

**University of Calgary**  
**Faculty of Communication and Culture**

**Science, Technology and Society (STAS) 40101 - Lecture 20**  
**Ecofeminism and "The Science Wars"**  
**Spring 2004**  
**Monday and Wednesday, 14:00-16:45 (SH 274)**

**Instructor:** Dr. Regina Cochrane

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**Web Page:** <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/Web/outlines2/data/P04/appr/STAS/stas-40101-04p-20.html>

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 14:00-16:00 and by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course will explore the "Science Wars" in contemporary ecofeminism by looking at the debate between defenders of the ecofeminist subsistence perspective – Indian physicist and ecofeminist, Vandana Shiva, and the American ecofeminist and historian of science who has greatly influenced Shiva, Carolyn Merchant – and their arch-critic, expatriate Indian biologist and science studies scholar, Meera Nanda.

### **Objectives of the Course**

1. To critically examine the range of positions taken by ecofeminists on issues related to science and technology.
2. To address more specific questions such as the following: Is modern science and technology a "Eurocentric" plot to dominate women, nature, and the peoples of the global South? What role does science play in the confrontation between tradition – especially premodern religious traditions – and modernity? How is science implicated in the contemporary clash between modernist and postmodernist social theories?

### **Textbooks and Readings:**

Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper Collins, 1980)

Regina Cochrane, *STAS 401.01 Book of Readings, Spring 2004* (available at U of C Bookstore)

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Seminar Presentation/Handout (1-2 pages): due date variable; value = 20%

Midterm (Essay) Exam: June 7, value = 30%

Participation: value = 10%

Term Essay: due Monday, June 29, 14:00-16:00 (SS 348); value = 40%

Note:

1. Each student will be responsible for presenting a "mini seminar" of approximately 20 minutes, which enlarges upon or contributes to the topic being discussed in class on a given day, and preparing a handout of 1-2 pages to accompany this presentation. A sign-up sheet with a list of seminar topics and dates will be circulated in class on May 17. The grade for this exercise will be divided into two parts: 10% for the presentation and 10% for the handout.
2. The midterm exam will consist of two short essay questions which will be written in class. A list of 5-6 study questions -- including the two midterm exam questions -- will be distributed in class (and posted on Blackboard) on June 2.
3. Since this will be a small-enrollment, seminar-type class, a fair amount of time will be devoted to class discussion. Consequently, an emphasis will be put on participation. Participation requires, before anything else, actually being present in class. Attendance will therefore be taken and this will count for half the participation mark. Students missing more than one full class (2.75 hours) will be penalized proportionately unless they can provide acceptable documentation (doctor's note, etc.). The other half of the participation mark will be allocated to the quality rather than the quantity of a student's contribution to class discussions. This entails treating other students and the instructor with respect -- i.e., not interrupting or attempting to dominate class discussions -- as well as being prepared for class by keeping up-to-date with the readings, answering (and asking) questions, and engaging in dialogue and debate with classmates, guest speakers, and the instructor.
4. Essay topics will be handed out in class on May 17. Please return the essay assignment directly to the instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS110; a date stamp and a log book to record your name and course number is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, recorded in the log book, and placed in the instructor's mailbox. Any assignments not recorded in this log book will be considered to have not been handed in.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination:** No

**Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late if the instructor is not notified beforehand about the reasons for the delay and/or if the appropriate documentation (ex. physician's note) is not provided. Students will not be allowed to reschedule a missed seminar presentation unless appropriate documentation is provided.

### **Writing Skills Statement**

Faculty policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see [www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/info](http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/info). Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you wish help with your writing at any stage, including drafts, you are invited to contact the Writing Centre, SS110, 220-7255.

### **Grading System**

The following grading system is used in the Faculty of Communication and Culture:

|             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| A+ (96-100) | C+ (65-70) |
| A (92-95)   | C (62-64)  |
| A- (86-91)  | C- (59-61) |
| B+ (81-85)  | D+ (55-58) |
| B (77-80)   | D (50-54)  |
| B- (71-76)  | F (0-49)   |

### **Plagiarism**

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. For details see [www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/info](http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/info). Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (SS110) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

## **Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

## **Students' Union**

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Communication and Culture see [www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/info](http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/info)

## **"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333**

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

## **Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

This schedule will be handed out in class and posted in the "Course Information" file on Blackboard. Students registered in the course can access it by logging in, using their U of C user name and password, at: <http://blackboard.ucalgary.ca>. Throughout the course, study questions and notes will be posted in the "Course Documents" file and assignments in the "Course Assignments" file at this site

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## **STAS 401.01, Spring 2004**

### **SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS**

#### **May 17: Introduction to Contemporary Ecofeminism**

Introductions; discussion of course outline and assignments; overview of contemporary ecofeminism; introduction to Merchant

Video: *Fury for the Sound* (XMV6108401)

Readings:

- Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), Introduction, chapter 1

#### **May 19: "Socialist" Ecofeminism on Organic Society and its Downfall**

Readings:

- Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), chapters 3-6

May 24: No class – Victoria Day holiday

May 26: The Rise of Mechanistic Science and the Domination of “Female” Nature

Seminar #1: The Mythology of “Mother” Nature

Readings:

- Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), chapters 7, 8, 9, 12, and epilogue

May 31: Modern “Patriarchal” Science and its War against Women and Nature

Video: *Ecofeminism Today*

Seminar #2: Men in Ecofeminism

Readings:

- Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* (London: Zed Books, 1989), Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

June 2: The Green Revolution versus the “Feminine Principle”

Seminar #3: Haripriya Rangan on the Chipko Movement

Readings:

- Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* (London: Zed Books, 1989), Introduction, Chapters 5 and 7

Study questions for midterm exam distributed in class

June 7: Ecofeminism and Goddess Spirituality

Midterm exam

Video: *Goddess Remembered* (XMV5578601)

Seminar #4: Lewontin on Shiva’s Soybean “Science”

June 9: Questioning (Cultural) Ecofeminism’s Rejection of Science

Seminar #5: The Scientific Traditions of the East

Readings:

- Meera Nanda, “Is Modern Science a Western, Patriarchal Myth? A Critique of

the Populist Orthodoxy,” *South Asia Bulletin*, vol. XI, no. 1 & 2 (1991): 32-61.

- Meera Nanda, “‘History is What Hurts’: A Materialist Feminist Perspective on the Green Revolution and Its Ecofeminist Critics” in
- Rosemary Hennessey and Chrys Ingraham (eds.), *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class Difference and Women’s Lives* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 364-394

#### June 14: Questioning Postmodern Feminism and Postmodern Critiques of Science

##### Seminar #6: Sokal’s Paradox

##### Readings:

- Meera Nanda, “Women in the Third World: Exploring the Dangers of Difference” in Nancy Holmstrom (ed.), *The Socialist Feminist Project: A Contemporary Reader in Theory and Politics* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002), pp. 396-407
- Meera Nanda, “Against Social De(con)struction of Science: Cautionary Tales from the Third World” in *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997), pp. 74-96

#### June 16: Ecofeminism and the “Science Wars”

##### Seminar #7: Diverse Women for Diversity and the Goldsmith Connection

##### Readings:

- Philip S. Baringer, “Introduction: The ‘Science Wars’” in Keith M. Ashman and Philip S. Baringer (eds.), *After the Science Wars* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1-13
- Meera Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward: Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Fundamentalism in India* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), chapters 1 and 10

#### June 21: Ecofeminism and the Water Wars

##### Seminar #8: Goddess Spirituality and the Anti-Dam Movement

##### Readings:

- Vandana Shiva, “The Sacred Waters” in Vandana Shiva, *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002), pp. 131-140
- Meera Nanda, “Why I Defend the Narmada Dam” (<http://www.mail-archive.com/marxism@lists.panix.com/msg29595.html>)

Video: *Dam/Age* (XMV 6237001)

## June 23: Postmodern Science, Postmodern Ecofeminism, and Religion

### Readings:

- Carolyn Merchant, "Postmodern Science" in Carolyn Merchant (ed.), *Key Concepts in Critical Theory: Ecology* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1994), pp. 17-21
- Stacy Alaimo, "Cyborgs, Whale Tails, and the Domestication of Environmentalism," *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 171-187
- Joanna Macy, "Toward a Healing of the Self and Nature" in Carolyn Merchant (ed.), *Key Concepts in Critical Theory: Ecology* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1994), pp. 292-298