

## Humanities 395: Special Topic: FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP TODAY

Four Distinguished Professors will be on campus, each for three weeks, during which time they will teach a module of a single four-credit upper-level interdisciplinary seminar in Fall 2004 open to juniors and seniors. The four Visiting Professors will be:

**Kristin Ross** is Professor of French and Comparative Literature at New York University. She is the author of *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (1988); *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and The Reordering of French Culture* (1995); and *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (2002).

**Susan Bordo** is the Otis A. Singletary Chair in the Humanities and Professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of Kentucky. She has written and edited several books, including *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993, nominated for the Pulitzer Prize), *Twilight Zones: The Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.* (1997) and, most recently, *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private* (1999).

**Amy Hollywood** is Professor of the History of Christianity and Theology at the University of Chicago, where she teaches courses on early and medieval Christian thought and practice, the history of Christian mysticism, and contemporary theory, all with particular attention to questions generated by feminist and queer studies. She is the author most recently of *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (2002), and is currently writing a book about the reception—medieval, early modern, and modern—of medieval Christian women's mysticism.

**Rosi Braidotti** is Professor of Women's Studies and Scientific Director of the Netherlands Research School of Women's Studies at the University of Utrecht. She co-ordinates ATHENA, the European Thematic Network of Women's Studies for the European Commission's SOCRATES program, and is the author or editor of several books, including *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy* (1991), *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (1994), *Women, the Environment and Sustainable Development: Towards a Theoretical Synthesis* (1994) and, most recently, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (2002).

A brief description of each of the four modules follows:

## **“Feminist Scholarship Today”**

**Sept. 6 - Sept. 24 – Professor Kristin Ross:** “Feminism and French Culture.” In this course we will examine gender and feminism in postwar France with an eye toward key differences with developments within Anglo-American feminism. The course will be organized around a number of debates: universalism, the category of woman, gender and colonialism, popular culture and “auteur theory” in cinema, “parité.” Readings will include texts by Monique Wittig, Joan Scott, Genevieve Sellier, Eric Fassin, and Jacques Rancière.

**Sept 27-Oct 15 – Professor Susan Bordo:** “‘Girl Culture’ 2004: Is Ophelia Drowning or Surfing the Third Wave?”: Have “girls” as we’ve known them disappeared? Is today’s pre-teen and teenage girl a feminist dream realized, a throwback to old notions of femininity, or a radically new creature that’s different from anything that’s come before? Using contemporary movies (e.g. “Blue Crush,” “Lost and Delirious,” “Bring It On,”) teen magazines and other popular cultural materials, and selections from the classic studies of Gilligan and Pipher as well as more recent works such as Rachel Simmons’ *Odd Girl Out*, we will attempt to assess the situation of growing up female today. Some selection of the following topics will be considered: food, weight and body issues, gender roles and sexual identities, the cultural sexualization of girls’ bodies, the new athleticism, “girl power,” and the so-called “hidden culture of aggression” among girls. Special attention will be paid to racial and class differences that are often obscured in both scholarly and popular discussions of girls and “girl culture.”

**Oct. 25 - Nov. 12 – Professor Amy Hollywood:** “Feminism, Mourning, and Melancholia”: A common presumption of much second-wave feminist theory is that death does not pose a challenge for women in the same way it does for men. According to this view, only an over-attachment to individuality, the ego, or the self renders human mortality problematic. Women, insofar as they reject these masculinist values, do not or will not fear death. Yet even if we accept this argument (a big if), the reality of human mourning, apprehension, and fear in the face of the *other’s* death remains. The three week course will explore the need for a specifically feminist philosophy of mourning, one attendant to the critique of masculinist “necrophilia” first launched by Herbert Marcuse, Mary Daly and others in the 1960s and 70s. Toward this end, we will read important historical accounts of women’s relationship to death and mourning in Western Europe as well as theoretical texts by Sigmund Freud, Julia Kristeva, and Judith Butler.

**Nov. 22 - Dec. 10 – Professor Rosi Braidotti:** “Feminist Philosophies of the Subject: A Critical Overview.” We will begin with some general overviews of the topic (by Braidotti and Linda Alcoff), followed by some readings from Luce Irigaray and other psychoanalytic feminists on the question of the subject. The second half of the course will focus on what feminism can draw from the work of Gilles Deleuze (“nomadic subjects” and a materialist theory of becoming), and will conclude with a move from theory to practice, with readings dealing with “practical” issues of European feminism (the ATHENA or the Socrates projects).

**Students interested in enrolling in this class should have taken at least one of the following courses as a pre-requisite and should consider this as they register for Spring 2004 courses: ANT 344; ART 210; ECN 218; ENG 273 or 327; FRN 305, 312, 341, or 342; GWS 111 or 249; HIS 222, 318; PHI 235, 265, 268, or 295; PSY 314 or 333; REL 216, or 313; SOC 320 or 395.**

Questions should be directed to Alan Schrift, Director, Center for the Humanities, [schrift@grinnell.edu](mailto:schrift@grinnell.edu).