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Theorizing Care in an Uneven World THEOCRIT 9659

Winter 2023

Tuesdays 1:30-4:30pm

Prof. Kate Lawless

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Office hours: by appointment

Course Description

Care is both a vital human need and a form of relationality that remains highly under-valued and under-theorized. And yet, in the age of pandemics, human displacement and ecological crisis, it is (back) on the global agenda. This seminar engages (the return to) care from a variety of disciplinary and theoretical vantage points to examine how it might serve as an analytic for contemporary social and political life. We explore normative and radical conceptions of care, in terms of its practical/theoretical, ethical/political, individual/structural configurations, beginning with philosophical foundations (Plato, Aristotle) and moving through various historical and theoretical moments, including world-care and self-care (Heidegger, Arendt, Foucault); feminist, Black and Indigenous care ethics (Gilligan, Noddings, Lorde, Kimmerer); the politics of care work (Federici, Fraser); fugitive planning as care (Harney and Moten); and speculative ethics (Puig de la Bellacasa). We close with two multi-species ethnographies that theorize more-than-human forms of care, their intersections with human ideals (such as conservation and resilience), and their challenge to the category of the human itself (Hartigan Jr., Parreñas). Throughout the course, we ask: How can care be a site of social and political change? Can we imagine a radically transformative form of care? What is the relationship between an ethics of care and its politics? Is care intrinsically good? Might it be violent? What is the relationship between self-care and world-care? Is self-care inherently narcissistic or individualistic? Has it been co-opted by neoliberalism? How is this challenged by Black radical and Indigenous traditions? What can we learn about the history of care by reading it through the lenses of social and material difference? How do collapsing ontological distinctions and new epistemologies challenge our normative and anthropocentric notions of care? What forms of living and dying, thinking and knowing, building and letting go might emerge from care's re-enchantment? Overall, our aim in this course is to investigate the socially, politically, and ethically revolutionary possibilities of theorizing and materializing care in an increasingly hostile and uneven world.

annotate a minimum of 10 sources, 2 of which are course texts. Each annotation should include a description of the text in your own words and your evaluation of the text. Aim for 150-200 words per annotation. This assignment is worth 20%.

Conference Presentation + Paper: If you chose the earlier assignment 'Conference Paper Abstract,' you will participate in an end-of-semester conference on April 11 for which you will prepare a 15-minute presentation. You should not simply read from a pre-written paper, but instead prepare an engaging presentation. You may or may not include a visual component. Using peer feedback from the presentation, you will submit a 2500-word conference paper on April 25. The presentation for this assignment is worth 15% and the paper is worth 25%.

Stand-Alone Literature Review: If you chose the earlier assignment 'Annotated Bibliography,' you will write a stand-alone literature review based on your annotated bibliography. In this 8000-word paper, you will review a specific body of care literature (i.e., Black feminist self-care). Your aim is to provide an overview and evaluation of the existing literature in one sub-field of care theory with a particular eye to strengths, limitations, controversies, and gaps. You should conclude with ideas for a future research agenda. This assignment is due on April 25 and is worth 40%.

Required Texts

Butler, O.E. (1993). . Grand Central Publishing.

Hartigan Jr., J. (2017).

University of Minnesota Press.

Kimmerer, R.W. (2015).

. Milkweed Editions.

Parreñas, J.S. (2018).

Duke University Press.

Puig de la Bellacasa, M. (2017).

University of Minnesota Press.

All other readings will be posted on OWL under Resources

Reading Schedule

1: Jan 10

Mol A., Moser, I., & Pols, J. (eds). (2022) Care: Putting Practice into Theory.

(pp. 7-26). Transaction Publishers.

Engster, D. (2005) Rethinking Care Theory: The Practice of Caring and the Obligation to Care.

(3), 50-74.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Contact: I will attempt to respond to email messages within 24 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours on weekends and holidays. I will not hold regularly scheduled office hours; however, I'm happy to schedule individual appointments as necessary. Please email me to set a date and time.

Assignment Deadlines, Submission, and Grading: I am of two minds about deadlines: 1) they should always be flexible to some degree to accommodate for when life happens; 2) they are necessary to keep us motivated, accountable, and vigilant against procrastination and perfectionism. Some people are very good at imposing deadlines intrinsically, while others rely on extrinsic motivation. Whatever your case, we will be imposing some soft deadlines and some hard deadlines in this course. Assignments should be submitted to the appropriate assignment page on OWL by 11:55pm on the suggested (soft) deadline. Be aware that assignments submitted after the deadline may not receive full feedback. No assignments will be accepted after the final day of class without academic accommodations (this is a hard deadline).

Health and Wellness: As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help students achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing a graduate degree. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone in whom they feel comfortable confiding, such as a faculty supervisor, a program advisor, or the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies). Campus mental health resources may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html.

Scholastic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously. Students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

Http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Land Acknowledgement: We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, H