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11-13-2024

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Recommended Citation

Berman, Dylan, "2024-11-13 Feminist Theory Class Takes It From the Classroom to the Community" (2024). *The Spectator Online*. 1369.
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Feminist Theory Class Takes It From the Classroom to the Community

Dylan Berman, News Editor

Seattle University emphasizes engagement and social change as an important part of the educational experience, and Char Brecevic, an assistant professor in the philosophy department is putting that value into practice. Her “Feminist Theories” class is currently working on a community engagement project taking what they’ve learned in the classroom, and making a difference.

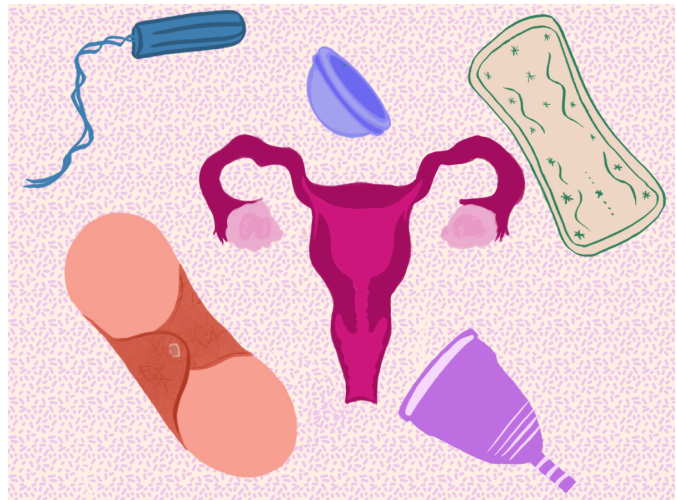
The class is planning an art gallery event exploring period poverty, which is the inability to afford or access menstrual products. It will also involve a screen printing set up for anyone in attendance to participate in the art work. The art gallery will consist of work submitted by the Seattle U community. Submissions are open till Nov.16, and students interested in submitting can fill out this [form](#) or contact avu3@seattleu.edu.

Part of the event will also be a donation drive of menstrual products. The class is planning to work with local women’s health charities to get donations to populations that need them. This event is happening Nov. 22 at 3 p.m. in the Casey Commons. The class recently settled on the title “Free The Flow: Period Poverty and Menstrual Justice.”

“Feminist praxis calls for us to recognize and work against systemic injustices. This project does just that by providing educational information about this topic, while collecting menstruation-related products for vulnerable populations,” Brecevic wrote to The Spectator.

Rose Lindsey, a fourth-year creative writing major, explained that this project is an effort to put the theories and ideologies of the class into practice.

“Really the goal of this project was to find something that would be able to put that kind of feminist methodology into actionable things we are doing as a community together,” Lindsey said.



Zam Ortega

Brecevic explained that she was motivated to do this project for her class because of growing apathy she sees amongst students, and because AI has undermined traditional academic writing assignments as means of evaluation. She also explained that community engagement and support is core to feminist theory as a field. Brecevic believes engagement like this project should play a larger role in higher education.

“Community engagement should be interwoven across our curriculum in order to give students access to the kinds of lived experiences that have the power to help them see the world (and all those who inhabit it) in more nuanced, more curious, and less prejudicial ways,” Brecevic wrote. “[It can] cultivate a kind of institutional ethos that sees its responsibility to care for the communities in which it is embedded as an integral part of its intellectual mission.”

The class is still looking at which local organizations to partner with, but are looking at Mother Nation, a local Indigenous women's activist group. Gabi Muña, a fourth-year political science and sociology major, explained the importance of real action along with feminist theory.

“It's really about having an engagement based learning, so breaking down those institutional barriers, the red tape that surrounds creating events, and seeing what great things can come out of persisting past those and working together to organize people,” Muña said.

Muña explained that a lot of the feminist theory explored in the class focuses on lived experience and community care, making community engagement an important part of exploring the subject material.

“We wanted to make an event that would not only have a theoretical, educational element, but that would have a direct impact for people in need in the community through the donation process,” Muña said. “Dr. B thinks it's very important to bring it back to the people the theories are supposed to serve, and make sure we're actually doing something meaningful.”

Brecevic explained that community engagement felt necessary in line with the works being taught in her class.

“For me, it felt half-hearted to assign the sagacious works of Hooks, Lorde and Anzaldúa without demonstrating to my students what their philosophies are exhorting us to do (namely, to take seriously our responsibility to care for ourselves and one another with unrelenting love, compassion, and answerability),” Brecevic wrote.

Currently the class is in the process of coordinating the event. Brecevic, along with the students, explained that at first the task was overwhelming, but that the class is on track to host a great event.

Muña and other students emphasized that Seattle U is a part of the Seattle community, and that work like this project is at the core of the school's Jesuit educational ethos of social change and community contribution.

“I also hope the project marks an inflection point in how the community conceives itself in relation to the university (and vice versa). We aren't just here to talk about the good work, we are here to do the good work ourselves and galvanize others to join in for the sake of ourselves, our neighbors, and our shared home,” Brecevic wrote.