

Gender, Race, and Neoliberalism
Department of Gender and Race Studies
AAST 502-001/WS 510-001
Spring 2020

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and by appointment

Mondays, 1-3:30 pm
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“Frictionless living is the promise of neoliberal capital - that is, if you are on the winning side of power.”
- Tressie McMillan Cottom, “Dying to Be Competent”

Course description

Broadly speaking, neoliberalism indicates the application of capitalist market logics of production, consumption, and regulation to all domains of life, including government and the purportedly non-economic spheres of life, such as the family, the university, and the carceral system. Frequently used and often maligned, neoliberalism is a capacious concept with uncertain borders, edges, and overlaps. It is often depicted as monolithic, overwhelming, and inescapable, more like the climatic atmosphere in which we exist rather than a (hu)man-made system we can control. The label of “neoliberal,” moreover, functions both descriptively and normatively. It might refer to an economic system, a form of political organization, a set of ideological commitments, or an era. The motivating premise of this course is 1) that neoliberalism is most fruitfully understood as an amalgamation of the above and 2) that to speak, think, and write deeply and with subtlety about neoliberalism requires engagement with each of these facets in all of their contextual complexity. The aim of this graduate seminar is thus two-fold. The first is to gain familiarity with a substantial selection of recent work in political theory, in this case by closely reading a cluster of texts on the theme of neoliberalism. The second aim is to analyze the gendered and racialized effects of neoliberal politics.

In exploring the multi-dimensionality of neoliberalism, the first third of the course will be dedicated to understanding neoliberalism’s intellectual origins. We will briefly familiarize ourselves with the history of neoliberalism and then turn to several of its most substantive and influential theoretical interpreters, Michel Foucault, David Harvey, Wendy Brown, and Nancy Fraser. From there, we will turn to what seems to be a hallmark of neoliberalism: a decreasing distinction between private and public. We will somewhat artificially hold the private and public apart, moving from domains typically associated with the former (such as reproduction, the family, and the home), toward the ambiguous arena that combines private purposes and public ends (work and then university), and finally toward the areas of the public realm most susceptible to neoliberal interventions (the carceral state, population management, the environment, and national security).

Questions to be considered include:

- has neoliberalism changed - in its effects, scope, practices - since its postwar emergence?

- how do its advocates understand and describe neoliberalism? What would it mean to live, as the above epigraph puts it, “frictionlessly”?
- how can we distinguish neoliberalism from related ideologies and policies, such as classical liberalism or globalization? Does neoliberalism exist on an ideological spectrum or is it a unique phenomenon?
- if it is unique, what is neoliberalism’s particular internal logic? What are its modes of thought? How can we think about, and analyze, neoliberalism without reproducing neoliberal logics?

Course objectives

As the instructor, I will:

- introduce students to major texts and debates within the interdisciplinary academic literature on neoliberalism.
- situate neoliberalism as a historical phenomenon.
- explain how both conservatives and liberals have adopted, and adapted, neoliberalism for their own ends.
- facilitate the development of students’ writing skills, with an emphasis on the construction of logically sound arguments.

Student learning outcomes

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- identify the historical conditions which gave rise to neoliberal economic arguments and policies.
- distinguish between popular deployment of the term in contemporary culture and its more precise, and conflicting, uses within scholarly discourses.
- compare classical political liberalism and the economic and political modes of neoliberalism.
- assess the effects of neoliberal principles and policies on people of color, women, and members of the LGBTQ+ communities.
- critically evaluate texts. More particularly, you will hone your ability to identify and dissect the central argument in representative texts, as well as the key evidence used to support it.

Reading schedule

Please read the texts in the order listed for each meeting.

GROUNDWORK

January 13 (week 1): Introductions

Manfred B. Steger and Ravi K. Roy, “What’s ‘neo’ about liberalism?,” in *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (2010), chapter 1, pp. 1-20.

Quinn Slobodian, “Introduction: Thinking in World Orders,” in *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (2018), introduction, pp. 1-26.

Watch: “[What is Neoliberalism?](#),” *Sc&F Online* (2012) (about 10 minutes)

Watch: “[Paradoxes of Neoliberalism](#),” *Sc&F Online* (2012) (about 22 minutes)

January 20 (week 2): No class (MLK Day)

Joseph Stiglitz, "The Promise of Global Institutions" and "Broken Promises," in *Globalization and Its Discontents* (2002), chapters 1 and 2, pp. 3-52.
Stuart Hall, "The Neoliberal Revolution," *Soundings* 48 (2011): 9-27.
Katrina Forester, "[The crisis of liberalism: why centrist politics can no longer explain the world.](#)" *The Guardian* (18 November 2019).

January 27 (week 3): Marxist histories of neoliberalism

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005), entire

February 3 (week 4): Foucauldian genealogies of neoliberalism

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-9* (2008)

pp. 1-22, entire

pp. 117 (begin at "And what is important...") - 121

pp. 131 ("So, what is this principle of neo-liberalism?...") - 133 (stop at "...of governmental style")

pp. 146 ("So, what does this...") - 150

pp. 159 - 166 ("...economic-juridical complex.")

pp. 215 - 233

pp. 238 - 247 ("... strictly economic and market terms.")

pp. 291 - 305 ("...whole characteristic of civil society.")

February 10 (week 5): Neoliberalism + democracy = ?

Wendy Brown, "Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy," *Theory & Event* 7.1 (2003).

Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization," *Political Theory* 34.6 (2006): 690-714.

Nancy Fraser, "Feminism, Capitalism, and the Cunning of History," in *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (2013), chapter 9, pp. 209-226.

Fraser-Dawson exchange:

Nancy Fraser, "Legitimation Crisis? On the Political Contradictions of Financialized Capitalism," *Critical Historical Studies* 2.2 (2015): 157-189.

Michael Dawson, "Hidden in Plain Sight: A Note on Legitimation Crises and the Racial Order," *Critical Historical Studies* 3.1 (2016): 143-161.

Nancy Fraser, "Expropriation and Exploitation in Racialized Capitalism: A Reply to Michael Dawson," *Critical Historical Studies* 3.1 (2016): 163-178.

Nancy Fraser, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Cinzia Arruzza, "Notes for a Feminist Manifesto," *New Left Review* 114 (2018): 113-134.

THEMATIC CONCERNS (FROM "THE PRIVATE" TO "THE PUBLIC")

February 17 (week 6): Reproduction

Dorothy E. Roberts, "Race, Gender, and Genetic Technologies: A New Reproductive Dystopia?," *Signs* 34.4 (2009): 783-804.

Charlotte Halmø Kroløkke and Saumya Pant, "I only need her uterus": Neo-liberal Discourses on Transnational Surrogacy," *NORA* 20.4 (2012): 233-248.

Laura Briggs, "The Politics and Economy of Reproductive Technology and Black Infant Mortality," in *How All Politics Became Reproductive Politics: From Welfare Reform to Foreclosure to Trump* (2017), chapter 4, pp. 101-148.

Jemima Repo, "The Demographic Problematization of Gender" in *The Biopolitics of Gender* (2015), chapter 4, pp. 105-132.

Briggs, "Offshoring Reproduction," in *How All Politics Became Reproductive Politics*, chapter 3, pp. 75-100.

February 24 (week 7): The family

Melinda Cooper, *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism* (2017), chapters 1, 3, 5, and 7

March 2 (week 8): The home

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (2019), entire (**note:** longer reading than usual!)

March 9 (week 9): Work

Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," *The Atlantic Monthly* (July 2012)

Sheryl Sandberg, "The Leadership Ambition Gap: What Would You Do if You Weren't Afraid?,"

"Success and Likeability," and "The Myth of Doing It All," in *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (2013), chapters 1, 3, and 9, pp. 12-26, 39-51, and 121-139.

Natalia Cecire, "Beyoncé's Second Skin (Part I)," Works Cited (May 23, 2014)

---, "Beyoncé's Second Skin (Part II): How to Be *** Flawless," *Arcade* (December 16, 2014)

Catherine Rottenberg, "Introduction: Feminism in Neoliberal Times," "How Superwoman Became Balanced," and "The Neoliberal Feminist," in *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism* (2018), intro and chapters 1 and 2, pp. 1-13, 23-78.

March 16 (week 10): No class (spring break)

March 23 (week 11): The university

Heather Fraser and Nik Taylor, *Neoliberalization, Universities and the Public Intellectual: Species, Gender and Class and the Production of Knowledge* (2016), chapter 1 excerpt, pp. 2-18.

John Holmwood, "Race and the Neoliberal University: Lessons from the Public University," in Gurminder K. Bhambra, Kerem Nisancioglu, and Dalia Gebrial, eds., *Decolonising the University* (2018), chapter 3, pp. 37-52.

Kehinde Andrews, "The Challenge for Black Studies in the Neoliberal University," in *Decolonising the University*, chapter 8, pp. 129-144.

Jeffrey Williams, "The Pedagogy of Debt," in *Toward a Global Autonomous University: Cognitive Labor, the Production of Knowledge, and Exodus from the Education Factory*, eds. The Edu Factory Collective (2009), pp. 89-96.

Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "The University and the Undercommons" and "Debt and Study" in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (2013), pp. 22-43 and 58-68.

March 30 (week 12): The carceral state

Loic Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (2009), chapters 5 and 6, pp. 151-208.

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (2007), chapters 3 and 5, pp. 87-127 and 181-240.

April 6 (week 13): Population management

Michelle Murphy, *The Economization of Life* (2017), entire

April 13 (week 14): The environment

Class will be led by Dr. Jared Margulies from the Geography Department. Readings subject to change!

Adeniyi P. Asiyani, Edwin Ogar, and Oluyemi A. Akintoye, "Complexities and Surprises in Local Resistance to Neoliberal Conservation: Multiple Environmentalities, Technologies of the Self and the Poststructural Geography of Local Engagement with REDD+," *Political Geography* 69 (2019): 128-138.

Dan Brockington and Rosaleen Duffy, "Capitalism and Conservation: The Production and Reproduction of Biodiversity Conservation," *Antipode* 42.3 (2010): 469-484.

Kathleen McAfee and Elizabeth N. Shapiro, "Payments for Ecosystem Services in Mexico: Nature, Neoliberalism, Social Movements, and the State," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 100.3 (2010): 579-599.

Malini Ranganathan, "Thinking with Flint: Racial Liberalism and the Roots of an American Water Tragedy," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 27.3 (2016): 17-33.

Neil Smith, "Nature as Accumulation Strategy," *Socialist Register* 43 (2007): 16-36.

April 20 (week 15): (In)security

Sara Farris, *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism* (2017), entire

Required books

Melinda Cooper, *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism*

Sara Farris, *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism**

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-9*

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*

Michelle Murphy, *The Economization of Life**

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership**

* available as an e-book through the library

Readings not included in the required books will be available via a shared Box folder: <https://alabama.box.com/s/s8y4lqab8ugqsaeuigfvpogk14k5qmrl>

Assignments and requirements

Discussion posts (20%): Everyone is responsible for submitting eight posts to the course discussion board over the semester. There are eleven possible weeks to submit your post (see the assignment schedule); you may skip posting the week you present and two other weeks. Each should be in the range of 400-500 words; they are due by 5 am.

Your post should pose a specific question you would like to discuss about the upcoming reading (i.e., the reading that will be discussed in class on the same day that the post is due) and give your preliminary thoughts about it. You might address ideas or arguments you found confusing, intriguing, or with which you disagreed, or you could relate the reading to events in the news, other classes you've taken, or things you've read. The posts do not need to discuss the readings comprehensively but should instead focus on a particular issue, theme, or even paragraph.

Preparation and participation (25%): This class will be discussion-based and so regular attendance, preparation, and participation are required. Please be sure to have the text(s) with you in class.

Presentation (15%): Everyone will be responsible for offering a critical introduction to the week's readings once over the course of the semester. Guidelines are at the end of the syllabus.

Midterm paper (15%): You are free to choose the topic of your choice on which to write a 5-6 page midterm paper. The form is up to you - it could be a traditional paper that analyzes a text (or texts) or it could be a more experimental in keeping with your larger intellectual commitments and interests.

Final paper (25%): You may choose to write a 12-15 page paper on a new topic or to significantly revise and expand your midterm paper. (If you do the latter, you should include a 1-2 page discussion of the major revisions with the final product.)

Assignment schedule

1/13 (week 1)	Introductions
1/20 (week 2)	No class (MLK Day)
1/27 (week 3)	Discussion post due
2/3 (week 4)	Discussion post due
2/10 (week 5)	Discussion post due
2/17 (week 6)	Discussion post due
2/24 (week 7)	Discussion post due
3/2 (week 8)	Discussion post due
3/9 (week 9)	Midterm paper due
3/16 (week 10)	No class (spring break)
3/23 (week 11)	Discussion post due
3/30 (week 12)	Discussion post due
4/6 (week 13)	Discussion post due
4/13 (week 14)	Discussion post due
4/20 (week 15)	Discussion post due
Exam week	Final paper due

Academic resources

Please feel free to consult with [the UA Writing Center](#). For questions about formatting, grammar, and other more technical aspects of writings, [the Purdue Online Writing Lab](#) is the best online resource.

The Gender and Race Studies Department works with Dr. Sarah Sahn (sfsahn@ua.edu), a Research & Instructional Services Librarian. Dr. Sahn can help with refining a topic and making a research plan, figuring out how best to search for information on a specific topic and identifying the best databases, locating specific resources, and citing them properly. She can also help with citation managers (especially Zotero). Students are welcome to make appointments to meet with her in person or in small groups. She can also meet via video conferencing or answer questions over email.

Office hours

I have an open door policy for office hours. While you can contact me about meeting at a particular time (especially if you have class during my regular hours), you should also feel free to drop by without prior notice. If you are absent, it is a good idea to stop by and make sure you're caught up. Please know that you do not need to be struggling to come to office hours! I am happy to discuss particular readings, written assignments, how our work connects to other classes, or the class in general.

Extensions and late assignments

A two-day extension can be requested for either the midterm or the final paper, as long as it is done at least 48 hours in advance of the regular due date, via email.

Late assignments will lose one-third of a letter grade (i.e., an A- becomes a B+) for every day that they are late, including weekends, except in cases of illness or other documented emergencies.

Assignments not submitted will receive an F. All assignments must be submitted in order to pass the course. I reserve the right to alter any reading or writing assignments during the semester.

General grading rubric

A (100-90): demonstrates careful and thorough reading of the text; answers all parts of the question(s); provides a clearly articulated thesis; outlines the way in which thesis will be explicated; defends and supports thesis in the body of the paper using textual evidence; considers counter-arguments, if appropriate; argues, does not summarize; structurally elegant; writing is clear and straightforward. Excellent work.

B (89-80): demonstrates familiarity with the text, though may rely more on lecture and discussion than on own reading, or may demonstrate a cursory reading; provides a solid thesis but may not explain how it will be defended, support it thoroughly with textual references, or develop arguments as fully as they ought to; may make selective use of text to support claims; structurally, individual points may feel disconnected from one another. Writing is clear but with room for improvement. Good, but not excellent, work.

C (79-70): a weak, if appropriate or topical, thesis that either does not require a strong defense or relate entirely to the original question(s); demonstrates minimal passing acquaintance with the

material; evidence may be drawn primarily from lecture; substance of paper may tend toward summary of the text rather than critical engagement; does not attend to counter-arguments; individual paragraphs may be well-crafted but the paper overall lacks a sense of cohesion and attention to detail. Fair, but not good, work.

D (69-60): does not provide a clear thesis; may not respond to the question(s); does not support claims with evidence; emphasizes opinion or summary over analysis; paper lacks structure; does not otherwise demonstrate mastery of the concepts presented and analyzed in class; lack of organization makes paper difficult to follow; neglect of grammar, style, and writing.

F (59-0): does not provide a thesis or respond to the question(s); may be purely opinion or summary of text(s); no attempt to convey an interpretation of the material; lacking structure, coherence; no attention paid to grammar, style, and writing.

Academic integrity

You are expected to be familiar with - and adhere to - the official Academic Misconduct Policy provided in the UA Catalog.

Technology

Laptops and tablets are permitted for accessing e-books and readings on Box. This is subject to change if they become a source of distraction. Phones are *verboden* (forbidden).

Content note

Given the nature of the course, some of the materials we read will deal with topics that may have personal resonance, such as misogyny, sexual violence, abuse, and racism. If there are specific materials or topics that you anticipate will be particularly challenging for you, I'd be happy to discuss any concerns you may have beforehand and, if necessary, find alternative materials.

If you ever feel the need to step outside during a class discussion, you may always do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student or see me individually to discuss the situation.

Accessibility

I am committed to the full inclusion of all students. Please speak with me if you have a condition (whether apparent or non-apparent, learning, emotional, physical, or cognitive) that will require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures.

I also encourage you to contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) for information about accommodations. If you have a diagnosis, ODS can help you document your needs and create an accommodation plan. By making a plan through ODS you can ensure appropriate accommodations without disclosing your condition or diagnosis to me (or any other instructors).

If you are pregnant and will need accommodations for this class, please see the University's FAQs on the UAct website.

If you intend to be absent from class for religious observance, please see the Guidelines for Religious Holiday Observances and notify me in writing or via email during the first two weeks of the semester. I will work to provide reasonable opportunity to complete academic responsibilities as long as that does not interfere with the academic integrity of the course.

Personal resources

If you face challenges securing food or housing and believes this may affect your performance in the course, I urge you to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will help me to connect you with available resources.

For students dealing with anxiety, depression, distress, or other concerns, the Counseling Center can offer resources. They can be reached 24 hours a day at 205.348.3863.

The Women and Gender Resource Center (205.348.5040) provides free, confidential, and voluntary counseling and advocacy services to members of the UA community who are victims/survivors of interpersonal violence. Services are also provided to family and friends who have been impacted by the abuse, to Shelton State students, and to anyone who is victimized on the UA campus.

Resources outside of UA include the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1.800.799.7233) and RAINN's National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline (1.800.656.HOPE); both of these organizations also offer a chat option.

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help sustain a safe learning environment on our campus. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility and am required to share with the University information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that is related to me. I can, though, help connect you to resources like those above.

Presentation guidelines

Everyone will be responsible for offering a critical introduction to a reading once over the course of the semester. This presentation constitutes 15% of your final grade.

Requirements

Presentations should be between ten and twelve minutes. Reading through your material aloud is the best way to estimate the length. You are welcome, though not required, to meet with me during office hours to discuss your presentation.

You must make a one-page handout for your classmates. The content is up to you - it may include an outline of your argument, questions for discussion, or something else. **Avoid simply pasting quotations from our readings**. Email it to me by 10 pm the evening before your presentation so I can make hard copies for class.

Do not summarize the reading(s): you should assume your audience has read them and is familiar with the central claims. Instead, your presentation should engage with the authors' arguments and evidence carefully and fairly.

The content of the presentation is up to you. You do not need to try to cover everything addressed in the reading(s): you might focus on a few specific passages or a particular theme that unites various reading(s). You might begin by evaluating the claims of the argument. Are they persuasive? Why or why not? If the argument is confusing or problematic, try to convey where and how things go awry. Do any arguments seem particularly insightful? If the readings connect to others we have done, you might consider introducing that connection and how it affects our understanding of the respective texts. (It is best to avoid referring heavily to texts we have not read in the class.) Do you see connections to “real world” events worth exploring?

Please raise some questions for discussion. Discussion questions should be open-ended and thought provoking. They should ask about meaning, concepts, validity of claims, persuasiveness and the like. They probably do not have a “right” answer but rather invite people to respond in a number of different ways that the person asking the question does not necessarily anticipate.

If you are presenting the same week as someone else, please meet beforehand in order to divvy up the material(s). You are welcome to discuss the materials with one another but your presentations must be independent.

The computer/projector and the dry erase board are at your disposal, though it is not required that you use them. Nor do you need to memorize your presentation; working from notes is absolutely fine.

Evaluation of your presentation

Your presentation will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. adherence to the 10-12 minute time limit - avoid going over or under
2. the quality of the handout and its integration into your presentation
3. the clarity of your discussion and the effectiveness with which you communicate your ideas: is your presentation easy to follow? for example, could your audience easily summarize your main points?
4. the content of your presentation: does it demonstrate a critical engagement with the materials? does it fall into the “book report” trap (summarizing instead of critiquing)?