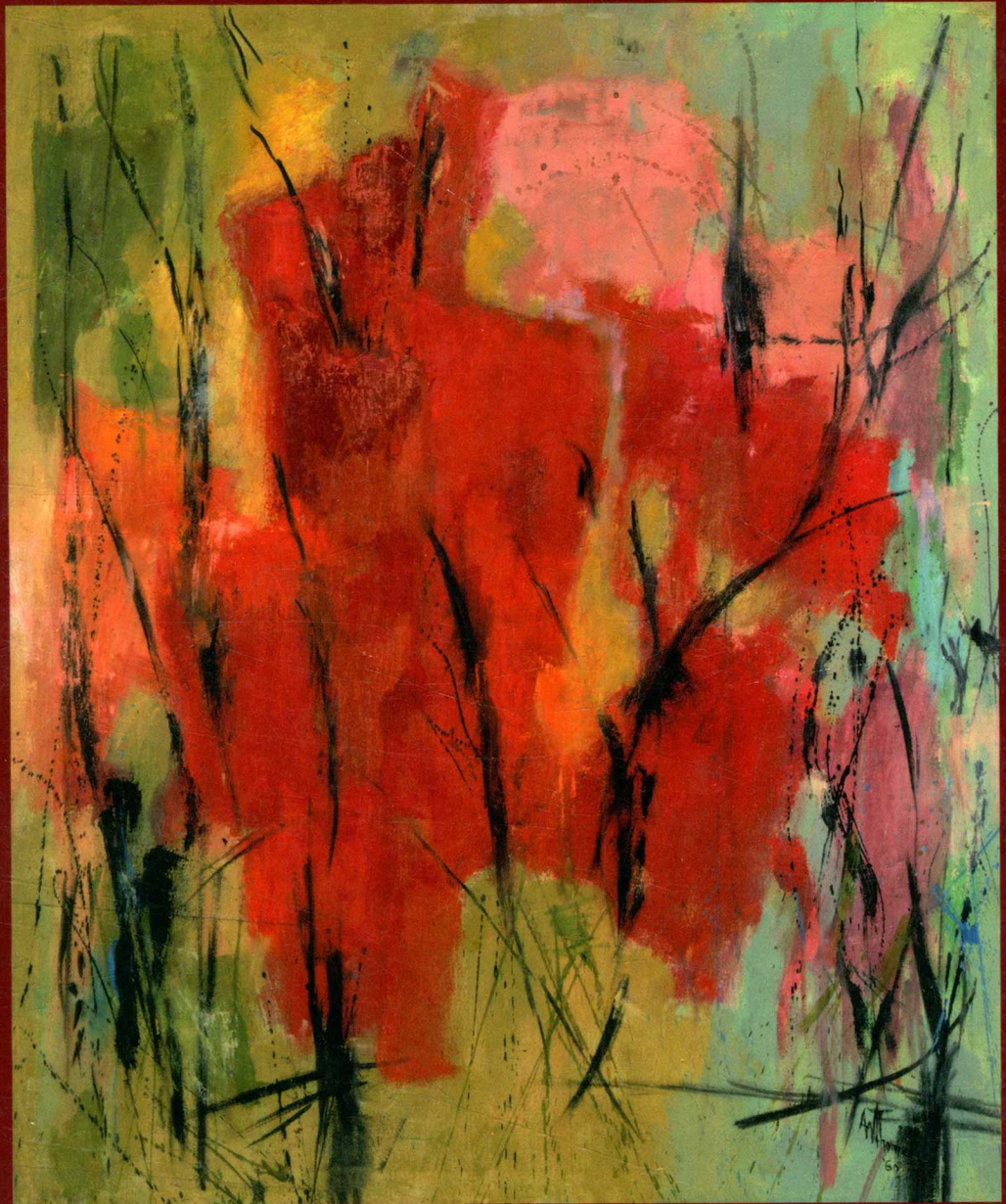


WOMEN'S VOICES | FEMINIST VISIONS



Classic and Contemporary Readings

FOURTH EDITION

SUSAN SHAW | JANET LEE

F O U R T H E D I T I O N

WOMEN'S VOICES, FEMINIST VISIONS

Classic and Contemporary Readings

SUSAN M. SHAW JANET LEE

Oregon State University



Higher Education

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*Dedicated to all our WS 223 "Women: Self
and Society" students
with thanks for all they have taught us.*

Preface

We decided to create this book after finding our students were increasingly not reading the assigned material in our introductory women's studies course. Our students found the texts to be mostly inaccessible, or alternatively, they enjoyed reading the more testimonial first-person accounts included in some texts but were not getting the theoretical framework necessary to make sense of these more experiential readings. We were tired of creating packets of readings, and students were tired of having to access alternative readings on top of purchasing a textbook. This book was crafted to include a balance of recent contemporary readings with historical and classic pieces as well as both testimonial and more theoretical essays that would speak to the diversity of women's experiences. Each chapter has an introduction that provides an overview of the topic and provides a framework for the readings that follow. Additionally, each chapter provides a variety of learning activities, activist profiles, ideas for activism, and other sidebars that can engage students with the material in various ways.

Although students of women's studies in the early 2000s are in many ways like the students who have preceded them, they are also characterized by certain distinctions from the students of the 1980s and 1990s. Many of today's students come to our classes believing the goals of the women's movement have already been accomplished, and, although most will say they believe in gender equity of some sort, few identify with feminism as a political theory or social movement. Even among students who are supportive of feminist thought, there is a distinct sense of a "third wave" of feminism that reflects the interests of young women who have come of age benefiting from the gains made by their feminist foremothers. Moreover, as women's studies has become institutionalized on college campuses and is fulfilling baccalaureate core requirements, more students are being exposed to women's studies than ever before. Many of these students "choose" women's studies from a menu of options and come to the discipline with varying levels of misunderstanding and resistance. Some of these students have been influenced by the backlash efforts of the 1980s and 1990s and by conservative religious ideologies that seek a return to traditional gender relations. All of these distinctions call for a new, relevant, and accessible introductory women's studies text.

As is typical of contemporary students, students in women's studies today are the kind of visual learners who often prefer reading and interacting in front of a computer screen or watching video clips to reading traditional texts. They are

unlikely to wade through long, dense, theoretical readings because they deem them “boring” and “irrelevant.” We know from experience that a large percentage of students in introductory women’s studies classes only read a fragment of the required readings and that our required readings end up as “fragmented texts.”

Our intention in this book is to address these challenges by presenting a student-friendly text that provides short, accessible readings which reflect the diversity of women’s experiences and offer a balance of classic/contemporary and theoretical/experiential pieces. The goal is to start where students are rather than where we hope they might be, and to provide a text that enriches their thinking, encourages them to read, and relates to their everyday experiences. We have chosen accessible articles that we hope are readable. They are relatively short, to the point, and interesting in terms of both topics and writing styles. Although most articles are quite contemporary, we have also included several earlier classic articles that are “must-reads.” And although the articles we have chosen cover the breadth of issues and eras in women’s studies, we hope students will read them and enjoy reading them because of their accessibility, style of presentation, and relevance to their lives. Many are written by young feminists, many are testimonial in format, and, on the whole, they avoid dense, academic theorizing. The cartoons, we hope, bring humor to this scholarship.

We also structure opportunities for students to reflect on their learning throughout the text, and, in this sense, the book is aimed at “teaching itself.” It includes not only articles and introductions but also a number of features designed to engage students in active learning around the content. For example, we address students’ tendencies to lose interest by creating a format that presents smaller, self-contained, more manageable pieces of knowledge that hold together through related fields and motifs that are woven throughout the larger text as boxes. This multiple positioning of various forms of scholarship creates independent but related pieces that enable students to read each unit in its entirety and make connections between the individual units and the larger text. We see this subtext as a way to address students’ familiarity and comfort with contemporary design, multiple windows (as on Web pages), and “sound bytes.” By also presenting material in these familiar formats, we intend to create a student-friendly text that will stimulate their interest. We encourage them to actually read the text and then be actively engaged with the material.

Pedagogy is embedded within the text itself. In addition to the textual narrative, we include in each chapter learning activities, activism ideas that provide students with examples and opportunities for the practical implementation of the content, questions for discussion that help students explore chapter themes critically, and suggestions for further reading. Instructors will be able to utilize the various pedagogical procedures suggested in the text (and those in the accompanying instructor’s manual) to develop teaching plans for their class sessions. By embedding the pedagogy within the text, we are creating a classroom tool that enables a connection between content and teaching procedure, between assigned readings and classroom experience. Thus, students and instructors should experience the text as both a series of manageable units of information and a holistic exploration of the larger topics.

We hope that this text will address the needs and concerns of students and instructors alike by speaking to students where they are in relation to feminist issues. Our hope is that the innovations included in this book will invite students into productive dialogue with feminist ideas and encourage personal engagement in feminist work.

Like other women's studies text-readers, this book covers the variety of issues that we know instructors address in the introductory course. We do not isolate race and racism and other issues of difference and power as separate topics, but thoroughly integrate them throughout the text into every issue addressed. We have also chosen not to present groups of chapters in parts or sections but to let the individual chapters stand alone. Pragmatically, this facilitates instructors being able to decide how they want to organize their own courses. At the same time, however, the chapters do build on each other. For example, after introducing students to women's studies, Chapter 2 presents the systems of privilege and inequality that form the context of women's lives and then Chapter 3 explores the social construction of gender, building on the previous chapter by introducing the plurality of sex/gender systems. The following chapters then examine how sex/gender systems are expressed and maintained in social institutions.

For this new edition, we have revised chapter framework essays to reflect the most up-to-date research and theory in the field. We've also included new readings that are contemporary and exciting. With each new edition, we strive to keep the textbook fresh and interesting for our students.

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Janet Lee and Susan Shaw are currently working on a new text, *Women Worldwide: Transnational Feminist Perspectives on Women*, forthcoming from McGraw-Hill. It brings global perspectives to the study of women, gender, and feminism.

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Women's Studies: Perspectives and Practices

WHAT IS WOMEN'S STUDIES?

Women's studies is an interdisciplinary academic field devoted to topics concerning women, gender, and feminism. As a body of knowledge, it examines women's status in society and seeks to improve the condition of women's lives, both in the United States and globally. Women's studies puts women (in all our diversity) at the center of inquiry and focuses on our reality as subjects of study, informing knowledge through this lens. This inclusion implies that traditional notions regarding men as "humans" and women as "others" must be challenged and transcended. Such a confusion of maleness with humanity, putting men at the center and relegating women to outsiders in society, is called *androcentrism*. By making women the subjects of study, we assume that our opinions and thoughts about our own experiences are central in understanding human society generally. Adrienne Rich's "Claiming an Education" articulates this demand for women as subjects of study. It also encourages you as a student to take seriously your right to be taken seriously and invites you to understand the relationship between your personal biography and the wider forces in society that affect your life. As authors of this text, we also invite your participation in knowledge creation, hoping it will be personally enriching and vocationally useful.

Women's studies involves the study of gender as a central aspect of human existence. Gender concerns what it means to be a woman or a man in society. Gender involves the way society creates, patterns, and rewards our understandings of femininity and masculinity. In other words, *gender* can be defined as the way society organizes understandings of sexual difference. Women's studies explores our gendered existence: how we perform femininity and masculinity and how this interacts with other aspects of our identities, such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexuality.

HOW DID WOMEN'S STUDIES COME ABOUT?

Women's studies emerged as concerned women and men noticed the absence, misrepresentation, and trivialization of women in the higher education curriculum, as well as the ways women were systematically excluded from many positions of power