

Indeed, critical pedagogical projects that seek to foster active participation in global democracy for equality and solidarity themselves must also evolve to consider more highly nuanced ways of critically interacting with the existence of social inequality on a global scale. In other words, analysis must shift beyond praxis that simply recognizes existing oppression, and strategies that explore and implement creative solutions for addressing exploitation cannot suffice. Accordingly, there is a loudening call for educators and students to reflect on the ways in which they are themselves implicated in global systems of privilege and oppression via complicity – unintentional or otherwise – in global capitalist exploitation of land and labor (Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders* 235). Within the U.S. university, oppression operate globally, academics continue to develop strategies to expand university curriculum beyond national borders and integrate perspectives from diverse parts of the world. See chapter four of this thesis for a thorough examination of women’s studies practitioners’ efforts to “internationalize” core curricula.
critical pedagogy identifying inequalities as “happening to others over there,” as well as practices that allow students to locate themselves outside of patterned systems of exploitation reinforce division between differing groups of social actors at local and global levels. Within global capitalist society, western radical educators must address possessive individualist expressions of being in the world, which posit adversarial social frameworks that valorize and naturalize competition and self-aggrandizement (Keating 26). Indeed, critical pedagogical practices that encourage the recognition of social injustice worldwide do not guarantee the abolishment of deeply entrenched rugged individualist philosophies highlighting U.S. American status quo stories.13

Dominant narratives supporting neoimperialist claims inferring that impoverished groups from developing nations suffer due to their own negligence or at the hands of abusive governments reinforce U.S. cultural hegemony.14 These narratives have the ability to function within liberatory educational environments despite the existence of a well-intentioned commitment to eradicating oppression, and this particular expression of social justice advocacy directly impedes the aims of critical pedagogies concerned with feminist, anti-racist, and anti-globalization goals (Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders* 227; Tripp 296). Humanitarian efforts to help emancipate oppressed peoples from historically marginalized groups locally and globally nurture social compartmentalization based on hierarchies of power and disenfranchisement (Grewal 516). Unless these power differentials are adequately challenged in terms of dominant groups’ active participation in systemic oppression, global actors will continue to be partitioned off into opposing camps characterized by the ability to help and the need to be helped, respectively. Therefore,

13 AnaLouise Keating writes, “status quo stories reaffirm and in other ways reinforce the existing social system…they contain ‘core beliefs’ about our reality,” and contribute to social assumptions that “ignore the crucial ways that colonialism, slavery, and miscegenation have impacted and shaped us all” (23-24). Other status quo stories maintain sexist, classism, heterosexist, and ableist assumptions operating on both systemic and individual terrains. See AnaLouise Keating’s *Teaching Transformation: Transcultural Classroom Dialogues*.

14 Here I engage directly with the definition of hegemony put forth by Antonio Gramsci and refer to socio-political, cultural, and ideological situations in which all aspects of social reality are controlled by and in service to a single social class. The dominating social class rules through a combination of force and consent that balance each other out so that force does not overwhelm consent but instead appears to be backed by the support of the majority and it seemingly expressed by public opinion. For more on Gramsci’s theory of hegemony in relation to higher education see Peter Mayo’s *Gramsci and Educational Thought*. 
radical educators dedicated to social equality locally and globally must conceive of critical pedagogical projects that educate concurrently about the negative outcomes of global capitalism, the role that the U.S. economic elite play in creating and maintaining those negative outcomes via neoliberal policy-making and support for transnational institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank, and the powerful effects individual freedoms enjoyed by U.S. citizens have for reinforcing global inequality.\textsuperscript{15} Pedagogical praxis guided by reflection based on U.S. hegemonic accountability and commitment to global solidarity for social justice and equality are preliminary steps to invoking activist strategies that resist global North/South divisions that impede anti-hierarchical transnational projects.

Global capitalism complicates pedagogical goals of global accountability and solidarity. In addition to the hardships that accompany critical pedagogues’ efforts to nurture liberatory education environments within social terrains governed by U.S. cultural hegemony, the corporatization of the U.S. university posses serious threat to educational praxis for global democratic citizenship. The advance of global capitalism facilitates neoliberal economic policy, which emphasizes the liberalization and centrality of the market as social and economic resource allocator, “substitutes supply-side for demand-side economic management,” and submits public life to commodification (Tormey 33). The university is increasingly beholden to private interest and must submit to market interest and business sponsorship for funding.\textsuperscript{16} The very nature of the university shift as academic

\textsuperscript{15} Undoubtedly, these freedoms manifest in varying degrees according to the intersectional nature of sexism, racism, classism, and other systems of oppression that operate to limit access to economic and social resources for historically marginalized populations in the United States of America.

\textsuperscript{16} For example see Jay Weiner’s “Research to Revenue.” Weiner discusses the University of Minnesota’s Office of Technology Commercialization, which helped bring in more than $95 million in revenue in 2009 from the University’s intellectual property. Companies like GlaxoSmithKline area among the corporate sponsors helping to generate such royalties. Weiner asserts that revenue opportunities associated with corporate sponsorship to generate patents based on research conducted at the University of Minnesota are crucial as the state continues to drastically cut funding to its land-grant institutions. Also, see Alan Finder’s “For One University, Tobacco Money is a Secret.” Finder discusses Virginia-Commonwealth University’s contract to conduct research for PhillipMorris USA. Additionally, Manchester Hall, a building on San Diego State University campus housing mainly administrative offices has been named for corporate sponsor, Manchester Financial Group, whose business holdings include Next Wave Wireless LLC, and Broadcasting Group of the Americas. In 2008 the Chairman of Manchester Financial Group, David Manchester, was involved in a controversy in San Diego and greater California state when he donated the sum $125,000 to support California Proposition 8, a ballot proposition and constitutional amendment, which provides that only marriage between a
freedom is restricted to reflect corporate and consumer demands. Profit-making and securing grant monies for research that nurtures entrepreneurial endeavors are exceptionally productive projects at the corporate university, and while globalized curriculum remains a reality for many university students, efforts to enhance one’s knowledge across borders is increasingly tied to enhancing marketability in the business sector post graduation (Stromquist 129). Universities engaged in expansions and engagements with other countries cite profit rather than human solidarity as prevailing motivation, and cross-cultural perspective around values such as respect, reciprocity, and appreciation of ethnic differences are rendered peripheral (Farahmandpur 97). In this way, educational environments are decolonized as transnational curriculum becomes commonplace within universities governed by U.S. cultural hegemony, and subsequently recolonized according to global capitalist paradigms that emphasize the diversification of higher education to cultivate diversification for market economies. Critical pedagogical strategies devoted to democratic education and active participation in global social justice movement are replaced with entrepreneurial approaches to global interconnectivity and radical projects that stress global accountability, interconnectivity, and solidarity for the elimination of oppressions are regulated to the margins of university life.

Finally, the corporatization of the university complicates critical pedagogues’ efforts to take moral stances on oppression, and to nurture liberatory education in college classrooms across the country. Educators passionately dedicated to social justice activism must be continuously aware of socially conservative responses to nationalist critique (which is enforced by U.S. cultural hegemony). Leftist, progressive, and radical educators may experience administrative resistance to anti-hierarchical teaching methods or anti-capitalist research projects as they compromise corporate universities’ agendas and mar academic departments’ funding prospects (Giroux, “The Attack on Higher Education” 15; McLaren, Farahmandpur, Martin, and Jaramillo 235). These frustrations have no doubt existed

17 For example, Ian Angus writes about David Nobel alleging that in 2001 Simon Fraser University, despite overwhelming faculty support for his candidacy, denied the professor’s appointment to J.D. Chair in the

man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. David Manchester’s support of Proposition 8 caused immediate response from gay rights proponents, including Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, which cancelled any events that were to be held at the string of California hotels owned by corporation. See Bill Ainsworth’s “Developer is Foe of Same-Sex Marriage.”
historically for progressive educators and are often most severe in times of extreme U.S.
nationalism ushered in by anti-communism during the McCarthy era and by the War on
Terror in post 9/11 global society. However, contemporary limitations to academic freedom
for university professors invested in social equality currently exist at the intersection of social
and fiscal conservationism. Accordingly, faculty research is increasingly impacted by
university administrations whose moral interests lie less frequently with the needs of
historically underserved populations (Angus 71; Parenti 112). Chandra Mohanty elaborates
on the dangers of university corporatization for challenging global capitalist oppression:

The fundamental ethical shift that occurs as a result of the ideology of
privatization is the replacement of public participation and institutional
responsibility and accountability with profit motive. Privatization recasts the
principles of democratic governance into the principles of capitalist marketplace
and turns citizens into consumers. It is about the abdication of responsibility, and
it necessitates looking at who benefits (corporations and the neoconservative
movement) and who is adversely affected – workers of all kinds, people of color,
poor women, and anyone concerned about democracy and citizenship. (Feminism
without Borders 173)

Simultaneously, economic power lies less with programs and departments as corporations
increasingly sponsor new faculty hires, influence decisions regarding faculty tenure, and
increasingly manipulate dismissal processes for radical faculty (Mohanty, Feminism without
Borders 179). In effect, outside agencies decide more and more who does and does not
enter academia in order to ensure security for ethical and capitalist interests informed by
neoconservative ideology. Radical educators who dedicate their teaching, their research and

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Humanities based on his overt criticism of university-corporation relations rather than his academic merit. See
Ian Angus’s “Academic Freedom in the Corporate University.”

18 This is increasingly visible in cases involving professors who are engaged in radical environmental and
animal rights advocacy. For example, Steven Best, professor of the philosophy department at University of
Texas, El Paso, was removed from his position as department chair in 2008 and subsequently denied promotion
by the university presumably due to his research on underground earth and animal liberation groups. Animal
rights advocates are routinely targeted as terrorists by US and UK governments, labeled enemies of the
neoliberal ethics employed by corporate technoscience, and defamed as serious threats to consumer freedom by
US agribusiness. Universities, sponsored by state and federal governments, and corporations, have stake in
repressing the work of such scholar-activists, and do so in the interests of private funding and public support.
For more on this topic see Richard Kahn’s “Operation Get Fired: A Chronicle of the Academic Repression of
Radical Environmentalist and Animal Rights Advocate-Scholars.”
ENGAGED TEACHING PRAXIS

Critical pedagogical philosophy emphasizes the transformational potential of engaged teaching practices as they take place in the university classroom. Radical educators labor to introduce students to strategies that directly resist banking methods of higher education and promote praxis characterized by the dialectical relationship between theory, practice, and continuous self-reflection (Freire 50). Visions of non-hierarchical classroom environments that aim to redefine and reorganize traditional understandings and manifestations of power between teacher and students are informed by dedication to mutuality, and the hope that relationship dynamics in progressive classroom environments may permeate academy/community divides and nurture the transformation of authority on larger social levels. Mutuality in the classroom nurtures solidarity as learners are encouraged to interact critically with course material, information imparted by professors, and ideas and opinions held by fellow classmates in ways that nourish individual and collective psyches in non-mutually exclusive ways.

Indeed, it is within the university setting where many young people first develop personal belief systems relevant the socio-economic politic as they interact with a form of critical inquiry that is compatible with mutual respect (Angus 67). Criticism is of the idea, not of the person who broaches it, which problematizes a single “truth.” Encounters between faculty and students strengthen the search for truths in the spirit of enlightenment effectively refuting adversarial mentalities grounded in personal defense. At best, critical pedagogical teaching strategies that foster critical inquiry of structural and institutional power differentials may ignite and nurture commitment to social justice activism for equality, and

19 One example of the lack of institutional support for radical educators is elucidated by the famous 2002 incident in which African American studies professor Dr. Cornel West left Harvard due to a conflict with the university’s president Larry Summers who allegedly attacked the academic merit of West’s scholarly work – noted by the New York Times for its ability to appeal to wide audiences – and accused West of spending excessive amounts of time with political organizing outside the university. See Cornel West. Another involves renowned scholar-activist Andrea Smith, who was denied tenure at the University of Michigan despite her invaluable contributions to women’s studies and Native American scholarship. See Maria E. Cotera’s “Women of Color, Tenure, and the Neoliberal University: Notes from the Field.”
cultivate leadership qualities necessary for sustained global democratic participation. Yet classrooms where such exchanges take place are increasingly uncommon among higher education environments. The corporatization of higher education informed by advances in global capitalism imposes neoliberal economic principles on institutions and teaching becomes less central to university’s economic viability. Accordingly, university teaching positions are increasingly unstable and relegated to faculty who are forced to compete with one another for limited appointments (Stromquist 112). A growing divide between a small core group of university employees with higher pay, job security, and benefits and a larger group of part-time and contract workers with lower pay, insecure professional futures, and limited or no benefits emerges at the corporate university (Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders* 179).

While universities are unequivocally reliant on business granted funds and scholarships, they are also impacted by the economic climate of a neoconservative global economy that conceives of classical institutions of higher education as less pertinent to profit and productivity when contrast with for-profit universities that offer accelerated degrees, technical training certificates, and distance-learning programs with heavy business influence. Engaged pedagogical praxis invested in liberatory education, the ignition critical consciousness, and students’ increased social justice activism cannot readily flourish in corporate atmospheres; the inextricable link between education and individual and collective freedom so adamantly embraced by critical pedagogues crumbles with the advance of global capitalist take over.

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20 In 2011, the San Diego City Community College District in San Diego, California announced it would dramatically cut summer class offerings down to minimal levels due to massive federal budget cuts of $32 million dollars. This is despite a 7% enrollment in student attendance and a 60% increased rate of transfer to a 4-years institution, from 1,839 transfers in 2005-2006, to 2,938 transfers in 2009-2010 (Office of Institutional Research and Planning). In terms of SDCCD faculty, hundreds are without work this summer. In 2009, the California Faculty Association, which represents 22,000 faculty members within the California State University system, agreed to two unpaid furlough days per month in order to close a $584 million budget deficit caused by a 20 percent reduction in state financing (“Union Accepts Furloughs at California Universities”).

21 According to the American Federation of Teachers, adjunct/part-time faculty members account for 47% of all faculty at U.S. public colleges and universities. Additionally, adjunct/part-time faculty represent nearly 70% of the institutional workforce at community colleges (3). See American Federation of Teachers’ “A National Survey of Part-Time/Adjunct Faculty.” Based on U.S. Department of Education 2007 staff survey data, full-time non-tenure track faculty, part-time/adjunct faculty, and graduate employees combine to comprise 73% of the postsecondary instructional workforce (“Academic Staffing Crisis”).
CONCLUSION

While it is necessarily important to consider the limitations inherent to critical pedagogy for fostering critical awareness in students, as well as the shortcomings that characterize U.S. institutions of higher education, the potential of universities to contribute to the development of democratic citizenship should not go unrecognized. Educational environments that implement engaged pedagogical praxis on college campuses act as sites for free scholarly inquiry and radical educators’ commitment to social justice movement promises to nurture student dedication to active social, political, and cultural participation. As the world evolves with the influx of mass globalization, technological advances that facilitate epistemic mobility, support mass cross-border communication, and nurture more widespread and accessible employment opportunities for diverse classes of workers also have positive consequences for critical pedagogues who interact with classroom strategies designed to promote global accountability and solidarity through knowledge sharing. At best, universities’ democratic and educational conditions collide to strengthen possibilities for global social justice.

Yet the complexities of advances in economic globalization warrant vigilant investigation for university administrations, faculty, and students dedicated to social justice practices manifest in and outside of college classrooms. Global capitalism firmly governed by neoliberal policy-making and coupled with neoconservative political agendum is deeply invested in privatizing higher education. Business sponsors and corporate interests, while beneficial for universities in the midst of economic struggle, severely limit academic freedom, and profit is consistently valued above the pursuit of knowledge in the spirit of enlightenment. The corporatization of the university has the power to radically alter the way educators conceive of democratic citizenship, and those who advocate for the eradication of oppression must intervene in the aforementioned developments to locate the academy at the center of the struggle against social, political, and economic inequality locally and globally.
CHAPTER 3
TRANSFORMATIVE FEMINIST PEDAGOGIES

Chapter three engages with feminist pedagogy, a unique philosophical discourse of classroom-based teaching informed by feminist theory. Additionally, feminist pedagogy constitutes as set of pragmatic teaching strategies that draw heavily from the principles of feminism with the overarching goal of fostering a theory of education as the practice of freedom for each student despite specific subject-positions, which have been constructed by the intersections of gender, race, class, and other categories of difference operating locally and globally. With a commitment to material social transformation, feminist pedagogues maintain that liberatory learning environments have the potential to contribute to the development of critical consciousness in students, and propose that this type of awareness can effectively translate into social justice activism both inside and outside academic arenas. Feminist pedagogy draws heavily from the major tenets put forth by critical pedagogy, yet is unique in its ability to actively recognize the inherent inequalities associated with systemic and institutionalized gender discrimination and the ways in which paying attention to women’s lives and experiences assist in addressing not only sexist domination, but a variety of hierarchies of oppression.

This chapter outlines the major tenets of feminist pedagogy including the importance of feminist teaching praxes that combine theory, action, and continuous-self reflection. I purport that strategic teaching philosophies and methods informed by feminist pedagogy may intervene into U.S. higher education to more effectively nurture student empowerment, contribute to the development of communities of learners and activists that penetrate the boundaries of academia, and cultivate leadership qualities necessary for the maintenance of an ever-evolving feminist movement for global equity and human dignity accessible to general populations. In order to contextualize feminist pedagogy socially and historically, I begin with a discussion of the major principles of critical pedagogy. Its growth, beginning with the rise of progressive education and critical theory, has had wide-ranging effects on contemporary teaching philosophies dedicated to decolonizing communities suppressed by
rampant neoliberalism, patriarchal masculinity, and racial discrimination. And while I can only touch upon the intricacies of this philosophy, my main intention is to highlight the ways in which feminist pedagogy draws from, critiques, and enriches critical pedagogy to meet the needs of those who use academia as a vehicle for nurturing commitment to feminist movement for social transformation.

**Critical Pedagogy**

Critical pedagogical theory includes a serious commitment to the ideal and practice of social justice where education takes place, and to the transformation of the institutions, structures, and conditions within society that thwart the democratic participation of its members. Consequently, radical educators utilize the praxis in an effort to engage critically with the impact that social signifiers such as gender, race, and class have upon the lives of students from historically marginalized subject positions. Such an analysis becomes a preliminary step en route to a more equitable society. Ultimately, critical pedagogues believe that education and emancipation are inextricably linked, and the conditions under which the former occur greatly influence the likelihood of the latter.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the United States saw an upsurge in the restructuring of the principles of education by prominent figures such as philosopher and education reformer John Dewey, an adamant practitioner of educational progressivism (Crabtree, Sapp, and Licona 2). Members of the Frankfurt School, whose critical theories of the social sciences are fundamentally linked to critical educational thought, also had a significant influence on the field (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 8). Thus, the movement for progressive education coupled with the advance of critical theory carved out a space for radical thinkers and educators to create linkages between the practice of schooling and democratic principles of society, and transformative social action in the interest of oppressed communities.

In an effort to advance democratic ideals within U.S. society in general, John Dewey dedicated himself to a pragmatic educational praxis that highlighted the necessity to engage with and enlarge students’ experiences so that they might freely interact with their environments in the practice of constructing knowledge. Dewey’s main principles rely heavily on active education, and the notion that the purpose of education is inherently tied to
students’ realization of democratic freedom and their subsequent participation in the community as enlightened U.S. citizens. Although Dewey’s philosophy of progressive education has been heavily critiqued by pedagogues who believe that his theories underestimate the sociopolitical and economic forces that shape systems of privilege and oppression in the United States (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 3), these principles are undoubtedly major contributions to contemporary critical pedagogical philosophy as well as the educational praxis of feminist pedagogues who cite critical pedagogy’s main tenets as profoundly influential to their work including Antonia Darder, Bell Hooks, and Bernice Malka Fisher. Additionally, Dewey has continuously labored to make central the reciprocal relationship between thinking and reflection as it pertains to teaching, a concept embraced and built upon by feminist scholars and teachers seeking to reconcile unbalanced educational practices stymied in the western tradition of mind/body dualism and the secularization of epistemic systems (Alexander 293-296; Ayala, Herrera, Jiménez, and Lara 269).

Dominant ideals surrounding critical pedagogy draw heavily on the philosophical tenets of the Frankfurt School, an Institute for Social Research affiliated with the University of Frankfurt, which was established in Germany in 1923. Dedicated to reclaiming and utilizing a Marxist theoretical framework in order to address the distressing results of advanced capitalism and the rise of bureaucratic communist orthodoxy occurring in the first half of the twentieth century, the intellectual labor of the Frankfurt School was intended to become a material force in the struggle against all forms of domination (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 9). Moreover, contemporaries of the Frankfurt School sought to challenge dogmatic forms of rationality and binary oppositional methods of epistemological development and definition characterized by positivistic objectivity and empiricism; they championed dialectical logic in favor of self-conscious social critique aimed at change and emancipation through enlightenment (Carr 208).

For feminist pedagogues, critiquing knowledge construction informed by U.S. cultural hegemony is of growing importance. The influence that social and institutional systems of privilege and oppression maintain over the practice of attributing worth or value

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22 Chapter 4 of this thesis examines pedagogic strategies concerned with critiquing western knowledge dominance in academia, particularly via the “transnationalization” of women’s studies core curricula.
to epistemological processes—as well as knowledge itself—requires close and constant analysis by anti-racist feminists striving for equality in a society governed by “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (Hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody* 4). This is true not only in terms of U.S. women’s historical struggle for recognition as creators and contributors to the nation’s epistemological cannon (Harding 22), but also upon the consideration of various *conocimientos*, or ways of knowing, which challenge or contradict white and masculine methods of constructing knowledge, methods based on supposed complete objectivity and the presence of empirical evidence, and which elevate theories of reason and rationality to positions high above attributes such as emotion, intuition, and self-reflection (Anzaldúa 541; Keating 64).

Upsetting the dominant narrative regarding rationality and epistemological development is an essential aspect of feminist struggle among women in developing nations who, in an increasingly globalizing world, are positioned to address North American/western hegemony and its power over knowledge, knowledge development, and ways of knowing. This challenge to hegemonic concepts of rationality becomes a valuable form of resistance to the xenophobic rhetoric spewing from the global North, a rhetoric that operates to effectively devalue ways of knowing birthed from the global South (Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders* 6-8). North American/western feminists—perhaps well-intentioned allies to non-western women—often perpetuate and reinforce dominant knowledge and epistemological processes as North western hegemony becomes reinscribed in their charitable humanitarian efforts to help educate and emancipate supposedly oppressed Third World women from less developed nations (Grewal 516; Tripp 296). Feminist activists from developing nations are therefore put in a position in which they must navigate the material benefits of feminist alliance with North American/western women while resisting hegemonic western epistemological value attribution, maintaining the significance of non-western ways of knowing, and embracing the potential that they, as feminist activists, have for addressing systems of privilege and oppression in their respective communities.

In keeping with the important task of challenging traditional epistemological systems and culturally hegemonic knowledge development and definition, theory produced and propagated outside the West has contributed significantly to the field of critical pedagogy. In fact, perhaps the most celebrated and influential educational philosopher in the development
of critical pedagogical thought and practice is Paulo Freire, a Brazilian national, whose work makes important linkages between the plight of underserved members of Brazilian society and nationwide lack of accessible education (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 5).

Paulo Freire’s contribution to critical pedagogical philosophy has been remarkably broad. While his work focuses mainly on questions of pedagogical thought, his concepts have widely influenced fields ranging from postcolonial theory to human development models. Freire’s most heavily cited work in the arena of critical pedagogy is the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first published in Portuguese in 1970 and translated into English the same year. In this text, he develops the foundations of an emancipatory philosophy of education, and labors continuously to ground the politics of education within an existing social framework characterized by deeply entrenched systems of privilege and oppression (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 6). Ultimately, Freire argues that there is a need for the development of a “pedagogy of liberation” in education that can act as a material force for change, a tool to be utilized for societal transformation both inside and outside the classroom (Freire and Faundez 230). In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire argues that the social and economic plight of underserved, marginalized groups of people from lower socio-economic backgrounds is tied directly to limitations around access to and quality of education. He draws attention to the ways in which this sort of discrimination hinders the realization of one’s “ontological vocation,” or life’s calling (47). In other words, Freire values the attainment of knowledge through active learning as a step toward emancipation for oppressed groups, and asserts that to become fully human—a condition that he argues is our primary purpose and destiny in life—traditionally marginalized learners must encounter an education in which they are encouraged to ask questions and engage in critical inquiry and reflection.

Thus, Freire’s main discussion of methodology and applications of teaching practice in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* makes central his critique of the “banking concept” of education, a teaching approach he considers dehumanizing in that it assumes the educator possesses all significant information, and learners are passive, empty receptacles in which information is to be deposited (72). He asserts that the banking method attempts to control thinking and action, and conditions students to accept the ways in which they are discriminated against vis-à-vis hierarchical student/teacher relationships based on differential authority—relationships that mirror the oppression found in larger society.
Paulo Freire’s pragmatic answer to the banking concept of education, which effectively discourages critical consciousness and active self-reflection, is embodied in his proposal for a “problem-posing education,” a pedagogical approach explicitly political in origin for which these variables are significant attributes (84). Readily embraced as a major tenet of feminist pedagogy, problem-posing education creates space for the learner’s humanization as it attempts to acknowledge and make use of students’ prior knowledge and experience (Fisher 35-36). Problem-posing education also allows for a more fluid curriculum that is co-created within the classroom, and acknowledges the learning is a process that occurs for teachers as well as students, one based on reciprocity, boasting a dedication to the reconciliation of socially embedded power dynamics regarding traditional roles for educators and learners. Importantly, it is Freire’s contention that such a restructuring of positions of power, authority, and ways of learning and knowing in the classroom has the ability to penetrate the boundaries of academia and manifest in the community. This type of manifestation has the potential to effectively disrupt historical forms of domination based on race and class, including what he refers to as “internalized oppression,” or the complacency of historically disempowered groups who encounter pervasive discriminatory social conditions (47). Elaborating on the potential that liberatory education boasts for the eradication of societal systems of privilege and oppression, Freire contends that in order for all people to truly realize freedom, which he defines as the “indispensable condition for the quest for human completion,” the oppressor, or dominant groups, must enter into a relationship of mutuality and collective effort with the oppressed, or marginalized groups, through nonhierarchical strategies like active, intent listening and honest dialogue (47). Thus, the new educator and learner relationship put forth in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed moves beyond the classroom to provide a model of a more general social relationship based on dialogical trust among citizens.

Furthermore, this new relationship subscribes to Freire’s notion of liberatory pedagogical praxis in which theory, action, and continuous self-reflection are in constant dialectical relationship with one another (50). This specific praxis goes on to serve as a prerequisite for conscientização, or conscientization, a process by which teachers encourage students, as empowered subjects, to achieve a deepening awareness of the social realities that shape their lives and discover their own capacity to re-create them (Darder, Baltodano, and
Ultimately, the linkages Freire makes between a liberatory education and social emancipation are dense with exploration of the potential that both oppressed and oppressive groups have for contributing to these inextricable processes both inside and outside the classroom. Because of his belief in education as the practice of freedom, Freire posed questions of culture, social power, and systemic oppression within the context of schooling. In doing so, he highlighted his investment in emancipatory education, and made central pedagogical questions related to historically marginalized students’ social agency, voice, and democratic participation in larger society. He asserted that only with the realization of mutuality and collective effort of target and non-target groups and the transformation of social oppression, would the pedagogy of the oppressed become a pedagogy based on a process of permanent liberation available to all people universally. His utopian philosophical musings and practical approaches to teaching and learning have made a significant impact on the direction of critical pedagogy and radical teaching globally. In terms of feminist pedagogy, countless scholars and educators simultaneously embrace and critique Freirean theory for its undeniable achievements and inevitable limitations.

While continuing to draw heavily from Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to address the educational plight of students from marginalized communities, more current trends in critical pedagogy have focused attention on the material realities of student populations affected by the twentieth century neoliberal economic agenda as it intersects with policies of education. In an increasingly globalizing society, an understanding of hierarchical power structures tied to socio-economic statuses shifts upon analytically considering the triumph of global capitalism and the progressive division of capital among global citizens. Under worldwide neoliberal economic rule, schools and universities become increasingly financed by corporations that dictate that they must bring their policies and practices in line with the importance of knowledge as a form of production (Davies and Guppy 439). The free-market driven hidden curriculum propagated under this system “functions to de-form knowledge into a discreet and decontextualized set of technical skills packaged to serve big business interests, cheap labor, and ideological conformity” (McLaren 82). Commercialization demands reforms that effectively strip education of its potential to foster a sense of social consciousness and personal agency in students replacing critical thinking with the installation of a mode of thought based on conspicuous consumption and perceived
obsolescence. Ultimately, students are prepared to become “custodians of the capitalist state,” a state governed by transnational elites who rule on behalf of capital and the pursuit of wealth (McLaren 82). Furthermore, a neoliberal education system makes inherently impossible the realization of one of critical pedagogy’s main tenets: that is, education should advance democratic participation and social equity.

Peter McLaren, cultural studies scholar and leading architect of contemporary critical pedagogical thought, supports the notion that the transformational power of capitalist imperialism jeopardizes the future of education. His work is dedicated to the development of actionable recommendations that can be utilized when addressing the crisis of education under neoliberal policy. McLaren argues that radical educators dedicated to critical pedagogy must continue with renewed fervor to embrace schools as sites for production of both critical knowledge and sociopolitical action, never forgetting that the struggle over education is fundamentally linked to struggles “in the larger theater of social and political life” (104). The lines that separate community from academe must continuously blur, while educational institutions remain separate from private enterprise. Radical teachers have the opportunity and obligation to set an example for students by actively engaging with the very communities they purport to serve while working tirelessly to guard public schooling from advertisers and business establishments with profit-driven motives. Concerted efforts to construct a social order that is not based on capital is a shared responsibility of all critical educators and pedagogical scholars, and revolution must not meet its end in the classroom.

Feminist political discourse critiques capitalism and other institutionalized forms of oppression based on their implication within a patriarchal world system characterized by gender ranking and misogyny, and feminist scholars around the world have contributed vigorously to research that examines neoliberal economic policy as a locus of struggle. When analyzing the global policies of transnational institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank, postcolonial feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty places gender at the center of inquiry. In doing so, she pays special attention to the ways neoimperialist climates have particularly devastating effects on girls and women—populations that make up the majority of the global poor (*Feminism without Borders* 234-35). In terms of progressive educational praxis, Mohanty argues that feminist pedagogical practices are especially useful for highlighting the negative
impacts of globalization and the intersecting and overlapping oppressions that women experience in a today’s world economy. Teaching and learning informed by feminist pedagogy has the power to transform traditional patriarchal education systems by deeming women subjects, rather than objects, of study (Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders* 242; Shaw and Lee 3). By using a gendered lens to look at contemporary social and political issues as they play out in higher education, feminist pedagogues maintain a more inclusive and holistic understanding of the potential that critical pedagogy has for fostering emancipation through education. A gendered analysis also points to the gaps in critical pedagogical philosophy, which operate to exclude women and girls falling short of realizing real structural change.

**Feminist Pedagogies**

It is an important goal of feminist scholars, particularly those concerned with the field of education, to directly address the ways in which critical pedagogy may be enhanced by viewing social issues through a gendered lens. By utilizing feminist methods to develop progressive frameworks to teach about the intersectionality of gendered identities, the material realities of privilege and oppression, and prerequisites for social transformation, today’s feminist pedagogues add to a rich history of feminist educational scholarship, much of which was brought to the forefront in the North American/Western contexts as U.S. feminist thinkers and activists dedicated themselves to highlighting how patriarchal masculinity dominated classroom environments and curriculum in the 1960s and 1970s. Feminist community members and academics mobilized to develop women’s studies programs in order to foreground the limited utilization of intellectual scholarship done by, for, and about women within institutions of higher learning and to address the lack of female leadership so prevalent in the academy (Shaw and Lee 2). And while dedication to liberatory pedagogical praxis cannot be universally applied to all past and present women’s studies practitioners, the (inter)discipline continues to create spaces where pedagogues revolutionize the curricular content and teaching methods associated with higher education.

The feminist pedagogy put forth in this place and time was an active combination of intellectual thought and grassroots organization that drew heavily on the consciousness raising techniques valued by social justice activists associated with the U.S. Civil Rights,
New Left, and Women’s Liberation movements of the era (Fisher 27). It has effectively facilitated the evolution of more contemporary shifts in the feminist educational praxis of the late twentieth and early twenty-first, and the current working definition of feminist pedagogy as “a movement against hegemonic educational practices that tacitly accept or more forcefully reproduce an oppressive, gendered, classed, racialized, and andocentric social order” (Crabtree, Sapp, and Licona 1).

While many feminists embrace critical pedagogical praxis, others accuse critical pedagogical philosophers of employing a superficial and myopic lens when critiquing the sexist structures and practices put forth by the dominant paradigm. In other words, the physical space of the academic institution is not solely responsible for the marginalization of women active in movements for egalitarian higher education; there has been a fair amount of suspicion and concern regarding the failure of critical pedagogical theory to engage directly with questions of women, anchored within the context of women’s experiences locally, globally, and transnationally (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 16). It has been noted that even within the arena of critical pedagogy women’s ways of knowing and recording knowledge, i.e., personal biography, narratives, and explicit engagement with historical and political locations of the knowing subject, are often regulated to traditional epistemology’s periphery (Alcoff and Potter 1-2; Luke 25). Feminist pedagogues, however, embrace these non-traditional epistemologies based on a dedication to a style of teaching that engages students in gender-based analyses of power, social structures, and educational contexts (Crabtree, Sapp, and Licona 3). Ultimately, feminist pedagogical praxis, while admittedly influenced by critical pedagogy, is unique in that it is driven by its own set of assumptions about teaching and learning, a commitment to nonsexist classroom practices and interactions, and a set of explicit objectives discussed below.

Feminist pedagogy is as dense and diverse as any pedagogical theory, yet in simplistic terms it can be considered a vision of how the classroom could possibly look. The importance of fostering student empowerment, community, and leadership are among the major tenets of the heuristic, and many feminist pedagogues highlight dedication to accessible education as a central concern of their work. Women’s empowerment has been a main tenet of feminist social practice since its inception. In a feminist environment student empowerment is emphasized as practitioners of feminist pedagogy deny traditional
schooling’s demand to seek a balance of power in the classroom. Instead power is reconceptualized as capability and creative energy afforded to each student (Shrewsbury 168). To empower students, educators utilize practical teaching strategies that cultivate both autonomy and mutuality. In terms of autonomy, the implicit recognition that students are sufficiently competent to contribute to course development, and the belief that students have the ability to be agents of social change may promote self-esteem. Educators might also facilitate students’ ability to find their own voice and claim their own accomplishments by strategically enhancing opportunities to develop independent thinking about course material as well as introspection regarding the goals and objectives they desire to accomplish in the course of a term or semester. Ultimately, those engaged in feminist pedagogical praxis in the classroom may realize “education as the practice of freedom” as feminist pedagogues encourage students to assume responsibility for their choices and claim their educations (Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 19; Rich 25).

Mutuality effectively crafts non-hierarchical communities of learners, or “knowledge-making communities…that cultivate a diversity of socially embedded truth claims out of which epistemic wholeness develops” (Sánchez-Casal and Macdonald 3). Defined by multiple intersecting factors including social location, cultural identity, epistemic standpoint, and political convictions, classroom communities based on mutuality and connection compose a core principle of feminist pedagogical framework. Feminist political scientist and university professor Carolyn Shrewsbury advocates for mutuality and classroom community and believes that, “students may find connection with themselves, their individual and collective pasts, with others, and with the future” as they are nurtured both individually and as an interconnected group (171). Classroom communities grow as educators enhance the stake that everyone has in a course and thereby make clear the responsibility of members of the class for the learning of all; they are characterized by active dialogue and collective consensus, the acknowledgement and honoring of difference, and the birth of creative solution. They are fostered upon educators’ continuous labor to nurture participatory classroom structures and dynamics, and when students are given the ability to enact collective evaluation.

Due to the complexities of social power differentials regarding subject positions of gender, race and ethnicity, class, etc., true egalitarian community will likely never be realized
in classrooms implicated in institutionalized higher education environments. Feminist pedagogues readily acknowledge this fact yet many utilize the classroom strategies above as steps likely to facilitate the academy’s transformation. This is done in passionate service to the struggle for social justice, and is based on a commitment to the belief that education and emancipation are inextricably linked. Feminist pedagogues depart from critical pedagogy in the adherence to an understanding that revolutionary efforts fall short of effecting real change without adequate analyses of the sexist exploitation operating inside and outside the classroom.

The development of personal connections made through mutuality can have effects that extend far beyond communal feminist learning environments. Educators dedicated to feminist pedagogy actively work to bridge the gap between social and academic community by linking classroom-based learning with opportunities for application in broader settings. Teaching strategies such as experiential/service-learning, feminist-action research, and other methods of engaged community-based learning have the potential to produce social transformation on local levels. Students may come to recognize the links between the personal and the political as their individual educational experiences and material efforts to understand and change collective social reality collide (Crabtree, Sapp, and Licona 5-6). Thus, enacting feminist pedagogy buttresses the assertion that theory and intellectual inquiry have responsibility to society.

Community-based service learning embodies the feminist rejection of the practice/theory dichotomy endorsed by western empirical tradition. Feminist pedagogues acknowledge their usefulness for generating diversity, informing and enhancing ethnical debates, challenging students’ worldviews, and subverting traditional assumptions about knowledge and authority in otherwise traditional academic contexts (Williams and McKenna 137). Course material may be contextualized in real life situations, and students are guided to think critically for themselves and hone their own systems of belief as they apply intellectual independence to personal and professional spheres. Leadership, the embodiment of the ability and willingness to act on belief systems, logically and intuitively flows of feminist pedagogical praxes that foster empowerment and community inside and outside the classroom (Shrewsbury 172). At best, the experiential/community-based service learning associated with feminist pedagogy allows students to examine the differences between social
groups and how they are constructed in society, as well as their own roles in various forms of domination, subordination, hierarchy, and exploitation. Leadership in dialectical relationship with continuous self-reflections is a valuable skill necessary as feminist activists and scholars contribute to the broader struggle for the eradication of institutionalized systemic oppression.

Without practitioners’ active dialogue with the main tenets of feminist pedagogy and the foundational assumptions of feminist knowledge creation, the transformative power of community-based service learning is overshadowed by the pervasive sway of the dominant paradigm. Care-giving placements, charitable work, and other popular service sites can be very problematic when they are concretely deemed locations of textualized experience. In “Negotiating Subject Positions in a Service Learning Context,” university professors Tamara Williams and Erin McKenna detangle the complications inherent to the possibility of predominantly white upper-middle-class students encountering mostly Latino men in prisons or African American women in women’s shelters as they embark on community-based service learning projects. They assert that these experiences may affirm pre-existing stereotypical views and serve to reproduce rather than alter students’ investment in race, class, and gender privilege (Williams and McKenna 140). Community-based service learning projects, like all feminist pedagogical methods, must address students’ distinct subject positions with emphasis on the social realities of identity construction in order to combat replicating status quo stories and maintain a dedication to transformation based on action. Consequently, the feminist teacher must be equally and personally committed to feminist pedagogical praxis, willing to critique her own subject-position, and to ready articulate and implement her own concomitant plan for transformative action.

There is no one pedagogic method for highlighting social realities of identity construction and their consequences for students engaging in community-based service learning. To avoid reinforcing social hierarchy associated with systemic and structural oppression when incorporating service-learning into classroom settings, feminist educators Tamara Williams and Erin McKenna outline three specific classroom strategies they employ in their teaching: “Active encouragement to reflect on silence, conscious affirmation and valuations of students ‘voicing’ – either written or spoken – in classroom area, and the identification and nurturance of multiple authorities” (150). Williams and McKenna do this through assignments (e.g. anonymous journals) and by foregrounding specific course themes (e.g. silence as a form of oppression). They also encourage the use of email and other forms of technology that allow students to experiment “with new modes of exposition with less risk,” and suggest allowing students to rewrite papers as they evolve to grasp the purposes of feminist forms of “service” learning (150). For more on these strategies see their work “Negotiating Subject Positions in a Service Learning Context: Toward a Feminist Critique of Experiential Learning.”
For those invested in the main tenets of feminist pedagogy the willingness to model ones’ subject position and theorize and critique the self in the classroom are necessary risks inherent to purporting anti-dualistic teaching positions within academic institutions. A professor’s openness and willingness to engage in self-reflexivity and in politically risky behavior establishes a certain type of learning environment—one that facilitates the creation of a safe space where students can self-disclose in the interest of fostering classroom community and cultivating support (Ayala, Herrera, Jiménez, and Lara 261). Self-disclosure and self-expression in safe spaces picks up a major tenet of 1960s feminist political discourse concerned with the fostering the psychological safety needed as women address questions central to their experience without fear of ridicule or judgment from men, society, or each other (Fisher 140; Freedman 36). Safe space translates into discussion-based classroom learning that leans heavily on concepts of compassion, open-mindedness, and the reception of student comments that connect the personal to the political.

A major critique of this feminist pedagogical practice makes central the ways in which white feminist activists and academics often evoke the need for safety as a way of avoiding the issue of racism in the classroom (Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 36). Adamant devotion to transforming the classroom into a safe haven for all students has the potential to suppress the dissent and/or conflict often considered necessary to explicate systems of domination and subordination embedded in classroom dynamics (Fisher 139). The anger and shame students may experience reading or talking about social injustice constitutes a vulnerability not readily attributed to a “safe space,” yet it is a vital step on the path toward social liberation as teachers and students shift from inhabiting a place of ignorance and/or guilt to one exemplified by critical consciousness, personal accountability, and community action. Additionally, students’ differing experiences of privilege and oppression based on gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability affect their willingness to accept the classroom as a safe space. The likelihood of self-disclosure decreases as traditionally marginalized students’ fears regarding exposure, performance, and failure contrast with the luxury privileged students find in epistemic entitlement.

For professors dedicated to fostering critical thinking and student participation in classroom environments, the controversy regarding adequately nurturing safe space has much to do with accessibility. Dedicated to realizing education as the practice of freedom on a
macro level, both critical and feminist pedagogues aim to create comfortable learning environments where knowledge and ideas are accessible to general populations of students. Yet the power dynamics embedded in diverse groups’ multiple subject-positions that dictate which students have the ability to speak and be heard are further complicated as competing hierarchies of thought pervasive in the academy manifest in liberatory teaching. Historically, feminist pedagogues have embraced the use of accessible terminology, course material, and teaching strategies aimed at inclusion as political strategy (Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 71). They have juxtaposed these teaching and research methods with the jargonistic theoretical language of some critical pedagogy, and have asserted that assigning course material that is highly abstract, difficult to read, and containing obscure references ultimately functions to create new forms of oppression for those who have historically found themselves at the margins of classical intellectual discourse (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 17). Without the cultivation of accessible knowledge, empowerment, community, leadership, and other major tenets of feminist pedagogy cannot be realized at even the most basic levels.

Sometimes students’ ability to access information in liberatory learning environments is garnered when practitioners of critical pedagogy surrender the exclusive educational authority they possess in favor methods “more receptive to fostering connections with and among students in the classroom,” (Colwill and Boyd 230). Feminist critics of mainstream education draw attention to the tradition of single authority figures placed at the front of the classroom asserting that such models reflect and reinforce gender hierarchy and limit historically marginalized students’ engagement with course material and classroom discussion. The overall accessibility of complex theories and ideas may be enhanced when radical educators prioritize re-envisioning authority and begin interrogating disciplinary expertise. Conceding to students certain aspects of course planning, negotiating, evaluating, and decision making promotes leadership skills, contributes to student empowerment, and helps redefine power in a move away from domination toward accessibility and agency (Shrewsbury 169).

Paulo Freire, introduced above, has contributed significantly to this tenet of feminist pedagogy; he endorses teaching strategies that suggest liberatory educators should acknowledge and claim authority but not authoritarianism. Freire supports decentering educators’ authority in the classroom arguing that groups of learners are composed of both
teachers and students who find commonality and equality in their shared ability to know the world and act as subject in the world (Weiler 454). By acknowledging power and working to decenter it, educators become “transformative intellectuals,” aware of their authority and willing to assume it to more effectively fight forms of oppression. Transformative intellectuals “combine scholarly reflection and practice in the service of educating students to be thoughtful active citizens,” and those who are committed to liberatory pedagogical praxis utilize their authority to enlist colleagues and treat students like agents of change deeply concerned with issues of social justice and transformation (Bauer 97; Giroux, “Teachers as Transformative Intellectuals” 206). Yet, despite the general agreement that authority in the classroom should not lie exclusively with the teacher, feminist pedagogues often take issue with Freirean methods.

Feminist and womanist teachers value Freire’s theoretical insights on the problems associated with internalized oppression, yet those concerned with internalized dominance in the classroom find only vague clues for addressing “that peculiar intellectual infection that tells students that only college professors who are male, white, heterosexual, and United States born deserve to be taken seriously” (Torres 78). Due to existing gender and racial relationships, women of color and lesbian and queer women enter the classroom already disempowered in unique ways, and these hierarchies may be further compacted by disparities in socio-economic status and differences in ability. Chicana feminist scholar and educator Edén Torres speaks at length on this matter in her 2003 book Chicana without Apology, problematizing Freire’s liberatory philosophy and feminist pedagogy’s enthusiasm for decentering authority:

But both theories assume that all teachers automatically have authority conferred upon them by all participants in the educational system. While this is true in the formal sense—in that we will ultimately assign grades at the end of the semester—informally, I often enter the classroom to discover students who are neither willing to grant me such automatic power, nor even show me common courtesy in some cases. (78)

The majority of students in United States have a level of unearned power and privilege that they bring with them into the classroom, and Torres cites that while mainstream students rarely question her disciplinary expertise, many freely attack the content or entire premise of her courses despite prior exposure to catalogue descriptions and intended student learning objectives (79). The unofficial power that some student populations (e.g. upper-middle class
white male heterosexual) possess also has the potential to breed student hostility and resistance, which complicates marginalized women teachers’ pedagogical methods, professional goals, and the mobility afforded to them as they negotiate racist, sexist, and heterosexist academic institutions. Feminist pedagogue Laurie Finke further critiques radical educators’ efforts to promote non-authoritarian classroom environments asserting that they “have often ended up mystifying the very forms of authority [practitioners] sought to exorcise” (7). Authority is institutionally embedded in the social location of education, and upon final analysis the act of surrendering authority in the classroom presupposes its possession. Consequently, feminist radical educators recognize a need for the continuous re-envisioning of Freire’s liberatory pedagogy with special attention to the complexities of diverse groups who experience varying levels of privilege and oppression based on social positioning, and who require pluralistic pedagogical praxes malleable enough to meet shifting and undeniably contradictory needs.

The major tenets of feminist teaching philosophy drawn from Freire’s liberatory pedagogy—armed love dedicated to mutual humanization, legitimizing experiential knowledge as the foundation of authentic knowledge, decentering authority through the cultivation of dialogue, and educational praxis characterized by the dialectical relationship between theory, action, and continuous self-reflection—are significant to feminist radical educators dedicated social transformation through education. Striving to develop these qualities assists teachers in coming to understand that they cannot liberate anyone, but rather that they are in “a strategic position to invite students to liberate themselves, as they learn to read their world and transform their present realities” (Darder 47). Yet advances in feminist scholarship point to the need to advance pedagogical praxes that historicize and contextualize students’ multi-situated identities and differences. In doing so, feminist teachers can more effectively authorize the experiences of marginalized students “without exotifying their specific subject positions or excluding and/or silencing ‘dominant students’” (Sánchez-Casal and Macdonald 9). Additionally, pluralistic pedagogical praxes reinforce radical educators’ commitment revolutionary change as feminist teaching theories and methods aim to avoid generalizing and essentializing student groups and their lived experience.

In order to negotiate dedication to fostering anti-racist liberatory learning environments radical teachers implicated in the hierarchical systems associated with
academic institutions must become queer minded24 educators actively engaged in a critique of contemporary language around issues of difference, diversity, and power operant on university campuses (Truame 212). Chandra Mohanty asserts that educational institutions posit certain rhetoric around diversity, which intended to ensure struggles for radical transformation not take place on college campuses and in college classrooms. A product of the “race industry…responsible for the management, commodification, and domestication of race on [U.S.] American campuses” this rhetoric appropriates liberatory pedagogical practices by professionalizing and institutionalizing anti-racist feminist scholarship replacing the ideologies’ radical potential for transformation with theories of “harmony in diversity” that recognize difference yet fail to contextualize them historically (Feminism without Borders 193-196). As noted above, the historical contextualization of identity and difference is a necessary to ensure an understanding of multi-situated student experiences and larger political processes of privilege and oppression.

By directly critiquing mainstream multicultural policies manifest in the academy, feminist radical educators and scholars challenge the empty cultural pluralism put forth by educational institutions working to depoliticize diversity and stifle revolutionary change. They effectively “decolonize [their] disciplinary and pedagogical practices,” position themselves to unleash the transformational power of critical and feminist pedagogy, and repoliticize diversity in the academy (Mohanty, Feminism without Borders 200). Ultimately, feminist teachers are not just responsible for guiding student toward the development of critical knowledges or critiquing knowledge at its construction cite; they must work to form a “culture of dissent,” which makes transparent the axes of power liberal institutions hope to camouflage in supposed dedication to “plural” and “alternative” perspectives (Mohanty, Feminism without Borders 216). Radical educators who seek to dispute the commodification and domestication of diversity embody the feminist principle that, for women and other marginalized groups traditionally socialized to view power in terms of the way it is used to control and silence, claiming authority can be an emancipatory strategy rather than an act that reproduces existing social systems of domination and subordination (Bauer 97). Thus,

24 According to Annelise Traume, queer minded people “are unconventional in their suspicion of the coercive nature of the of the academic institution…” (212).
embracing pedagogies of dissent in the face of the dominant paradigm’s tendency to dismiss, trivialize, delegitimize, and depoliticize truly diverse knowledges in academe enacts feminist resistance on multiple levels.

Despite the potential dangers associated with invoking multiculturalism in higher education, feminist, womanist, and radical educators do not call for the complete dismissal of the discourse, and many are deeply invested in employing it as a theoretical and pedagogical framework for social change. Pedagogical theorist AnaLouise Keating outlines multiculturalisms’ usefulness for fostering a pedagogy based on interconnectivity in *Teaching Transformation: Transcultural Classroom Dialogues*. Acknowledging the drawbacks to melting-pot, separatists, and even critical and radical multicultural discourses, Keating believes that when historicized and defined broadly to exhaust categories of difference multiculturalism has the potential to offer unique opportunities for the development of “nonoppositional politics, inclusionary frameworks, and broader common ground among diverse peoples and worldviews” (10). Guided by the belief that “we are related to all that lives,” Keating’s approach to multiculturalism encourages communities of learners to engage in self-reflective commitment to the transformative potential that lies with an ability to locate ones’ self within a larger holistic social context (22). This type of awareness replaces binary systems of identity and difference with approaches that are more expansive and relational, which plays a crucial role in creating a matrix of reciprocity, mutual accountability, and respect (33). Thus, educational praxis informed by transformative multiculturalism makes possible the radical upheaval of both learning and social environments as educators and students become motivated to effect change based on knowledge of the multiple, overlapping and inextricable ways that each global citizen is connected economically, ecologically, linguistically, socially, and spiritually (35).

Those who subscribe to a personal and political discourse of transformational multiculturalism anticipate that radical pedagogues and their students generate a desire to take accountability for complicity in maintaining and reinforcing structures of domination as they consider interconnectivity and begin to examine theories of co-implication regarding local and global systemic oppression. Keating notes, however, that transformational multiculturalism cannot alone spark students’ critical consciousness nor can it guarantee the development of communal agency or worldwide social equality; it must be accompanied by
careful thought, hard work, flexible goals, and the belief that change is possible (16). Admittedly, there are often utopian qualities associated with theories of critical and feminist pedagogy yet passionate dedication to the realization of liberatory educational environments often necessitates such visionary thinking. Indeed, Paulo Freire aimed to reframe what it means to be utopian by refusing to concede to a definition based on idealism or impracticality. Rather, Freire put forth an active description of utopian pedagogical philosophy that involved “the naming of analysis of existing structures of oppression,” as well as “the creation of new forms of relationships and being in the world as a result of mutual struggle against oppression” (Weiler 452). As feminist pedagogy continues to advance both theoretical and pragmatic recommendations for fostering educational environments suitable to social justice activism, perhaps concern with the importance of critiquing what may be considered utopian feminist destinations will be overshadowed by investment in collective journeys toward universal liberation.

**CONCLUSION**

Both broad in scope and specific in aim, feminist pedagogy continues to evolve to fit the changing nature of society and academe. These interrelated communities comprise populations that encompass a variety of experiences informed by diverse subject positions, and no one theory of feminist pedagogy can accurately begin to consider locally and globally contextualized needs. Yet the social and political issues that effect all of the worlds citizens—invariably connected to one another as well as all that lives—are best addressed by those feminist pedagogues who refuse to concede to a divisive U.S. hegemonic lens that works to prevent cohesive transformative action grounded in the authentic recognition of diverse interconnectivity.

Critical awareness of this sort may effectively nurture the reciprocity, mutual accountability, and the respect and honoring of differences necessary to become adequately “fluent in each other’s histories” (Alexander cited in Mohanty, “Crafting Feminist Genealogies” 486). Thus, feminist pedagogues, drawing from, critiquing, and enriching traditional theories of critical pedagogy, intervene into patriarchal, hierarchical higher education; they view the classroom as a strategic site for collaborating across borders and barriers to constantly re-define feminist multicultural agenda. And while it is impossible to
consider each new pedagogic trend, a committed understanding of the ability that accessible feminist teaching philosophy, praxis, and methods have for empowering students, creating community, and cultivating the leadership necessary for continued movements for social justice is ubiquitous in the diverse and expansive field of feminist pedagogies.
CHAPTER 4

CURRICULUM FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Calls to integrate diverse perspectives into U.S. women’s studies have existed since before the institutionalization of the academic discipline. In Chapter 4, I aim to travel across this particular strand within the progression of U.S. women’s studies nonlinearly in a way that respects the fluidity and overlapping nature of curriculum transformation for global inclusion, while paying special attention to a specific aspect prominent in the literature; that is, the difficulties associated with expanding U.S. women’s studies curriculum to integrate the lives and experiences of women outside of the nation without reinforcing two curricular models that feminist scholar and pedagogue Chandra Talpade Mohanty labels “feminist-as-tourist” and “feminist-as-explorer,” respectively (Feminism without Borders 238-42). Each tendency within U.S. women’s studies – the former putting forth an orientalist framework and the latter relying on a cultural relativist paradigm – buttresses the master narrative of North American/western feminism and affirms the othering of non-North American/western women in ways that will be explored further here. In short, this chapter engages with U.S. women’s studies projects informed by transnational perspectives, and asserts that core curricula that resist U.S. cultural hegemony foster movement for global solidarity.

In this chapter I limit my analytical engagement to an examination of dialogical exchanges between/among the work of several specific women’s studies scholars who, while dedicated to the development of transnational feminist curricula in the U.S., express concern over U.S. women’s studies curricular perspectives that are complicit in the project of U.S. hegemony. Specifically, I utilize the calls, critiques, and suggestions for curriculum transformation present in the works of Ella Shohat, Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. These scholars are in favor of the expansion of transnational feminist curricular endeavors on U.S. university campuses. Thus, their work acts as a useful guide necessary to the construction of a framework for analyzing current efforts to incorporate transnational perspectives into U.S. women’s studies – an intervention to address higher education’s perpetuation of monist, U.S. hegemonic academic paradigms.
Chapter 4 develops a framework based on the works of the aforementioned scholars to analyze 20 syllabi constructed between 2006 and 2011 for U.S. American women’s studies undergraduate course offerings in feminist theory. Through this analysis I explore to what extent women’s studies these professors perpetuate or combat U.S. hegemonic discourses via the integration of transnational feminist perspectives to women’s studies curriculum now forty years since the academic institutionalization of the first women’s studies program in the United States. I pay special attention to two aspects of the syllabi: course objectives and readings assigned in order to assert that what is being taught in women’s studies is crucial to resisting projects that reinforce U.S. hegemonic feminist knowledge production. Syllabi constructed for undergraduate courses on feminist theory are an especially useful starting point for this type of analysis. First, the majority of U.S. women’s studies students enrolled in feminist theory undergraduate courses have had some exposure to either feminist scholarship or theory courses through other departments due to university prerequisite policies. Furthermore, unlike introductory women’s studies courses in which students engage with feminist discourses often for the first time, feminist theory courses presuppose student populations who have some previous academic experience and are thus more likely to be intellectually capable of interacting with complex theoretical frameworks.

Second, feminist theory undergraduate courses are often required as part of the core curriculum in order to obtain a women’s studies certificate or degree. Women’s studies professor Patrice McDermott notes, “the core curriculum, in effect, embodies fundamental, shared intellectual and political tenets that define the field and are considered required

25 Of the 20 course syllabi examined for this project, 19 have been designed for undergraduate feminist theory courses offered through women’s studies or women’s and gender studies programs and departments. One syllabus, Vest 2010, was designed for a feminist theory course offered through the Philosophy of Man department at the University of Central Florida. University of Central Florida does not have a women’s studies program, but questions of feminist theory and feminist ethics are engaged with here as per their departmental website. Of the 20 syllabi analyzed, 17 have been designed for courses with titles that utilize both the word “feminist” or “feminism(s)” and the word “theory” or “theories.” The remaining three have the word “feminist” or “feminism(s)” in the title. They are: “Feminist Thought” (Donadey 2008), “Dreams of a Common Language: Feminist Conversations across Difference” (Light 2009), and “Feminisms” (Turcotte 2011). While these three courses do not utilize the word “theory” in their titles, it is clear upon analyzing the course objectives and readings assigned that they indeed engage with feminist theory. Furthermore, all 20 syllabi were designed for 20 different courses offered through 20 different public universities in the United States.

26 Chapter 3 of this thesis engages with the question of how women’s studies is taught, and explores the potential that critical feminist pedagogies maintain for resisting higher education projects that reinforce U.S. hegemonic knowledge production.
knowledge for all women’s studies students” (92). Accordingly, the course objectives and assigned readings put forth by feminist theory professors are likely to reach more women’s studies students than those designed for elective course offerings. An analysis of syllabi constructed as part of the core curriculum is more representative of current educational trends in U.S. women’s studies programs and departments.

Finally, many of the canonical texts most often assigned in feminist theory courses have become more accessible with the publication of edited compilations such as *Theorizing Feminism: A Reader* (Hackett and Haslanger) and *Feminist Theory: A Reader* (Kolmar and Bartkowski) making feminist theory courses easier for professors to organize. Some readers directly engage with feminist theory locally and globally, such as Carole McCann and Seung-kyung Kim’s *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, thus ensuring the presence of a more transnational perspective in the classroom when assigned. Feminist theory readers designed specifically for women’s studies courses assist professors not formally trained in global feminist issues in their teaching; they help to create spaces for women’s studies students in the U.S. to interact with transnational feminist perspectives. Therefore, the rather recent appearance of readers that engage with feminist theories locally and globally is an important consideration for analyzing feminist theory courses syllabi, especially when reflecting on the most contemporary shifts in curriculum transformation focused on integrating transnational perspectives.

In order to lay the foundations for an analysis of U.S. hegemony and the project of U.S. women’s studies I begin this chapter by outlining the history of academic feminism beginning with the establishment of the first women’s studies program in the nation in 1969. I chart the major critiques of women’s studies curriculum chronologically, while maintaining that there is extremely limited precision accompanying a linear tracking of curricula transformation for increased inclusivity – clear change over time does not happen neatly and in order within all institutions. I engage directly with shifts toward U.S. multicultural feminist education and engagement with postcolonial feminist theorizing in the U.S. in order to ground my analysis of feminist theory syllabi in deep-rooted debates regarding the intersectional, relational nature of women’s experiences with privilege and oppression around the world.
Providing a historical context of curriculum transformation within U.S. women’s studies is crucial to this project; past conversations regarding inclusivity greatly inform scholars’ contemporary engagement with new and more intense complexities around diverse forms of women’s exploitation and agency in an increasingly globalized world. Indeed, projects of U.S. hegemony within women’s studies thrive in conjunction with hegemonic curriculum across institutions of higher learning, which are in many ways supported by U.S. investment in global capitalism – an aspect of economic globalization that particularly affects the world’s poor.27 The corporatization of the university, which highlights competition and profit rather than academic freedom and global social justice, directly impedes the development of women’s studies curriculum informed by transnational feminist perspectives for global solidarity to ultimately serve U.S. neoimperialist interests. Thus scholars and professors who interact with anti-capitalist pedagogies via their course objectives and assigned readings simultaneously enrich limited U.S. women’s studies curriculum that oversimplify and homogenize the lives and experiences of non-western women, and resist the commodification of higher education in neoliberal society (Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders* 173, 200). Accordingly, curriculum transformation to integrate transnational perspective becomes not only an act of inclusivity, but also a radical act committed to socio-economic justice worldwide.

Overall, an analysis of what is and what is not presently being prioritized within women’s studies is important for understanding contemporary feminist education and the current production of feminist epistemological frameworks. However, addressing complex questions about the existence of current women’s studies curricular perspectives that reproduce U.S. hegemony inside and outside of the classroom cannot be done solely through an examination of feminist theory course syllabi. Indeed, a more thorough analysis of departmental objectives, individual professors’ pedagogical philosophies, and general university political climate should be considered for a more comprehensive understanding regarding the pitfalls of failing to “transnationalize” U.S. women’s studies. Regardless, a syllabus analysis examining the integration of perspectives of women from diverse parts of

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27 For more on the relationship between U.S. hegemonic higher education and economic globalization see Chapter 2 of this thesis.
the world into U.S. women’s studies curricula can be an interesting starting point. Thus, this chapter is my intervention – a contribution to the conversation as well as to the struggle against exclusionary academic feminist frameworks organized around western philosophical thought.

**U.S. Women’s Studies**

Women’s studies as a scholarly field is a much contested site situated necessarily and uncomfortably within a continuously growing number of U.S. institutions of higher learning. By, about, and for women, it deploys feminist intellectual and political projects to address systemic and structural oppression targeting historically marginalized groups – an endeavor not always well received by university administrations invested in power differentials inherent to institutionalized education in the era of global capitalist pursuit. Actively engaged with both the material realities and discursive situations of women (a category used here in its broadest definition to include commonalities and differences grounded in both solidarity and conflict), women’s studies aims to serve as a bridge for students and professors seeking connections between abstract knowledge about women and movement for social justice bettering women’s situations. Put more directly, women’s studies scholars are concerned with the social construction of gender as well as women’s lived experiences of gender, race, class, sexuality, etc., structural forms of oppression and strategies of resistance, and the interplay between social location and power in the production of ideas, theories, and representations (Zimmerman 36). Women’s studies has often been labeled the academic arm of feminist movement in the U.S. even as it continuously challenges dualist categories that work to divide academia from feminist movement in the “real world.”

Within the corridors of the university, women’s studies disrupts disciplinary compartmentalization as its central epistemologies, methodologies, and theories draw from –

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28 For more on the “Academic/Real World” divide see Catherine M. Orr’s “Challenging the ‘Academic/Real World’ Divide.” Here Orr asserts that feminist scholars, activists, and students must recognize and challenge the “Academic/Real World” divide as a socially constructed oppositional binary; we must officially denote that the academy is indeed part of the “real world” and does not exist in a vacuum, separate from and without impact on local and global communities. Orr enhances this assertion by stating that only in addressing the realities of the increased institutionalization, professionalization, and corporatization of colleges and universities can we begin to address the ways in which higher education is potentially “wreaking new forms of havoc” for already impoverished communities (37).
and at the same time reject – various long-established traditional disciplines. Unable to fit neatly within the confines of institutionalized educational settings, women’s studies has been referred to as “multidisciplinary, intradisciplinary, nondisciplinary, antidisciplinary, neodisciplinary, transdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, critical interdisciplinary, intersectional, intertextual, and pluri-disciplinary” due to the reclamation, incorporation, and reworking the humanities’ and social sciences’ intellectual productions (Ginsberg 13). Furthermore, at the time of its inception in the late 1960s many outside the field of women’s studies viewed it with great suspicion as the overt political positioning of feminist scholarship radically contradicted western masculinist notions of objective knowledge and value-free epistemological undertakings.

These conflicts ensured difficult beginnings for feminist academics struggling to establish courses and programs across the country. Feminist historian Marilyn Boxer, active in cultivating San Diego State University’s women’s studies program,29 purported that “merely to assert that women should be studies was a radical act,” which complicated interaction with department and university administrations en route to earning institutional recognition (10). There was, and often still is, little university support for the creation of women’s studies programs and departments. Many exist as the products of tireless effort by feminist faculty who organized consciousness-raising groups, developed curricula, and taught courses. This work was typically voluntary and unpaid, done outside of their areas of specialization, and in addition to the scholarly and pedagogical responsibilities for which they were originally hired.

Women’s and lesbian studies trailblazer Bonnie Zimmerman notes that women’s studies “truly is and always has been a field in motion” whose formation and growth “has been marked by constant interrogation, reflection, debate, and reinscription” (31). As courses and programs became increasingly institutionalized among U.S. universities, strong critiques from women of color, lesbian women, poor women, and others who did not fit into the dominant definition of the term “woman” began to challenge women’s studies curricula invested in universal sisterhood. In the 1960s and ‘70s many feminist theorists engaged in

29 San Diego State University’s women’s studies program established 1969-1970, and is the oldest in the world. Dr. Marilyn Boxer served as chairperson for the program from 1974-1978.
women’s studies scholarship utilized a historical materialist analysis of women’s lives informed by radical feminism and Marxism (Zimmerman 31). Accordingly, women are oppressed and exploited as women in patriarchal capitalist society and their experiences of sexism are more or less the same. These ideologies support analyses that centralize women’s common oppression, and have historically been deployed by western feminists as a call to action, which ignored systems of oppression organized around structures other than gender.

Women’s studies theorists and pedagogues have engaged in discussions regarding academic feminism’s limited ability to pay adequate attention to women’s differences since the field’s inception, yet the 1980s saw increased criticism. Women of color feminists, particularly black scholars, disavowed pure celebration of women’s differences to draw attention to “race”/ethnicity, sexuality, class, ability, etc. as determining factors in the ways women became women in the United States (Schmitz, Butler, Guy-Sheftall, and Rosenfelt 884; Hooks, “Feminism and Black Women’s Studies” 54). Anti-racist and lesbian feminists pointed to white and upper- and middle-class privilege to reveal mainstream women’s studies programs that effectively glossed over the structural inequalities informed by socially defined categories of difference. The ways in which women’s various identities exist in relation to one another simultaneously informed by, constructing, and reinforcing structures of inequality received increased attention. Critiques made in works such as This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color, by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, and But Some of Us Are Brave, by Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, made it apparent that white feminists’ and mainstream women’s studies programs’ efforts to universalize the category “woman” in hopes of fostering unity among diverse groups prevented structural and institutional social change because it failed to critically engage with systemic oppression resulting from the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination. As a result, women’s studies programs, many still struggling with limited support from the institutions that housed them, underwent a massive curriculum transformation as they continued to strive for inclusivity in feminist pedagogy and scholarship.

The rise of postmodernism in the 1990s posed another challenge to mainstream women’s studies’ emphasis on unity among women. Poststructuralist thought highlights relationships between knowledge and power to stress the partiality and situational nature of all knowledge. By positing a plurality of subject positions hostile to biological essentialism,
poststructuralist feminist theorists upset the notion of “womanhood” through the deconstruction of binary oppositions – especially frameworks dichotomizing female and male sex categories (Schmitz, Butler, Guy-Sheftall, and Rosenfelt 885). On one hand, this ideological move allows more space for theorizing about sexism in that it complicates what it means to be a woman and overcomes limitations that tie women’s identities and intellects to their bodies. On the other hand, engaging more directly with the culturally constructed nature of identity, poststructuralist frameworks complicate women’s studies curriculum striving to include the perspectives of historically marginalized groups. Thinking about gender, race, and nation in more abstract terms with attention paid to textual analysis and the symbolic shifts women’s studies away from standpoint epistemology, which values the knowledge that emerges from unique social location and diverse experiences.

Debates regarding the positive and negative effects that poststructuralist theory has for women’s studies curriculum remain prominent in many departments today (Brown 21, Zimmerman 32). One of the debates most pertinent to women’s studies as an institutionalized academic discipline refers to naming as universities across the U.S. contemplate the accuracy – and marketability – of the “women’s studies” label. Critiques from LGBTQI feminists that assert these communities’ limited representation in women’s studies curriculum, as well as men’s growing role in the field, have raised questions as to the relevance of the phrase. Some programs and departments have amended their titles to “Women’s and Gender Studies” in order to elucidate scholarship that deals with a wider range of identities and experiences. Still others have dropped women’s studies all together in favor of “gender studies” in order to resist the biological essentialism associated with the category “woman” and recognizes gender as a social construct. In other words, gender studies emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the socialization of men and women rather than focusing predominantly on women’s experiences and knowledge (Ginsberg 28). This argument’s antagonists contend that taking the women out of women’s studies poses serious risk to the (inter)discipline’s feminist discourse and political goals. Gender studies is not necessarily feminist, it is not linked to the women’s movement, and it boasts no social political activist movement of its own (Zimmerman 37). In short, proponents of the label “women’s studies” believe that the move toward gender studies is depoliticizing, while
opponents feel it renders men genderless and excludes those living between, outside, and among gender binaries by reinforcing dichotomous categories.

In an act of constant interrogation and reflection, there are feminist scholars who identify the radical potential of destabilizing gender and assert that women’s studies must deconstruct the category even as they insists upon the historical, political, and systematic oppression of a class of individuals called “women” (Sánchez-Casal and Macdonald 2). Accordingly, the feminist political discourse and social justice activism that founded women’s studies at the university must not be lost as the field expands to incorporate postmodernist analyses of masculinities, LGBTQI issues, and the questions and complexities associated race and ethnicity as they manifest locally as well as globally.

Indeed, U.S. feminist scholarships’ increased attention to the global constitutes another major shift in women’s studies curriculum. In the 1990s a number of social and institutional tendencies converged to encourage what was then referred to as the “internationalization of women’s studies” (Rosenfelt 7). The increasing dominance of globalization in women’s daily lives – characterized by vast reconfigurations of power and the processes of production across increasingly porous national borders – propelled western academic feminists’ interaction with gender issues framed by and within the context of international perspectives (Rosenfelt, Lay, and Monk 1). Forums created by the United Nations Decade for Women, beginning with the 1975 World Conference on Women in Mexico City and moving on toward the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, ignited dialogues between feminists from all around the world, raising concern regarding the status of women globally.

A Platform for Action was developed out of the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, which set forth a clear international political mandate recognizing women’s historical and global inequality as well as the need for the development of culturally relevant strategies for the eradication of sexist, racist, classist, and imperialist oppression and to support women’s survival (“The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”). In one way, this Platform for Action’s main tenets found women’s studies to be a significant source of support within U.S. universities due to the (inter)discipline’s tradition of sustained efforts to deeply engage with difference in research, theory, and teaching praxis. However, most U.S. women’s studies departments in the late 1990s continued to be
organized around epistemic and pedagogical frameworks informed by western hegemony, and many women’s studies scholars and teachers saw limited comparative and relational theorizing about women’s lives and gender arrangements beyond national boundaries within their own respective departments. These scholars argued that women’s studies curriculum failing to integrate non-western epistemologies into the core curriculum were an impediment to inclusive women’s studies projects informed by anti-racist, anti-imperialist ideologies.\footnote{See Kaplan and Grewal; Moghadam; Mohanty, \textit{Feminism without Borders}; Shohat.}

In fact, feminist American studies scholar Patrice McDermott wrote of she and her colleagues at University of Maryland: “We are convinced that the women’s studies core curricula that remain exclusively oriented to U.S. content and western feminist perspectives no long meet the standards of scholarly rigor and political relevance that define our field” (88). Admittedly this assertion could not develop out of a fully integrated women’s studies curriculum that pays adequate attention to the multifaceted nature of intersectional and relational oppression existing at all levels of organized society, and constant debate regarding the transformation of U.S.- and Euro-centric women’s studies curriculum – including discussion and critique around the application of terms such as “international” and “global” – continues to thrive within the corridors of feminist academe well into the twenty-first century.

**Feminist Theorizing Beyond Nation**

Efforts to expand women’s studies curricula to include examinations of women internationally received significant attention in the late 1990s and early twenty-first century. In addition to numerous conferences and events sponsored by the United Nations Decade for Women, as well as material and social changes in women’s lives that accompanied the era’s rise in economic globalization, was the increased visibility of philosophical and theoretical work produced by postcolonial feminist scholars.\footnote{For an in depth discussion of the ambiguities, complexities, and transformative possibilities associated with use of the term “Postcolonial” within U.S. academe see Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan’s \textit{Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices}.} Similar to the ways in which women of colors and queer women in the United States exposed racist and heterosexist discourses in early women’s studies curricula, postcolonial feminists drew attention to North
American/western feminism’s glossing over of the inextricable linkages between privileges enjoyed by women in so-called First World nations and the oppression suffered by women in Third World nations.

Furthermore, postcolonial feminism emphasizes systematic and institutionalized economic inequality endured by women in developing nations—an analytical and activist framework that is often in contrast to western feminist’s seemingly narrow focus on reproduction and sexuality on one hand, and civil and political rights on the other (Tong 215). Historically, women indigenous to countries colonized by western imperial powers had much more to contend with than access to safe abortions and freedom of sexual expression; indeed, for postcolonial feminists the alleviation of economic exploitation is constitutive of reproductive rights issues and other platforms taken up by women in colonizing countries.32 Contemporarily the ways in which poverty and neoimperialism impact women outside of the global North are in large part due to global free trade agreements purported by massive financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, whose structural adjustment policies greatly privilege countries outsourcing their modes of production over host countries located the global South (Grewal and Kaplan 15; Naples 12). Thus, these same critiques are extremely relevant today as many women’s studies programs continuously fail to utilize department resources necessary for the development of teaching opportunities that highlight the interconnectivity of women’s privilege and oppression as well as the complicated ways in which U.S. and European feminists are implicated in capitalist exploitation affecting women, both within and outside their home nations.

In simpler terms, “the oppression of women in one part of the world is often affected by what happens in another,” and “no woman is free until the conditions of oppression of women are eliminated everywhere” (Bunch 249). Academics and activist invested in the incorporation of global feminist ideologies into their scholarship place value on honest

32 I refer to “colonized” and “colonizing” countries fully aware of the problems these terms evoke. More specifically I cite Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan’s critique of the use terms put forth in Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices. They write that the labels “colonizer-colonized” and “dominant-dominated,” used by scholars “to mark the interplay of power in the era of imperialism,” overlook “complex, multiply constituted identities that cannot be accounted for by binary oppositions” (10). Thus, I use the terms critically.
engagement with each other’s differences and commonalities. They are driven by two major goals as illustrated by women’s and human rights advocate Charlotte Bunch:

1. The right of women to freedom of choice, and the power to control our own lives within and outside of the home. Having control over our lives and our bodies is essential to a sense of dignity and autonomy for every woman.

2. The removal of all forms of inequity and oppression through the creation of a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally. This means the involvement of women in national liberation struggles, in plans for national development, and in the local and global struggles for change. (250)

Deep engagement with the interlocking nature of privilege and oppression manifest in all global corners is required in order to begin to understand women’s diverse, relational identities.

While dedicated to the eradication of all forms of oppression for women (and men) around the world, postcolonial feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty expands on this sentiment. Mohanty is critical of paternalist tendencies accompanying western feminist scholarship informed by notions that recognize difference in oversimplified terms. She warns of the discursive dangers that result from the collapse of the category “Third World women,” used by mainstream feminists to designate all women outside of the North American/western geographies often in total disregard for diverse experiences of and resistance to various, complex forms of oppression eluded to above (Feminism without Borders 40-41).

By positioning oversimplified, homogeneous differences between “Third World women” and “First World women” in binary opposition to one another – agency and mobility falling with the former, and limited movement and underdevelopment characterizing the latter – ethnocentrism associated with racist, imperialist projects is reinforced (Kaplan and Grewal 71). The use of such dualism ensures that epistemic authority lies with U.S. and European feminists, thus granting their scholarship the power to define the conditions of oppression for women around the world. Once again the advanced North American/western world is situated as the center of feminist intellectual endeavors thus marginalizing the epistemological projects of “victimized others,” and exactly complementing hegemonic white supremacist, colonialist discourses that emphasize the “backwardness” of non-western peoples and cultures (Grewal and Kaplan 12). For U.S. feminism, the self-determined activism of women around the globe is rendered invisible as the study of women
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

The theoretical contributions of postcolonial feminism have had a major impact on U.S. women’s studies curriculum transformation. Within the last decade there has been active engagement between/among feminist scholars and pedagogues deeply invested in “internationalizing” women’s studies in ways do not reinforce U.S. hegemony. Five major works appear to be in chronological dialogue with one another on this topic, each illustrating the complexities inherent to studying women internationally from U.S. locations, each positing a unique version of curriculum transformation, each utilizing specific language to describe their frameworks for inclusivity. As mentioned above, the intellectual assertions put forth in these texts cannot be digested in a strict linear fashion as the debates they engage not only overlap but also appear across numerous texts not explored here. Despite this recognition, a brief review of this literature makes a valuable contribution to the development of a framework for understanding current trends in transnational women’s studies curriculum implemented within U.S. institutions of higher education.

In 1998 Women’s Studies Quarterly published a special issue 26.3-4 titled, “Internationalizing the Curriculum: Integrating Area Studies, Women’s Studies, and Ethnic Studies,” to document and engage with a national project initiated and funded by the Ford Foundation and coordinated by the National Council for Research on Women (NCRW)

33 For example, western (mainstream) feminism’s preoccupation with phenomena such as women’s “forced” veiling in Islamic areas of the Middle East, and female genital cutting in parts of the Middle East and Africa deflect from the on-the-ground antisezist, anti-imperialist activism women in these locations engage in daily. For more specifically on U.S. hegemony and Western feminist’s efforts to address the “plight” of Muslim women see Saba Mahmood’s “Feminism, Democracy, and Empire: Islam and the War on Terror.” For a comprehensive discussion of African women’s movements that address a myriad of issues from negotiating peace to political representation see Aili Mari Tripp, Isabel Casimiro, Joy Kwesiga, and Alice Mungwa’s African Women’s Movements: Transforming Political Landscapes. The limiting definition of “feminist” activism imposed by North American/western standards have also historically glossed over the feminist nature of women’s U.S. antiracist activism, an issue that Black feminists engage with deeply in Hull, Scott and Smith’s the seminal text But Some of Us Were Brave: All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men.

34 See Shohat; Kaplan and Grewal; Joseph, Ramamurthy, and Weinbaum; Mohanty, Feminism without Borders.
called the Women’s Studies, Area, and International Studies Curriculum Integration Project (WSAIS). The project was launched in 1995 and was “designed to link programs in and the insights of women’s studies, area studies, and international studies, and especially to encourage the curricular inclusion of materials concerning women and gender in the ‘non-Western’ world” (Rosenfelt 5). Thirteen university campuses received grants from the Ford Foundation and developed individual projects to examine the ways in which women have participated in and been affected by transnational processes of colonization globalization.

Feminist scholar and pedagogue Deborah S. Rosenfelt, reflecting on the results of the WSAIS projects in her editorial to *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 26.3-4, notes some of the central issues that each program cumulatively addressed including issues of language and meaning, difficulties that stem from collaborating across disciplinary lines, and the challenges inherent to reconceptualizing theories of difference “in context outside of and not necessarily in dialogue with Western feminism” (6). Within the special issue, four University of Maryland scholars and pedagogues who took part in the WSAIS projects reflect on their efforts to transform women’s studies core curriculum to include study of women internationally. Patrice McDermott, Cindy Gissendanner, Seung-kyung Kim, and Carole McCann discuss the revision of women’s studies course syllabi and illustrate the difficulties of negotiating ethnocentric tendencies purporting western women’s superiority on one hand, and cultural relativism that bind complex human subjects to static monolithic categories on the other. Ultimately, however, these authors posit that the internationalization of women’s studies curriculum maintains significant potential for fostering inclusivity, and that the daunting task of thinking across geographic, cultural, and disciplinary borders produces unfathomable possibilities for intellectual and cultural exchange.

In agreement with the potential that transforming higher education curriculum maintains for feminist projects, women’s studies professor Ella Shohat’s 2001 article, “Area Studies, Transnationalism, and the Feminist Production of Knowledge,” extends the aforementioned authors’ discussion of an ethnocentric perspective of difference as it intersects with global feminism to critique U.S. hegemony reproduced via the internationalization of feminist scholarship. Shohat disavows the generalizing of groups of women from diverse national, cultural, and religious backgrounds and geographies, which, she argues, result from departmental demarcations such as “Middle Eastern Studies” erected
by U.S. universities, to demand that global feminist studies scholars address their complicity in maintaining such categories via collaborative work with Area Studies and Ethnic Studies programs and departments even if their work is done in the spirit of incorporating global perspectives into U.S. women’s studies. Shohat introduces the reader to the term “sponge/additive approach” as she illustrates the ways in which scholars doing work on global feminism maintain the master narrative of western feminism by absorbing the activist histories of non-western women into U.S. analytical frameworks as they “internationalize” the curriculum. Thus, curriculum transformed in the name of inclusivity is reworked without a decentering of Euro-American epistemic domination. Importantly, this “sponge/additive approach” is a major component of Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s “feminist-as-tourist model,” (Feminism without Borders 239) which, described in further detail below, becomes an organizational theme for the analysis of feminist theory course syllabi put forth in the latter part of this chapter.

Additionally in “Area Studies, Transnationalism, and the Feminist Production of Knowledge,” Ella Shohat critiques women’s studies projects for refusing to acknowledge a relational, multicultural feminism informed by the permeable, interwoven relationships between genders, races, classes, sexualities, nations, and continents. Shohat writes that feminist scholars, “must look for ways in which our variegated pasts and presents parallel and intersect, overlap and contradict, analogize and allegorize one another to place contested perspectives in dialogical relation within, between, and among cultures, ethnicities, and nations” (1272). Ultimately, Shohat calls for a transnational rather than an international feminist paradigm arguing that it is impossible for U.S. women’s studies to engage in non-ethnocentric versions of global feminism without reconceptualizing deeply embedded frameworks that posit the study of women internationally in addition to, rather than in relation to, women in the western world.

Indeed, women’s studies professors Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal engage in a similar analysis of the limitations inherent to feminist frameworks that utilize an international perspective for the study of women globally. They charge that U.S. feminist projects

35 For example, non-western women’s anti-colonial resistance is often left out of North American/ western historical accounts of feminist activism.
informed by internationalism maintain nationalist legacies, and cite heavy reliance on state intervention in sexist oppression as an example of feminist complicity in nation-state agendas. The authors go on to problematize U.S. feminist activism and scholarship that adopt global development and human rights models, which continue to garner widespread support due to the influential policies of the World Bank, UN, and other international bodies. They assert that institutionalized human rights and global development frameworks favor the creation of international interventionist state structures regardless of existing resistance strategies that are often organized at grassroots levels without national support and sometimes in opposition to nationalist interest (Kaplan and Grewal 72). Echoing the work of Ella Shohat, Kaplan and Grewal recognize the ways in which women’s anti-colonial, anti-racist, and anti-poverty organizing is rendered invisible when looked at through the lens of Euro-American feminist activism, a lens referred to as the “normative context” by Chandra Mohanty in her discussion of the ways in which the “feminist-as-tourist model” curricular model relies on the socio-cultural context provided by United States or western European nation-state (Feminism without Borders 239). Overall, the “feminist-as-tourist model” for integrating transnational perspectives into U.S. women’s studies leaves power differentials and global hierarchies untouched as ideas regarding feminist epistemology and activism are reproduced along Euro-American lines.

Ultimately, Shohat and Kaplan and Grewal oppose US feminist rubrics that engage with social justice frameworks grounded in the binary opposition of developed/developing nations that maintain the superiority of western ways of knowing and doing and that reinforce asymmetrical power relations via missionary models, which permeate national boundaries to bring feminism to oppressed “Third World women.” For all of these authors, internationalism can be conceived of as a nationalist and imperialist world-system configuration that implies a plurality of nations, states, and cultures to be engaged with

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36 For example, Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal write that in the United States domestic violence activism has come to see the state as an ally. Specifically, they assert that the Clinton administration’s approach to domestic violence was to fund policing as a means of intervention, rather than welfare and education programs. See Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal’s “Transnational Practices and Interdisciplinary Feminist Scholarship: Refiguring Women’s and Gender Studies.”

37 For more on this embodiment of feminist paternalism see Inderpal Grewal’s “On the New Global Feminism and the Family of Nations: Dilemmas of Transnational Feminist Practice.”
according to humanist notions of comparative study – a process that does not require a relational examination of inequality and exploitation buttressed by particular nations’ social, political, and economic self interests (Kaplan and Grewal 81). Accordingly, internationalism impedes feminist projects that are grounded in approaches to understanding the linkages operating at once between, among, and beyond diverse nations, patriarchies, colonialisms, racisms, and feminisms.

Importantly, Kaplan and Grewal cite the unique potential that women’s studies maintains for integrating the study of women from diverse parts of the world into U.S. higher education because it is not historically bound by the nation-state in the ways as are area and American studies (70). Therefore, in an effort to reconfigure women’s studies so that it may engage more directly which (inter)nationalist critiques, Kaplan and Grewal offer a set of critical practices informed by transnational curricular perspectives that “trace the complex circuits produced by problematic political, economic, and social phenomena” and refuse to valorize “legacies of development and modernization in academic knowledge production” (73). Their transnational curricular perspective includes the development of various critical approaches characterized by three points: (1) critiquing boundaries of nation and identity using linking, rather than comparison, frameworks, (2) focusing on complicity and conflict as well as alliance and commonality, and (3) critiquing the “natural” and “common sense” (79-80).

By integrating all three points into course syllabi to expand women’s studies curriculum, Kaplan and Grewal embrace a transnational perspective in their aim to move beyond internationalist rhetoric and reification produced by U.S. hegemony within women studies and develop a more representative study of women as complex, albeit gendered, racialized, and classed, subjects in an increasingly globalized world. Kaplan and Grewal’s curricular model relies on the understanding that “women’s lives are connected and interdependent, albeit not the same no matter which geographical area we happen to live in,” – an important concept lacking among women’s studies programs and departments that integrate so-called transnational curricular perspectives without adequate attention to U.S. complicity in global inequality (Mohanty, Feminism without Borders 241).

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity, refers to deficient pedagogical perspectives of this sort in her analysis
of trends surrounding the internationalization of women’s studies curriculum. She uses the label “feminist-as-explorer model,” which, often resulting in a “deeper, more contextual understandings of feminist issues in discretely defined geographical and cultural spaces,” rely on cultural relativist paradigms in which “differences between cultures are discreet and relative with no common basis for evaluation” (240). Put differently, “feminist-as-explorer models” collapse the local and the global of non-western countries into the international that, by definition, excludes the United States; questions of power, agency, and justice in an era of increased economic globalization are silenced.

Conversely, while Miranda Joseph, Priti Ramamurthy, and Alys Eve Weinbaum, authors of “Toward a New Feminist Internationalism,” largely concur with Shohat and Kaplan and Grewal’s agenda to expand the study of women within the U.S. beyond national borders, their focus embraces rather than renounces internationalism in order to reposition the national as a crucial scale of analysis. They assert that even in an increasingly globalized world, “nation states are continuously situated as a powerful global forces that shape individual lives” and insist that globalization has not rendered the nation state irrelevant (207). Furthermore, Joseph, Ramamurthy, and Weinbaum signal a shared reliance on Marxist analytics, and posit a model of internationalism characterized by workers’ alliance across borders of nation and state to oppose capitalism. By doing so they aim to draw from the historical relationship between women’s movements and Marxist political discourses and resituate class struggle within women’s studies, which, they argue, has been largely marginalized due to the rise of cultural feminism within the academy on one hand and preoccupations with global unity rather than solidarity on other.

The purpose of their framework is to produce a complete and inclusive theory linking the political economy with the international division of labor in order to situate particular communities, rather than general social and cultural formations, in relation to global capital and thus in relation to each other. Their focus is on the material and discursive structural processes that separate even as they simultaneously connect global actors. Thus, Joseph, Ramamurthy, and Weinbaum’s “Towards New Feminist Internationalism,” “underscore[s] the significance of global capitalism to gender formation,” while simultaneously highlighting the importance of reconceptualizing U.S. women’s studies to incorporate transnational perspectives in a way that does not simply add “globalization” and “nationality” to the race,
class, sexuality, disability litany of its study of gendered difference (209, 213-14). The authors caution women’s studies practitioners not to assume equivalence between categories, but rather to engage with their intersections in meaningful ways that are grounded in commonality and conflict. With their framework they join the voices of the women’s studies scholars and activists above – all of whom echo Kimberle Crenshaw’s hopeful suggestion that “through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us and negotiate the means by which these differences find expression in constructing group politics” (1299).

Syllabus Analysis

Interestingly, the curricular framework put for by new international feminism is in many ways in accordance with Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s description of her third and favored paradigm for transnational women’s studies curriculum transformation titled, the “feminist solidarity or comparative feminist studies model” (Feminism without Borders 242). According to Mohanty, feminist solidarity models for transnational curricula assume a comparative analysis of the directionality of power to foreground the conceptual, material, temporal, and contextual links and relationships between the local and the global. This model’s focus is not one based solely on an understanding of intersectionality, but also on the realities of women’s (and men’s) coimplication and mutuality in social and economic processes that govern women’s experiences of oppression and strategies for resistance. Feminist solidarity curricular perspectives result from professors’ and students’ attentiveness to the interweaving of histories of diverse communities by assuming both distance from and proximity to the subject of study as its strategy for analysis thus surmounting many of the shortcomings associated with “feminist-as-tourist” and “feminist-as-explorer” curricular paradigms, which frame non-western women’s identities and issues according to universal womanhood or cultural relativist frameworks, respectively.

While Joseph, Ramamurthy, and Weinbaum center economic globalization and the world division of labor for this curricular undertaking, Mohanty suggests organizing women’s studies curriculum around social and economic process and histories of various communities of women. In particular, organizing around substantive areas such as “sex work, militarization, environmental justice, the prison/industrial complex, and human rights,”
facilitates awareness of points of contact and conjunction as well as disjunctures among and between women from diverse parts of the world (Feminism without Borders 243). By moving away from add-and-stir/“feminist-as-tourist models” for transnational curriculum on one hand, and separate-but-equal (and always different)/ “feminist-as-explorer” curricular models on the other, U.S. women’s studies ceases engagement with homogenizing paradigms that gloss over important differences in the name of global sisterhood, and positions U.S. feminist education to shed its reliance on oppositional local/global, or First World/Third World dichotomizing grounded in dissimilarity. Feminist solidarity models posit what Mohanty refers to as a One-Third/Two-Thirds paradigm that “allows for teaching and learning about points of connection and distance among and between communities of women marginalized and oppressed along numerous global dimensions” (Feminism without Borders 243). A One-Third/Two-Thirds rubric frames women’s studies as a tool for fostering agency and activism across the borders of nation by recognizing privilege and oppression critically and inextricably and by formulating questions around connection without ignoring common differences.

**Feminist Solidarity Curricular Models**

Embracing Mohanty’s framework for transnational curricular perspectives grounded in feminist solidarity, women’s studies professor Caroline Light organizes a 2011 undergraduate feminist theory course around the possibility of “feminist conversations across differences” (1). The description for the course is outlined on the first page of the syllabus; it elucidates the need for women’s studies students to develop “a nuanced understanding of the construction of one’s own identity (including internal contradictions, multiplicities, and instabilities) and concepts by which to think about difference, language, politics, and activism” (1). She writes that in a globalized economy, feminists around the world are challenged to think and act transnationally and therefore emphasizes in her course “current perspectives developed in the fields of transnational feminist and queer theory” (1).\(^{38}\)

\(^{38}\) The contributions that queer theories make to the cultivation of inclusive women’s studies programs against U.S. cultural hegemony are significant in their own right. An examination of queer epistemologies and pedagogies that resist higher education grounded in compulsory heteropatriarchy is beyond the scope of this project.
Light’s assigned readings fall under major two units: *Theories of Identity and Community*, and *Conversations across Difference*. The themes that make up these two units include, among others, “Imagining Communities: Nationalism, Transnationalism, and Waves of Feminism,” “Organizing Across Difference,” and “Feminist Futures.” Light’s “organizing across difference” theme, containing readings titled, “Cutting through the Obfuscation: Female Genital Surgeries in Neoimperial Culture,” “Women’s Activism and Globalization: Linking Local Struggles and Transnational Politics,” and “U.S. Black Feminism in Transnational Context,” by Isabelle R. Gunning, Nancy A. Naples and Manisha Desai, and Patricia Hill Collins, respectively, uniquely corresponds to Mohanty’s feminist solidarity model in that it highlights transnational feminist activism outside the academy within women’s studies. Mohanty writes that women’s studies practitioners are responsible to not only expose students to feminist scholarship, but should also “envision the possibility of activism and struggle outside the university” and outside of the United States (*Feminism without Borders* 243).

Similarly, the “Feminist Theory” course syllabus constructed by Cathy Hannabach in 2011 features headings such as “Biopower Redux: Security, Violence, and the State,” “Affective Citizenship: Belonging and Unbelonging,” and “Practices of War,” to organize themes and readings informed by transnational perspectives. This demonstrates her refusal to teach women’s studies according to traditional ways of knowing put forth by U.S. academic feminism, i.e., along a typical line engaging first with liberal feminist theory, then with Marxist/socialist feminist theory, then with radical and/or lesbian feminist theory, and so on. Five of the syllabi analyzed here, including Barker 2006, Blum 2010, Garber 2010, Miller 2010, and Sanders 2010, have reading schedules organized along these lines which, in truth, could never package the breadth, complexity, and overlap of feminist theories so neatly.

Analyzed accordingly, Professor Heather M. Turcotte’s 2011 syllabus for an undergraduate course on feminist theory titled, “Feminisms,” is also framed by Mohanty’s feminist solidarity lens. Her course overview is worth citing at length:

Feminism has developed through contested and collaborative theories, methods, pedagogies, and practices of numerous feminist intellectual and political movements. This course examines some of the historical specificities, systemic processes and global networks of feminist exchange. We will explore a
genealogy of transnational conversations, debates and knowledge re-productions of varied feminist frameworks to open up the borders of Feminist Theory. We will discuss the productive aspects, contradiction and connections between different forms of feminisms. Through these knowledges we will also contextualize the framing and current reframing of Women’s Studies within academia to analyze the ways in which we exist within and between larger struggles and debates of feminist work. This focus on moments of systemic and interpersonal power suggests that continued reflection, deeper theorizations and plurality of frameworks are necessary to explore the meaning and practices of feminist solidarities. Various theories will be introduced that grapple with temporal and spatial constructions of feminism on local, national, international, and global levels. (1)

Here, one is able to discern Turcotte’s engagement with feminisms’ achievements and shortcomings, joys and frustrations. We recognize her desire to posit a solidarity model that encourages students to develop skill necessary to think relationally and comparatively about their own personal identities and positionalities as both distant from and proximal to diverse feminist projects on a variety of socio-political and economic organizational levels. She underscores the importance of examining multiple workings of power within institutions of higher education as well as the nation-state, and aims to foster “effective global communication skills and to further explore approaches to understanding global inequalities and our position, complicities and accountabilities within these global structures” (2). This corresponds directly to Mohanty’s emphasis the need for adequate responses to globalization within feminist pedagogies of internationalization.

Furthermore, Turcotte’s course syllabus is commensurate with the three main points put forth in Kaplan and Grewal’s transnational curricular perspective. In her course description and objectives she addresses point one, “critiquing boundaries,” and point two, “focusing on complicity and conflict as well as alliance and commonality,” and she engages with point three, “critiquing the ‘natural’ and ‘common sense’” in a way that, while perhaps not intended by Kaplan and Grewal, challenges what seems to present itself as the transnational feminist literary cannon.

To elaborate on this assertion, let me draw attention to two more syllabi that utilize the feminist solidarity curricular model via transnational curriculum: Donadey 2008 and
Gathered from a variety of diverse sources, Professor Turcotte’s assigning readings include texts that do not appear in any other Feminist Theory syllabus analyzed here. They include, for example, “Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subject,” “Theorizing the Shift from ‘Woman’ to ‘Gender’ in Caribbean Feminist Discourse: The Power Relations of Creating Knowledge,” and “The Challenges of Border-Crossing: African Women and Transnational Feminisms,” by Oyèrònké Oyewùmi, Eudine Barriteau, and Obioma Nnaemeka, respectively. Course curricula designed to pierce canonical boundaries that are buttressed by the sole or heavy reliance on assigned readings by scholars like McCann 2010. Each of these syllabi, constructed for undergraduate feminist theory courses disrupt both feminist-as-tourist and feminist-as-explorer paradigms by drawing from “both local U.S. feminist sources and from feminists around the globe” for their assigned readings (McCann 1). These syllabi adequately integrate “nationality, colonialism, and globalization” (Donadey 1) as well as “imperialism” (McCann 1) into an analysis of the intersection of oppressions, and engage deeply with the role of social location and power in the production of representations of women on one hand, and feminist epistemologies on the other. In order to achieve a feminist solidarity model, Donadey and McCann assign course readings drawn heavily from Carole McCann and Seung-kyung Kim’s text, Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives. While using this course reader in no way impedes the professors’ ability to engage with transnational perspective (in fact it likely facilitates the feminist solidarity model), widespread reliance on this collection of works may contribute to the invisibility of other, lesser known transnational perspectives within women’s studies curriculum thus essentializing the epistemologies put forth by feminist works in the compilation.

Gathered from a variety of diverse sources, Professor Turcotte’s assigning readings include texts that do not appear in any other Feminist Theory syllabus analyzed here. They include, for example, “Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subject,” “Theorizing the Shift from ‘Woman’ to ‘Gender’ in Caribbean Feminist Discourse: The Power Relations of Creating Knowledge,” and “The Challenges of Border-Crossing: African Women and Transnational Feminisms,” by Oyèrònké Oyewùmi, Eudine Barriteau, and Obioma Nnaemeka, respectively. Course curricula designed to pierce canonical boundaries that are buttressed by the sole or heavy reliance on assigned readings by scholars like

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39 I refer to the syllabi analyzed in this chapter accordingly: Professor’s surname, the year as it appears on the document itself. Further information regarding the syllabi can be found in the Appendix.

40 Two of these readings are assigned by Professor Turcotte week three under the heading “Configurations of Gender, Sex and Bodies,” and one is assigned week thirteen under the heading “Negotiating Transnationalism.” I draw attention to this fact (and also point to the existence of several other diverse readings included in her syllabus, which are assigned at various times under a variety of headings) in order to assert that Turcotte’s engagement with African and other non-North American/western feminisms does not appear to follow a “feminist-as-explorer” curricular model in which the “‘foreign’ woman is the object and subject of knowledge and the larger intellectual project is entirely about countries other than the United States” (Mohanty, Feminism without Borders 240).
Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Uma Narayan should be celebrated as efforts to broaden transnational feminist perspectives in U.S. women’s studies. Indeed, 10 syllabi that display transnational components include readings by Mohanty and/or Narayan, and 4 syllabi include works by Mohanty and/or Narayan as their only transnational component(s). Syllabi that move beyond engagement with works predominantly by scholars familiar to western feminist academics resist tendencies that tokenize or play lip service to postcolonial feminist scholarship and demands for the integration of transnational perspectives into U.S. feminist higher education.

While the five Feminist Theory course syllabi discussed above demonstrate the existence of a core curriculum grounded in transnational perspective for feminist solidarity, my analysis of 20 syllabi constructed between 2006 and 2011 illustrate that, overall, U.S. women’s studies courses maintain room for growth if pedagogues want to engage more directly with strategies to overcome U.S. hegemonic feminist educational frameworks characterized by the invisibility, homogenization, and exoticization of non-western women’s oppression and resistance. Indeed, of the 20 syllabi analyzed, 10 maintain insignificant engagement with any sort of transnational feminist perspective. Put differently, 3 feminist theory undergraduate syllabi do not incorporate any non-western epistemologies into their course objectives – most often eluded to via the use of the terms “international,” “global,” “transnational,” “postcolonial,” or “Third World” feminism – and include zero readings by non-western theorists (regardless of race/ethnicity). Thus, syllabi constructed by Baker 2006, Blom 2010, and Sanders 2010 maintain no transnational component and, accordingly, no transnational feminist perspective.

Seven Feminist Theory undergraduate course syllabi have some transnational or global component, but course description, objectives, and readings are not framed according to a transnational perspective. Syllabi constructed by Herles 2007, Landreau 2007, Sinnot 2007, McBride 2008, Hackett 2010, Miller 2010, and Winnubst 2011 are “peppered” with four or fewer texts by non-western feminist theorists. While Professor Hackett distinctly notes that her course will provide “an overview of responses by feminists in the U.S. to the question: what is sexist oppression and what should be done about it?” (emphasis mine) (1), the remaining six syllabi do not indicate a U.S. focus in their course description or objectives. In fact, Professor Miller and Professor Winnubst use the one or more of the signifiers listed
above in their course descriptions/objectives. Specifically, Professor Miller asserts that students will “study different feminist theories from multiple perspectives, including...postcolonial, third wave and global feminisms,” (emphasis mine) (1) and Professor Winnubst, in the description for her course titled, “Contemporary Issues in Feminist Theory,” claims that, “ranging from feminist of color and post-structuralist feminists to French feminists, material feminists and postcolonial feminists (emphasis mine), we will explore ways to reconfigure how we use and what we mean by the categories of both ‘feminism’ and ‘difference’” (1). These assertions are misleading, thus I use the term “peppered” here to denote that these Feminist Theory course syllabi feature such minor transnational components that they cannot be sufficiently examined according to add-and-stir curricular models criticized by the women’s studies scholars who frame this analysis.

**Feminist-as-Tourist Curricular Models**

Criticized as “brief forays” made into “non-Euro-American cultures,” add-and-stir curricular models are characterized by an obligatory day or week on some issue of gender oppression described as pertaining only to women outside “advanced” western culture. Yet the peppering we see above does little to educate students on non-Euro-American cultures regardless of how misguided or homogenizing that education may be (Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders* 239). As mentioned before, Mohanty terms the add-and-stir phenomenon within U.S. women’s studies the “feminist-as-tourist model” and asserts that this curricular approach can be recognized in that the western episteme framing the U.S. women’s studies syllabus remains generally unaltered and unchallenged. Indeed, the feminist-as-tourist strategy is necessary in order for U.S. feminist academics to maintain the difference and distance between the local and the global, reinforcing notions regarding “civilized, evolved First World women,” and “Third World women as victims.” Ella Shohat asserts that these pedagogical tendencies follow a “sponge/additive approach,” in which women’s historical contexts and complexities are consumed by Euro-American mainstream feminist discourses. It is not easy to draw attention to women’s studies course syllabi that reify these ethnocentrism, yet is it crucial that this project be carried out in an honest way in order to recognize and assess orientalist tendencies within U.S. feminist education so that we may begin to move increasingly toward feminist solidarity curricular models.
Five of the Feminist Theory course syllabi analyzed for this project succumb to the add-and-stir approach, including Leberge 2008, Moskop 2009, Garber 2010, Vest 2011, and Blaine 2011. These syllabi feature designated weeks in which students engage with transnational feminist perspectives. For example, it is outlined that during the tenth week of the semester, Professor Leberge’s “Introduction to Feminist Theory” course will spend time with post-colonialist feminist discourses. These broad, diverse, and complex philosophies are sandwiched between weeks nine and eleven labeled, “Psychoanalytic Feminism” and “Standpoint Feminism,” respectively. Similarly, no major discussion of feminist scholarship and/or activism across borders takes place until the fifteenth week of Professor Moskop’s 2009 course in “Feminist Theory: Gender Justice.” Finally, Professor Garber’s Feminist Theory course, offered a year later in 2010, follows the same pattern but offers two class sessions that journey into transnational feminist theories (they separated by seven weeks of course material): one Tuesday during week three focused on postcolonial feminism, and another Tuesday week ten that engages with feminism through a local/global lens.

It should be noted that Professor Leberge and Professor Moskop’s course syllabi, as well as Professor Vest’s and Professor Blaine’s list one of three popular feminist theory readers as required reading. Accordingly, themes are introduced to students in feminist classrooms according to the organization of feminist texts compiled for these edited works. Cited in the first part of this chapter facilitating the creation of feminist theory courses within academia, Feminist Theory: A Reader by Wendy Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski, and Theorizing Feminisms: a Reader by Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger may impede students’ and professors’ ability to deeply engage with curriculum that fully integrates transnational feminist perspectives.

While one cannot discern a professor’s pedagogical philosophies solely according to the course readers s/he assigns, excessive reliance on the above texts results in limited engagement with diverse feminist epistemologies. I do not assert that professors discontinue their use of such texts, but assert rather that the use of compilations categorizing feminist theories in a manner that ghettoizes transnational perspectives in designated weeks on postcolonial feminism should be reevaluated and critiqued. This act could be done in conjunction with students as a teaching moment potentially resulting in classroom conversations among communities of learners as to the particular power dynamics...
surrounding the organizational structure of feminist theory readers published in the West. Furthermore, conversations around this topic could lead to a restructuring of popular feminist theory readers and thus revolutionize ways women’s studies practitioners have historically interacted with feminist theories in the classroom. To recapitulate, four syllabi analyzed here that feature add-and-stir curricular models might have evolved out of the assignment of feminist course readers that engage with feminist-as-tourist perspective to transnational curriculum transformation.

**Feminist-as-Explorer Curricular Models**

Interestingly, my analysis of Feminist Theory course syllabi did not offer the opportunity to engage in a critique of women’s studies curriculum that posit transnational perspectives informed by Mohanty’s feminist-as-explorer model. This may be due to the fact that the ways in which U.S. women’s studies practitioners teach feminist theory is unlikely to be grounded in a specific location outside the West even as many of them embrace pedagogical philosophies that are informed by transnational curricular perspectives for feminist solidarity. Indeed, the geographic locations from which students and professors think, speak, and learn are inextricable from the knowledge that results out of these same processes; recognition of the power of location is vital to understanding one’s own complicity and mutuality in systems of privilege and oppression around the world.

In other words, we must become aware of the associations between where we stand and what we think and do in order to consider both our distance from and proximity to particular social and economic processes across borders. Those in the United States must theorize from the United States, which leads me to believe that the existence of Feminist Theory models taught through the lens of feminist-as-explorer frameworks, while perhaps providing a more complex and nuanced understanding of the lives of women from diverse parts of the world, do immensely more damage than add-and-stir approaches that at least recognize the multiple geographic locations albeit without analysis of power differentials between them.

On the other hand, it may be that women’s studies practitioners teaching feminist theory within U.S. universities are truly unable to conceive of a core curriculum that is grounded in the philosophies of feminist scholars theorizing from “other” nations or regions.
The answers to these questions lie beyond the scope of this chapter; future research that applies Mohanty’s analysis of the trends associated with internationalizing women’s studies curriculum to all course offerings within U.S. women’s studies programs and departments is needed to determine the existence of syllabi organized along feminist-as-explorer models.

**CONCLUSION**

A close examination of 20 U.S. women’s studies syllabi constructed for undergraduate courses in feminist theory between 2006 and 2011 reveals that while there is increasing integration of transnational perspectives within women’s studies core curriculum, many women’s practitioners do not adequately engage with curricular models grounded in commitment to global feminist solidarity. The existence of ten syllabi classified according to the analytical framework put forth in his chapter as possessing little or no transnational component – despite the presence of content – is troubling for academic feminists committed to inclusive women’s studies projects as forms of intervention into U.S. higher education.

The five feminist theory syllabi that reaffirm ethnocentricity and/or western superiority via reliance on “add-and-stir” approaches to transnational curriculum underscore the existence of feminist educations grounded in U.S. cultural hegemonic philosophies; they posit a North American/western center, and do little to transform U.S. university students’ understanding of the oppression of and resistance strategies for women from diverse parts of the world. Furthermore, curricular transformation predicated on “feminist-as-tourist models” ensure that the complex, uneven ways that peoples in the U.S. are implicated in processes of structural and systemic inequality globally – overwhelmingly due to the nation-state’s deep investment in widespread economic globalization – are largely rendered invisible. Accordingly, feminist educations emphasizing resistance strategies relevant to particular communities for the eradication of varied oppressions inside and outside of western contexts are unlikely to receive institutionalized nurturance across the United States. Overall, student engagement with diverse epistemological paradigms is likely to be extremely limited in these five cases.

Despite these shortcomings, this examination revealed five syllabi designed in accordance with a feminist solidarity model. The course objectives and readings assigned approach feminist theory undergraduate courses in ways that fully integrate transnational
perspectives. They highlight the importance associated with developing students’ awareness of women’s (and men’s) global interconnectivity, and display commitment to challenging hegemonic ways of knowing within U.S. women’s studies and larger U.S. higher education. These are extremely significant variables that women’s studies scholars and pedagogues dedicated to feminist movement for social justice globally must consider should they wish to their utilize privileged positions as U.S. academics to disseminate feminist theories that resist neocolonial discourse. Furthermore, growing power differentials affiliated with increased social, political and economic globalization require that women’s studies take seriously efforts to transform the core curriculum for transnational integration as feminist classrooms may often be the one of the only locations in which this work may take place within U.S. institutions of higher education.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The analyses presented within this thesis represent only a small fraction of my intellectual interest concerning feminist pedagogic and curricular interventions for United States higher education. In examining this intersection, I first engaged with the role of global capitalism in U.S. higher education and looked at the ways corporatization serves to impede critical pedagogic projects operating on university campuses. Secondly, modern developments in critical pedagogic renderings were scrutinized to emphasize the effectiveness feminist pedagogical praxis maintains for bridging academic and community spaces to foster holistic, inclusive movement for social justice. Thirdly, this thesis examines current trends in feminist higher education with particular attention paid to inclusivity projects within the field of women’s studies; a syllabus analysis reveals to what extent transnational perspectives are integrated into U.S. women’s studies core curricula at the start of the twenty-first century. Each area of analysis serves to reveal feminist strategic interventions into U.S. higher education. Dialogical exchange that makes obvious neoirperialism’s role in academia, empowering methods for teaching social justice activism, and transnational curricular content to decenter North American/Western ideological superiority within women’s studies intervene into U.S. higher education to confront its investment in reinscribing patriarchal, hierarchical, individualistic frameworks for intellectual engagement that ignore the revolutionary potential solidarity-based movements have for global transformation.

The results of the analyses presented herein provide the reader only a glimpse into contemporary U.S feminist education. Indeed, the assertions put forth by this thesis hardly skim the surface of necessary future research into these areas. This is due in part to the rapidly shifting nature of U.S. higher education in this moment of increased global capitalism as well as the sheer vastness of feminist pedagogy as a field of study. Although I offer some suggestions for the future of higher education based on transnational, anticapitalist feminist critiques, new directions in feminist praxis designed to address current social, political, and
economic processes require deeper engagement beyond the insights and inquiries put forth in this short piece. University and community educators deeply committed to solidarity-based feminist movement for social justice locally and globally may facilitate such future projects.

Specifically, the research presented has uncovered intellectual curiosities that I had not considered until I embarked upon this investigation into feminist higher education developments. For example, this work only briefly discusses student resistance in the classroom, and does not engage with the role that it plays in the construction of solidarity-based pedagogic and curricular models that center transnational perspectives. Yet as I near the end of the research and writing process I have become increasingly interested in topics of student resistance, particularly as they are informed by nationalist socialization. I have come to realize over the course of this project and through my own teaching that feminist educators who set out to construct syllabi and lesson plans that actively dismiss ethnocentric notions of Western superiority and the blatant homogenization of women from diverse parts of the world may do so to limited avail. Courses may be grounded in themes like accountability and mutuality, yet we may find that many U.S. university students remain uneager to examine U.S. complicity in unequal power differentials around the world. Acts of student resistance, which include feelings of sadness and guilt as well as expressions of complacency and/or hostility, erupt in classrooms when educators set out to “transnationalize” the curriculum in a society invested in nationalist agenda setting.

There has been a significant amount of scholarship around issues of student resistance (Davis; Lewis; Torres); its manifestations are varied, and emerge from diverse locations. But pedagogic processes that make use of students’ positionalities to provide deeper insight into individual experiences of privilege that emerge alongside the harmful consequences of widespread neoliberal economic policy and U.S. neoinperialism may yield resistance unique to educational endeavors centering transnationalism. Students deeply invested in U.S. nationalism and those who possess overt patriotic values complicate feminist educators’ ability to intervene into dominant higher education paradigms and adequately integrate transnational perspectives into women’s studies core curriculum. Thus multiple questions surrounding pedagogic interventions for addressing the intersection of student resistance and nation in the classroom become points of inquiry for feminist educators invested in both the transformative potential of pedagogical praxis and the integration of transnational
perspectives into feminist academic projects. As a starting point, future research might explore previous pedagogic scholarship on student resistance to gender and race analyses. What can the accountability processes there tell us about student resistance to examining one’s complicity in U.S. hegemony? Additionally, what strategies are currently enacted in order to address U.S. nationalism that is reproduced at an alarming rate via gender socialization, mainstream media outlets, and U.S. foreign policy? Do we integrate a critique of nation in all women’s studies courses alongside gender, race, class, and sexuality analysis? How we teach is as important as what we teach, and future research in these areas could benefit from the integration of transnational perspective into feminist higher education as a means to resist the negative effects of global capitalism on holistic feminist projects in academia.

Indeed, holistic pedagogic and curricular undertakings require engaged praxis characterized by the dialectical relationship between theory, action, and continuous self-reflection and should not be limited to the gender, race, and class litany of categories of analysis. Dedication to radical social transformation depends on each global citizen’s willingness to step outside of comfort zones to recognize numerous and complex systems privilege and oppression operating in their own lives, as well as the ways in which we are implicated in those systems, and educators must negotiate feelings of fear, resentment, guilt, and anger in their students and themselves should they embark on the research processes outlined here. Moreover, constant self-reflection is useful for uncovering information about the ways we are meant to challenge processes of oppression. While this thesis engages deeply with academic feminism as a tool to incite solidarity-based feminist movement in university actors, this is simply my current calling, and the arenas in which radical social change can and must take place in this world are endless.
WORKS CITED


Hull, Gloria T., Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith. *But Some of Us Are Brave: All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men: Black Women’s Studies*. Old Westbury: Feminist, 1982. Print.


**WORKS CONSULTED**


APPENDIX

SYLLABI ANALYZED
A: Judith Barker’s 2006 SEMINIAR 31-42500 “Feminist Theory” at Ithaca College
B: Cecilia Herles’s 2007 WMNST 4010 “Feminist Theory” at University of Georgia
C: Meghan Sinnott’s 2007 WST 3010 “Feminist Theory” at Georgia State University
D: John Landreau’s 2007 WGS 325 “Feminist Theories” at College of New Jersey
E: Anne Donadey’s 2008 WMNST 590 “Feminist Thought” at San Diego State University
F: Kari McBrinde’s 2008 GWS 305 “Feminist Theories” at University of Arizona
G: Marie Laberge’s 2008 WOM 216-010 “Introduction to Feminist Theory” at University of Delaware
H: Caroline Light’s 2009’s WGS 97 Sophomore Tutorial “Dreams of a Common Language: Feminist Conversations across Difference” at Harvard University
I: Wynne Moskop’s 2009 WS 390-01 “Feminist Theory: Gender Justice” at Saint Louis University
K: Andrew Blom’s 2010 WST 426 “Feminist Theory” at Central Michigan University
L: Pamela Sander’s 2010 WMNST 4100 “Feminist Theories” at University of North Texas
M: Jessica Miller’s 2010 WST 410 “Feminist Theory” at University of Maine
N: Carole McCann’s 2010 GWST 480 “Theories of Feminism” at University of Maryland, Baltimore County
O: Linda Garber’s 2010 WGST 101 “Feminist Theory” at Santa Clara University
P: Heather M. Turcotte’s 2011 WS 3250 “Feminisms” at University of Connecticut
Q: Cathy Hannabach’s 2011 WOMNST 500 “Feminist Theory: Imagining Otherwise” at University of Pittsburg
R: Jennifer Vest’s 2011 PHM 3123 “Feminist Theories” at University of Central Florida
S: Shannon Winnubst’s 2011 WS 575 “Contemporary Issues in Feminist Theory” at Ohio State University
T: Diana York Blaine’s 2011 SWMS 301 “Introduction of Feminist Theory” at University of Southern California