

FSP 123-01: Rebel Girls: Girlhood Activism & Social Change

Instructor: Emily Bent

Office: Bliss Hall, Room 117

Email: bent@tcnj.edu or emilycbent@gmail.com

Office Hours: M or W / 3:00pm – 4:00pm & By Appointment

Course Description

This course will examine how girls and young women 'do' activism. We will consider the various methods, tools, and strategies used to inspire socio-cultural and political change in the community. With an emphasis on girls and young women as leaders and agents of change, the course explores what it means to 'girl' activism. We will examine the intersections of age, gender and power to understand how girls engage and lead social change efforts despite their marginal status. Toward this end, the course will explore the function of social media, popular culture, film, music, protest, and satire in social change movements. Students will also have the opportunity to engage with young female activists from the local community to learn about their leadership strategies.

This course fulfills TCNJ's Community Engaged Learning (CEL) requirement of 10 volunteer / service hours. It is further designed as a supplemental course to the Women in Learning & Leadership (WILL) Program. Students can expect to gain critical literacy skills, as well as strengthen their written and oral communication.

Required Texts

Rebel Girls: Youth Activism & Social Change Across the Americas. Jessica Taft. 2011.

Growing Up with Girl Power: Girlhood On Screen and in Everyday Life. Rebecca C. Hains. 2012.

The Hunger Games. Suzanne Collins. 2008.

Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood. Marjane Satrapi. 2003.

- Additional readings will be available on CANVAS.

Learning Goals & Objectives

Students can expect to gain the following from the FSP and the Rebel Girls course:

- Foster intellectual curiosity in the students
- Introduce students to college-level assignments and college-level expectations in terms of writing, reading, research, and oral presentations
- Improve the students' ability to think critically about their world, their culture, and their own beliefs
- Foster a student culture of intellectual engagement outside the classroom
- Encourage students to take greater responsibility for their own learning
- Introduce students to the concept of a well-rounded education based on a breadth of knowledge that goes beyond their immediate professional or academic field, and
- Accomplish the appropriate Liberal Learning domain goals and interdisciplinary concentration goals for the course.

Assignments and Grading

You will be evaluated on the basis of a **100-point** system. The components of your grade include:

1. Class Participation: 10 points
2. Girl Activist Profile & Presentation (Individual): 20 points
3. 2 Critical Analysis Essays (3-4 pages): 15 points each / 30 points total
4. Group Presentation: Is She an Activist? (Groups of 3 – 4 / 15 minutes): 15 points
5. CEL Reflective Analysis Essay (5-7 pages): 25 points

1. Class Participation: 10 Points

True learning is an active – not passive – process. Your success, as well as that of the class will depend upon your willingness to wrestle with the questions and issues raised in this course. I expect you to be present, to have read the assigned materials, to be able to raise questions and engage in thoughtful discussion. I will lecture during each class so as to assist the group in becoming more familiar and comfortable with the readings at hand. Therefore should you miss class, you are responsible for any missed readings, notes, quizzes or discussions.

2. Girl Activist Profiles and Presentation: 20 Points

Select a girl, young woman, or group of girls (under 25 years) activist engaged in positive social, political, or cultural change. She may be real/fictional, contemporary/historical, local/global. Students will research the activist's background, inspiration, and impact on her local, national or global community. Identify key quotes, events, people, and experiences that have shaped her approach to social change; and then utilize the course texts to situate her activism amongst the larger dialogues about girls and girlhoods.

For this assignment you will submit the following:

- **Girl Activist Biography:** This paper will provide insight into girls' activism and contextualize that work amongst course discussions of girls, girlhood, girl power, and so forth. Papers should be 2-3 pages in length (plus citation page of 5+ sources) and will incorporate at least 3 readings from the course. (10 Points)
- **Poster Exhibit for Children's Museum:** Students will create a brief profile of the selected activist, her activities, inspiration, and strategies for change. Posters should be geared towards girls (5th grade and above). They should include a photo of the selected activist and include other creative, interactive visuals that tell her activist 'story.' The posters will be incorporated into the Girls Hall of Fame exhibit at TCNJ's Children's Museum in Forcina Hall. *All FSP students should visit the exhibit prior to this assignment. (5 Points)
- **Presentation (10 minutes):** Students will give a brief presentation on the selected girl activist. Presentations should identify the strategies and tools used to create social change; and also reflect on why this girl deserves to be in the Girls Hall of Fame. (5 Points)

Papers should be submitted via CANVAS before the start of class; I will not accept paper copies.

Due: September 30th by 5:00PM

3. Two Critical Analysis Essays: 15 Points Each for Total: 30 Points

Two critical analysis essays of 3-4 pages will assist students in grappling with the central topics explored in the course, as well as reading content, guest presentations, class discussion, and

debate. Essays should directly engage with the readings from class and do not require the use of outside sources; papers are required to utilize a minimum of 3 sources from class.

Remember, these are critical essays – break apart the issues in the readings. Do they make sense? Contradict one another? Tackle the same issue from different perspectives? Connect the readings together. Form an opinion and argue a point / position. When writing analysis papers, you should consider the following:

- Logic: What is the main point of the reading? What evidence or argument does the author offer to support it? What definitions of girls/girlhood, activism, etc. determine the author's perspective?
- Context: What are the consequences of these definitions? How does the piece corroborate or contradict other assigned readings? What issues or complications emerge in class discussion? What is missing or simplified in a particular reading? And how might other experiences inform, challenge, or shift the argument?
- Perspective: How has this set of course materials challenged or enhanced your understanding of the issue(s) raised?

Papers should be clear, coherent and above all critically analytical. Please spell-check and proofread your paper before you submit it. Refer to the Grading Rubric listed in the syllabus for further details. All papers must be submitted via CANVAS before the start of class.

Due: Essay #1 October 14 by 5:00PM; Essay #2 November 11 by 5:00PM

4. Group Presentation: Is She an Activist? / Groups of 3-4 Students: 15 Points

By the end of the semester, students will be well versed in the strategies and methods employed by girls to effect social change. This presentation serves as an opportunity for students to demonstrate this new knowledge of ‘rebel girls’ and put it into action. In groups of 3-4, students will consider whether Katniss (from the Hunger Games) and Marjane (from Persepolis) are activists. Presentations should be thought provoking and creative; they should incorporate course readings and texts to substantiate claims of activism vs. nonactivism.

Your group will be graded on your ability to raise critical and insightful questions that assists in class understanding of the material at hand. To do a good job, you may have to re-read course texts; all students should be prepared to answer questions about the claims / position presented to the class. Presentations should be approximately 15 minutes in length and again, should be interactive, critical, and scholarly. **Due: November 25**

5. Community Engaged Learning Activity & Reflective Analysis Paper (5-7 pages): 25 Points

FSP 123-02 fulfills TCNJ’s CEL requirement of 10 volunteer / service hours in our community. As part of this requirement, students will assist with at least 2 of the following ‘girl-centered’ events:

- **Girls Hall of Fame (Option 1):** Last year’s FSP produced the 1st Girls Hall of Fame exhibit at the Children’s Museum on campus. As part of that project, four students volunteered at the museum to lead groups of middle school students through the exhibit. Members of that FSP will visit our class to talk about their experience in the museum. 5

FSP students have the option of being trained on the script for the Girls Hall of Fame to then lead visiting middle school students through the exhibit.

- **Young Women’s Empowerment Day at TCNJ (Option 2)** – Date TBD (November). Each year the WILL program hosts this event on campus for 50+ high school girls from the Trenton area to experience college, network with other girls and young women, discuss critical issues, and develop a plan of action for their futures. WILL members will visit our class to discuss the days activities and FSP students will assist them in those activities. This event is typically held on a Saturday in November.
- **Girls on the Run Fall 5K (Option 3)** – Saturday, November 23rd, New Hope, PA. Students are invited to help 450+ elementary school girls celebrate the end of their Girls on the Run Season with a 5K run. Students will help with ‘happy hair,’ course set up & clean up, cheering, shirt and bib distribution, and so forth. I have arranged for a TCNJ van to pick students up on Saturday morning and bring you back to campus when the event is complete. Please note this will be an early but fabulously worthwhile event – students should be prepared to be picked up at 6:00am and return to campus by 1:00pm. You must register at: <http://gotrhbw5k.wordpress.com> as a volunteer to participate.
- **Working Group on Girls at the United Nations (Option 4)** – The Working Group on Girls (WGG) is a coalition of over 90 national and international organizations dedicated to advancing the human rights of girls. They believe that girls have an important role to play in international policy agendas and human rights frameworks, and they work to promote girls on-going inclusion throughout the United Nations system. During the Fall of 2013, the WGG will be focused on 3 central initiatives: International Day of the Girl Summit (www.DayoftheGirlSummit.org), Girls Against Violence Anti-Trafficking SuperBowl Campaign, and Girls in the Post-2015 Agenda. Students have the option of working with members of the WGG to support these initiatives. Projects may include research, technology support, video development / editing, and social media outreach.

After completing your CEL hours, students will reflect upon these experiences in the final CEL Reflective Analysis paper. Papers will consider the CEL experience in conjunction with course readings and discussions. Identify key issues and insights gathered from your CEL and connect those with course content. How do these events imagine girls, girlhood, activism, social change, leadership and so forth? What critical insights or challenges did you encounter in this experience? In what ways do girls ‘do’ activism, become empowered, or challenge their representations? This essay should serve as a culmination of everything that you have learned from this course about girls activism; it should take the CEL experience and course readings in a new direction.

Papers should be 5-7 pages (plus citations page) with a minimum of 6 sources from class. Outside reading is not required, though you may include additional sources if necessary. Submit final papers via CANVAS. **Due: December 9 by 5:00PM**

Course Policies

Assignments

All papers/essays must be emailed to me by the times and dates listed on the syllabus. Late work will be penalized accordingly (meaning the loss of one grade for each day that the paper is late). I will not accept papers submitted one week (or later) after the original due date.

*Note: It is your responsibility to keep up with all assignments, readings, and due dates. I will not chase after you should you miss an assignment, nor do I offer extensions without truly extenuating circumstances. Well-written, scholarly, and insightful essays require more than one night to write, so please plan your work accordingly.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is not tolerated at The College of New Jersey. All work must be your own. Any violation of academic integrity, including: cheating on exams, fabricating or borrowing material without proper citation, or facilitating others' academic dishonesty will be handled very seriously. In other words, cheating or plagiarism will absolutely not be tolerated. Please see the TCNJ website for more information on academic integrity:

<http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/policy/integrity.html>

Attendance

Any students who must miss class because of participation in a field trip, athletic event or other official college function should make arrangements with me well in advance. If there is an emergency situation, please notify me to inform me of your absence. Absences will only be excused with some form of written proof, such as a doctor's note. Too many unexcused absences can cause your participation grade to go down by some part of a letter grade, a whole letter grade, or more than one letter grade depending on individual circumstances and on the severity of the problem. For detailed information on TCNJ attendance policy go to:

<http://www.tcnj.edu/~recreg/policy/attendance.html>

Special Needs

Any student in need of academic accommodation should speak with me at the start of the course.

Grading Rubric: Written & Oral Presentations

A: builds on the requirements of the assignment and does more by showing an intellectual or imaginative engagement that transforms the project in an unusual way. It avoids the obvious, presenting illuminating insights. Ideas are flexibly developed, but with control and purpose. The student has taken the time to find the right words, to avoid clichés and unsupported generalizations, to communicate ideas with precision. These projects often focus on a very specific aspect of a big issue, and while they may not claim to come up with “the” answer, they reach toward new questions and new perspectives on a problem. Ideas are fully supported by well-chosen evidence; ideas are linked with other ideas, and sources with other sources. An “A” essay or presentation has a richly developed central idea, shows a detailed understanding of sources, has sound organization, and few if any grammatical or mechanical errors. A lively, original voice speaks and has something special to say – says it well and supports that voice fully.

B: effectively fulfills the requirements of the assignment, showing independent thought and active engagement with the topic. The project has a clear sense of order, which shows conscious planning and crafting. Ideas are well thought out, reasonably interpreted in their context, well demonstrated from sources and supported by appropriate examples. Only minor technical or stylistic errors are present. From overall organization to word choice, the writer has invested in the project with purpose, direction, and strategy.

C: shows an effort to present ideas, but the effort has not been effective. This project may be padded with unconnected materials or it may say the same thing over and over. Instead of analysis, the project relies on clichés, self-evident statements, or unsupported generalizations. The project may show incomprehension or confusion about what the sources have to say, or sources may simply be quoted or paraphrased rather than analyzed. Supporting examples are few, and those included may not clearly support the writer's central point. Organization is either mechanical, or it falls apart. Some words and concepts are misused.

D: wanders around without any point and lacks substance. It may resemble a "C" project, but may be significantly shorter in length. Ideas are few, shallow, or lack support and order.

F: is a no-show, a project that shows minimal effort, or a project that violates intellectual integrity. This includes projects that show a pattern of inappropriate paraphrase or un-cited copying from other sources, as well as essays written for other courses and resubmitted.

Participation Rubric

A: Prompt and regular attendance; contributes to group and class dynamics by eliciting feedback from others and helping to keep group on task; participates actively and regularly in group work by offering ideas and asking questions; listens respectfully when others talk, both in groups and in class; participates actively and regularly in class discussion; current on all assigned readings and other coursework.

B: Prompt and regular attendance; participates actively and regularly in group work by offering ideas and asking questions; listens when others talk, both in groups and in class; participate actively and regularly in class discussion, but either not at quite the same level as the "A" students and/or comments are not always as insightful; somewhat current on assigned readings and other coursework.

C: Regular attendance; rarely participates in group work by offering ideas and asking questions; listens when others talk, both in groups and in class; participates irregularly in class discussion; inconsistent in preparation of assigned readings.

D: Irregular in attendance and shows a pattern of (unexcused) tardiness; rarely participates in group work by offering ideas and asking questions; does not listen when others talk, both in groups and in class; does not participate in class discussion; is not prepared with assigned readings.

F: Rarely attends class; only offers a comment when directly asked by fellow group members or instructor; does not participate in group and/or in class; does not participate in class discussion; is not prepared with assigned readings.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

September 3 / Course Introduction

- Introduction and overview of course expectations
- Discussion of CEL requirement and options for fulfillment
- Taft, Chapter 1 “Introduction: Growing Up and Rising Up”

September 9 / Girls in Crisis (?)

- Rebecca Hains, Chapter 1 “The Girl Crisis and the Riot Grrrls”
- Jessica K. Taft “Girlhood in Action: Contemporary U.S. Girls’ Organizations and the Public Sphere” Pgs. 11-29 (CANVAS)

September 16 / Girl Power in Media

- Hains, Chapter 2 “Girl Power Goes Pop: The Spice Girls and Marketed Empowerment” and Chapter 4 “Girl Power on Screen: The Rise of the Girl Hero”
- In-Class Presentation: Academic Integrity

September 23 / Girlhood, Identity and Empowerment

- Hains, Chapter 7 “Girl Heroes and Identity: The Limited Typology of Girl Power” and Chapter 9 “Beyond Girl Heroes: Girl Power, Racism, and Power Relations”

September 30 / Girl Activist Profile Presentations / DUE

- No readings assigned; Student presentations of girl activist profiles for Girls Hall of Fame

October 7 / Girls + Activism = #GirlPower(?)

- Taft, Chapter 2 “We are Not Ophelia: Empowerment & Activist Identities”
- Hains, Chapter 3 “Did the Spice Girls Kill Feminism? Young Feminists Speak”

October 14 / Building Activist Identities / ESSAY # 1 DUE

- Taft, Chapter 3 “We are Not the Future” and Chapter 4 “We are Not Girls”

October 21 / Activist Movements

- Lyn Mikel Brown “We’re Taking Back Sexy: Girl Bloggers SPARK a Movement” Pgs. 47-69 (CANVAS)
- Katie MacEntee “Authentik: The Voice of Real Girls” Pgs. 143-147 (CANVAS)
- Leanne Levy & Sandra Weber “Yes I am a mother and I am still a teenager” Pgs. 129-139 (CANVAS)
- Taft, Chapter 5 “The Street is Our Classroom”

October 28 / Fall Break / NO CLASS

November 4 / Creating Change

- Taft, Chapter 6 “Join the Party” and Chapter 7 “We’ve Got Spirit”

November 11 / Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood / ESSAY # 2 DUE

- Satrapi, Persepolis

November 18 / The Hunger Games

- Collins, The Hunger Games

November 25 / Is She an Activist? Group Presentations / DUE

- No readings assigned; Group Presentations on Katniss & Marjane

December 2 / CEL Reflections & Discussion / LAST CLASS

- No readings assigned; Class discussion and reflection on course material, CEL experiences, and connections to girls activism, girlhood, and girl power

December 4 / FSP Symposium / Brower Student Center

- Poster / Video exhibit on FSP course with features from CEL experience, meetings with Girl Activists, and reading content

December 9 / CEL Analysis Essay / DUE 5:00PM

- Submit final paper via CANVAS