

Mediumship and Third World Feminisms: Bodies, Borders, and Worlds in Mediation

Note: Sample syllabus for a proposed course. Weekly readings and materials are representative selections.

Course Description

What kinds of knowledge appear when worlds meet?

This is an upper-level undergraduate seminar that revisits the intellectual traditions of Third World feminism through the concept of mediumship: the practice of inhabiting and mediating between multiple worlds. From Gloria Anzaldúa's borderlands theory to ecological, technological, and ritual forms of mediation, the course examines how feminist thought addresses situations in which dominant systems fail to account for lived realities. Pairing theoretical texts with visual and performed narratives, the seminar explores how knowledge travels across worlds and how feminist practices of mediation emerge across cultural, ecological, and technological contexts. Readings also place Third World feminist traditions in conversation with Indigenous and queer frameworks that similarly explore relational ways of inhabiting worlds.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand key concepts in Third World feminist thought
- Analyze how different cultural practices function as forms of mediation
- Engage critically with theoretical texts and cultural materials
- Reflect on how knowledge emerges through lived worlds
- Develop analytical and creative responses to course concepts

Assignments

- Weekly reading responses
 - 200-300 words
 - Responses may take analytical or experimental forms (short reflections, visual responses, or brief narrative fragments) as long as they engage the weekly materials.
- Concept Presentation

- Each group leads a short presentation introducing one key concept or text from the weekly materials and situating it within the course themes.
- Final project
 - Analytic essay (8-10 pages), or
 - Creative project (performance, visual narrative, short film, or other experimental format, etc.)

Creative projects should be accompanied by dramaturgical notes explaining the conceptual framework and course materials informing the work.

Projects may draw on personal experience, cultural observation, or archival materials to examine how mediation operates across bodies, environments, technologies, or communities.

Weekly Readings

WEEK 1 Representation Critique and Feminist Knowledge

- Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" (1988)
- Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (excerpt)

WEEK 2 Mediating Borderlands

- Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987, selections)
- Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981, introduction)

WEEK 3 Mediating Intersectionality

- Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" (1991)
- Rachel Kuo, Jaimee A. Swift, and TD Tso, *We Are Each Other's Liberation: Black and Asian Feminist Solidarities* (2025, selections)

WEEK 4 Feminist Decoloniality

- Maria Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism" (2010)
- Françoise Vergès, *A Decolonial Feminism* (2021, excerpt)

WEEK 5 Multispecies Mediation and Ecofeminism

- Melissa K. Nelson, "Getting Dirty: The Eco-Eroticism of Women in Indigenous Oral Literatures" (2017)
- Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2015, introduction excerpt)
- Instructor field note: ethnographic reflection on animal communication practices as interspecies mediation

WEEK 6 Technological Mediumship

- Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto* ("A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," 1985)
- VNS Matrix, "Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century" (1991), <https://vnsmatrix.net/projects/the-cyberfeminist-manifesto-for-the-21st-century>

WEEK 7 Storytelling as Ritual

- Terrapin Puppet Theatre, *The Paper Escaper* (2022, performance viewing)
- Devdutt Pattanaik, *Sati Savitri: And Other Feminist Stories They Don't Tell You* (2024, excerpt)

WEEK 8 The Body Mediates

- Chloé Pince, *Tant qu'on l'aura sous les pieds* (2022, wordless graphic narrative)
- Meesha Goldberg, *Daughterland* (2022, independent film), <https://www.secondstreetgallery.org/meesha-goldberg>

WEEK 9 Mediation in Popular Culture

- Maggie Kang and Chris Appelhans, *K-Pop Demon Hunters* (2025, film viewing)
- Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994, Third Space excerpt)

WEEK 10 Spirit Mediumship: Korean Shamanism

- Chongho Kim, *Korean Shamanism: A Cultural Paradox* (2003, excerpt)
- Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* (1987, excerpt)

WEEK 11 Mediumship as Queer Worlding

- Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Indigenous Queer Normativity" in *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (2017)
- Qwo-Li Driskill (Cherokee), "Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances between Native and Queer Studies." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 1-2 (2010): 69-92.

WEEK 12 Archipelagic Mediumship

- Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands" (1994)
- Student presentations: share final project ideas