

## Feminist Terms and Definitions

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**Ally:** A person who bridges communities through listening, trusting, and accountability for the purpose of combating oppression and advancing social justice and equity.

**Allyship:** An allyship may exist between those who are underprivileged and those who acknowledge their privilege (identity privileged). Identity privileged allies also challenge those who attempt to sub/consciously maintain the status quo.

**Anti-oppression:** An attempt to recognize and mitigate societal oppression for the purpose of advancing equity.

**Binary:** In the humanities and social sciences, a binary refers to a stable classification with two distinct and opposing parts. For example, some individuals view females and males as a binary.

**Chicana feminism (a.k.a. Xicanism):** A movement for and by Chicanas and Latinas who work for gender equity through the arts and action.

**Cisgender:** The alignment of gender (expression) and biological sex.

**Classism:** The act of disadvantaging and/or advantaging individuals belonging to a particular social class.

**Counter narrative vs. master narrative:** Counter narratives challenge or question the master narratives upheld by those who have power. Master narratives support the values and beliefs of a dominant group.

**Cultural appropriation:** When an individual or group borrows customs, language, clothing, etc. from a different culture with little to no regard for associated meanings or significance.

**Cultural capital:** A type of non-economic currency that may facilitate an individual's social mobility. According to French philosopher, Pierre Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital can be embodied (e.g., mastering a craft); objectified (e.g., collecting visual art); and institutionalized (e.g., publishing scholarship).

**Cultural critic:** A feminist who critiques the social practices of the status quo that reinforce marginalization.

**Discrimination:** Treating types of people unfairly and prejudicially based upon their race, disability, sex, age, and/or religion.

**Double standard:** The unfair application of principles or rules to individuals and/or groups facing similar situations.

**Empowerment:** The goal of empowerment is to address and eliminate discrimination by providing "marginalized groups with methods to obtain full privilege within a society. Individually, empowerment implies self-confidence in one's skills and a sense of belonging necessary to success in achieving one's goals" (Grand Rapids Community College, 2012, para. 10). A

criticism of empowerment is the perpetuation of inequity when one group has power over another to grant access to privilege.

**Equal Rights Amendment (ERA):** American suffragists designed the ERA in the 1920s as a way to guarantee equal rights for women under the United States Constitution. In 1972, after nearly 50 years of political strife, the ERA passed both houses of Congress; however, the states were unable to ratify the proposed amendment. To this day, 11 states have adopted constitutions or amendments, reminiscent of the ERA, to grant equal rights regardless of sex. These states include Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Montana, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming.

**Equality:** The pursuit of justice through *uniform* access to resources.

**Equity:** The pursuit of justice through *fair* access to resources. Equitable opportunities support individuals or groups who have been marginalized and historically denied access to resources.

**Female vs. woman:** “Female” denotes biological sex, while “woman” denotes gender (expression).

**Feminism:** A political discourse, movement, theory, and philosophy working toward equity by addressing “issues of oppression and privilege based on gender” (Feminish, 2012, para. 4).

**Feminist:** An individual who pursues equity by addressing “issues of oppression and privilege based on gender” (Feminish, 2012, para. 4).

**Female gaze:** The ways in which popular visual culture attempts to appeal to a given audience by highlighting the perspectives or attitudes of women.

**Feminization:** Social shifts toward emphasizing the feminine (e.g., feminization of education).

**Fluid:** A term used in gender theory often to explain subjectivity and sexuality as “unstable, contingent, situational, and historical” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 70).

**Gender binary:** The classification of gender and sex into two distinct and opposite forms of feminine and masculine.

**Gender (expression) vs. sex:** Gender (expression) refers to the ways in which individuals perceive their sexuality and present themselves as women or men or nonbinary. Sex is biologically defined as female or male. For example, females and males have different genitalia and hormones. Many view sex as a binary (e.g., female/male); however, when genitalia or chromosome assignment do not fit the biological norm (e.g., a child born with differing internal and external genitals), sex exists on a continuum.

**Gender-neutral pronouns:** Pronouns that do not have female or male implications. Examples include the singular they (e.g., If *a person* sleeps late, *they* could be tardy for school) and abbreviated pronouns (e.g., *e* for s/he, *em* for her/him, *eir* for her/his).

**Gender roles:** Gender roles are socially and historically constructed norms that are deemed acceptable and appropriate for individuals based upon their assigned sex.

**Guerrilla Girls:** The Guerrilla Girls are a group of masked feminists and artists who have been working anonymously to expose and disrupt “sexism, racism, and corruption in politics” (Guerrilla Girls, 2016, para. 1) and popular visual culture for over 30 years.

**Hegemony:** One group’s domination and suppression of another through social, cultural, political, and/or economic influence (Grand Rapids Community College, 2012, para. 23).

**Heteronormative:** A perspective that privileges heterosexuality and marginalizes non-heterosexuality. For example, heteronormativity supports normative views about sexual

and marital relations between women and men. Heteronormative views also place stable, binary understandings upon both gender (expression) and sex. In sum, “[t]he heteronormative view is that physical sex, gender identity, and gender roles should, in any given person, align to either all-male or all-female cultural norms” (Feminist, 2012, para. 10).

**Hierarchy:** A perception of rank and status as fixed whereby one individual or group is deemed more valuable than another.

**Homophobia:** Criticism and hostility toward individuals who are homosexual, or non-heterosexual.

**Homosexual:** An individual who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to others of their own sex.

**Identity politics:** Individuals who have been socially marginalized may theorize and/or practice identity politics by challenging established hierarchies to mitigate oppression and seek justice and freedom.

**Identity vs. subjectivity:** Humanist theorists generally view identity as dictated by an internal, essential nature (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Jagger, 2008). Post theorists (poststructural, postmodern, posthuman) understand subjectivity as constituted and regulated in historical, cultural, and political contexts (Jagger, 2008). In brief, identity is understood as stable, while subjectivity is seen as fluid.

**Intersectionality:** A concept often used in critical theories to describe the ways in which oppressive institutions (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, etc.) are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another.

**Male gaze:** The presentation of media, such as films or advertising, from the perspective of a heterosexual man.

**Marginalization:** The act of placing at the margins or edges or assigning a lesser importance to those not considered as important to a society, culture, or text.

**Men’s rights activists (MRA):** Refers to people who believe that social, legal, and economic discrimination against males is present in society to the extent that fighting it deserves an organized effort mirroring feminism.

**Microaggression:** Small, ambiguous behaviors toward minority group members that repeat or affirm stereotypes and subtly devalue.

**Misandry:** A hatred of men.

**Misogyny:** A hatred of women.

**Oppression:** The exercise of power in an unjust manner

**Other:** The term used by Simone de Beauvoir (1949) to describe the marginalization of a group or individual as “not-Self”; the objectification of a subject/self, which makes it possible for those in the “center” to define their subject/selves against those who are different (“the margin constitutes the center”).

**Performativity:** A term originated by Butler (1993) concerning the assimilation to the dominant culture for the purpose of remaking selected norms. Also considered the capacity of speech and communication to act, construct, and perform an identity.

**Privilege:** A set of advantages (or lack of disadvantages) enjoyed by a majority group.

**Queer:** A term used to refer to individuals who are sexual minorities who identify as members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, and asexual communities.

**Racism:** A term that refers to a system of social advantages and disadvantages based on race; bias by people in the dominant social position.

**Structural racism:** The systematic ways through which practices of conferring and withholding benefits based on race are embedded in social institutions.

**Interpersonal racism:** Any experience or incident in which race functions as a catalyst for disparate treatment.

**Internalized racism:** The process by which people of color reproduce dominant narratives about their own local ethnic communities/groups to justify their low socioeconomic positions.

**Rape culture:** A society in which rape is pervasive and normalized due to societal attitudes about gender, sex, and sexuality.

**Respectability politician:** A feminist who criticizes the critique of the cultural critic, and favors social assimilation.

**Sexism:** The umbrella term used to refer to a system of advantages and disadvantages based on sex or gender.

**Sexual identity:** An individual's gender orientation (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

**Sexual orientation:** An individual's predisposition and sexual attraction toward others, including the four categories of sexual identity (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

**Stereotyping:** Believing that all people with a particular characteristic are the same.

**Slut-shaming:** Attacking a woman or a girl for being sexual, having one or more sexual partners, acknowledging sexual feelings, and/or acting on sexual feelings.

**Social capital:** Perceived benefits associated with knowledge of and access to a network of individuals with privilege and in powerful advantageous positions.

**Social justice:** Justice as it applies to the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.

**Subjectification:** The philosophical concept that refers to the construction of the individual subject attributed to Michel Foucault (1982) that has been further elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987).

**Subject/object:** A binary combination important to feminist discourse. The subject possesses interiority, is empowered, and in hierarchical societies, dominates others; the object is reduced to the useful tasks they can perform, and is marginalized in a number of ways.

**Suffrage:** The right to vote in political elections.

**Title IX:** The federal statute that provides for equal opportunity for women in every aspect of federally funded public education.

**Transgender:** A person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that differs from the one which corresponds to the person's sex at birth.

**Transsexual:** A term that refers to individuals who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth; may identify as genderqueer, transgender, agender, or gender non-conforming

**Trigger warning:** A statement or written warning intended to inform individuals that viewing or reading information, content, or materials may trigger strong emotional reactions and feelings or memories of a traumatic experience.

**White privilege:** A phrase coined by Peggy McIntosh (1988) to describe "invisible package of unearned assets" (p. 1), advantages that white people possess or are immune to based on skin color. White privilege reinforces, often unconsciously, hierarchical systems of power and oppression.

**Womanism:** A term coined by Alice Walker (1983) to describe Black feminism that focuses on the conditions and concerns of Black women

**Victim-blaming:** Refers to a victim of a crime, an accident, or any type of abusive maltreatment who is held as wholly or partially responsible for the wrongful conduct committed against them.

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Lisa Kay is Associate Professor of Art Education, and Program Head of Art Education at Tyler School of Art, Temple University. Her interest in narrative storytelling - that encourages personal reflection, self knowledge, and healing in the context of making art - is evidenced in her scholarly publications, in her devotion to art therapy and art education, her selection of focus for her Fulbright and certainly in her own art. Lisa is also a professional artist who has exhibited both in the United States and in Europe.

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