In order for us to effectively engage in critical discourse and discussion we need to discuss and analyze the points of contention within and between the issues we are discussing. The main reason for doing so is to recognize and accommodate the spectrum that we all exist on.

Some of you are absolutely new to any discussion on feminism, race, intersectionality, and prejudice. That’s okay. Some of you are intermediates who have some exposure to these topics but still feel like you could, and want to learn more. That’s also okay. Some of you are knee-deep in critical analysis, and want a space to actively discuss and examine these theories. That is also okay.

Some of you are in the middle of these different planes. That is okay. Trust me, allow yourself to accept whatever you know, and especially what you don’t know.

We exist on a spectrum, not as a binary of experts and learners. Interested in the way gender intersects with race? Access Critical Race Theory 101 here.

This is a critical space for you, no matter where you are at on this spectrum. Given the diversity of you, it is important to highlight, define, and examine the key roots and theories we will be dissecting, as well as the formal language that we utilize in its analysis.

So, don’t be scared. Don’t be worried. This is a safe space for you to learn. For us to learn together.

- **Feminism**

It’s hard to confine this term into narrow roots, but as a general rule of thumb, it is important to understand this definition to be able to critically examine its discourse:

"to be “feminist” in any authentic sense of the term is to want for all people, female and male, liberation from (gender) role patterns, domination, and oppression."

— Bell Hooks, Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism
Here are some general glossary sub-definitions:

**Misogyny**: Explicit and implicit hatred towards women.

**Misandry**: Explicit and implicit hatred towards men.

**Misogynoir**: Explicit and implicit hatred of black women.

- **Internalized Misogyny**

  Internalized misogyny is an extension of a patriarchal system, which produces a wide held belief within women themselves, that they are inferior, thus becoming an aspect of their self-identity, shaping one’s relationship with the world around them.

  This is an important concept to learn, so we can not only unlearn its consequences, but because it is a belief that effects our navigation around this world, not just with ourselves, but with other women around us, who may carry this internalization.

  It is also important to note that internalization is not just a conscious state, but an involuntary state, which we can only climb out of when consciously choosing too.

"For instance, women and girls may learn to have low expectations of their capabilities, may be subtly channeled by teachers or parents into gender normative fields and away from traditionally male-dominated roles, may lack female role models in professions of interest, may be treated as if they need to be taken care of, may paradoxically be expected to be caretakers, to serve men, and put the needs of others before their own, may be criticized or ostracized for being assertive, visible, or outspoken, may find their opinions discounted, may be disliked as leaders unless they fit female stereotypes by acting nurturing, may be valued and appreciated primarily for their looks, bodies, may face expectations that they will spend considerable time and money modifying their physical appearance, may lose their names when they get married, and may be excluded from written or spoken discourse by the default use of male pronouns and other male-centric language constructs.

Because of the variability of misogynistic practices, it is no surprise that discrimination is often unintentional; both the agents and the targets are unaware of their role in them.
Regardless of whether these acts are intentional, however, the cumulative effects of oppression are pervasive, impacting how women shape their personalities and identities, negotiate their relationships, feel about themselves, make meaning out of their experiences, and make choices about their lives over the short and long term.”

— Bearman, Korobov, & Thorne, The Fabric of Internalized Misogyny

“Without confronting internalized misogyny women who picked up the feminist banner often betrayed the cause in their interactions with other women.”

— bell hooks

**Privilege**

Privileges are advantages we hold over others, whether that be of resources, opportunities, institutions, or representations.

We all hold some type of privilege; it is not a binary but rather a range we fall on and between. It is also important to note, that privilege is environmentally formed - meaning in some geopolitical and social contexts, you may hold more privileges that in other spaces. Privileges are not fixed, but rather, fluid.

This leads to the production of the idea that our privileges are a spectrum, from which sometimes we, even without intentional consent, still tacitly hold the upper hand.

Let’s use an example in which there are two women: one is Indian and one is White. In this case, yes, both are women. But, one is also an Indian woman, a racialized and marginalized individual, thus giving the white woman an upper hand in advantage and privilege over the Indian woman.

The purpose of this example is to illustrate that our privileges are not fixed, and stagnant beings, but are malleable to the different natural and social environments we are in. More importantly, privileges and intersections of domination are ever changing as our relation to others is changing.

What advantages we have, don't have, and wish to have are contingent upon the ways in which we navigate our social and cultural spaces.

**Gender (In)Equality**

Another loaded term, which we will inevitably need to dissect, but here is a general understanding of the effects of inequality in relation to gender.
“Frye frequently compares male domination to a master/slave relationship, and she defines oppression as “a system of interrelated barriers and forces which reduce, immobilize, and mold people who belong to a certain group, and effect their subordination to another group (individually to individuals of the other group, and as a group, to that group)”

— Fyre, 1983

"Visionary feminism is a wise and loving politics. It is rooted in the love of male and female being, refusing to privilege one over the other. The soul of feminist politics is the commitment to ending patriarchal domination of women and men, girls and boys.

Love cannot exist in any relationship that is based on domination and coercion. Males cannot love themselves in patriarchal culture if their very self-definition relies on submission to patriarchal rules.

When men embrace feminist thinking and practice, which emphasizes the value of mutual growth and self-actualization in all relationships, their emotional well-being will be enhanced. A genuine feminist politics always brings us from bondage to freedom, from lovelessness to loving."

— bell Hooks, The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love

• Patriarchy

I want to note that this term is incredibly biased in its definition, with a base in Western feminist thought only, which in many contexts does not take into account cross-cultural variations. Below is a simple definition, but please bear the complexities of the subject.

"Patriarchy literally means rule of the father in a male-dominated family. It is a social and ideological construct which considers men (who are the patriarchs) as superior to women.

Sylvia Walby in “Theorising Patriarchy” calls it “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Walby, 1990). Patriarchy is based on a system of power relations which are hierarchical and unequal where men control women’s production, and reproduction.

It imposes masculinity and femininity character stereotypes in society which strengthen the iniquitous power relations between men and women. Patriarchy is not a constant and gender relations which are dynamic and complex have
changed over the periods of history. The nature of control and subjugation of women varies from one society to the other as it differs due to the differences in class, caste, religion, region, ethnicity and the socio-cultural practices."

— Suranjita Ray, Understanding Patriarchy

• White Feminism

"The analytic principles discussed below serve to distort Western feminist political practices, and limit the possibility of coalitions among (usually White) Western feminists and working class and feminists of color around the world. These limitations are evident in the construction of the (implicitly consensual) priority of issues around which apparently all women are expected to organize.

The necessary and integral connection between feminist scholarship and feminist political practice and organizing determines the significance and status of Western feminist writings on women in the third world, for feminist scholarship, like most other kinds of scholarship, is not the mere production of knowledge about a certain subject. It is a directly political and discursive practice in that it is purposeful and ideological.

It is best seen as a mode of intervention into particular hegemonic discourses (for example, traditional anthropology, sociology, literary criticism, etc.); it is a political praxis which counters and resists the totalizing imperative of age-old "legitimate" and "scientific" bodies of knowledge. Thus, feminist scholarly practices (whether reading, writing, critical or textual) are inscribed in relations of power-relations which they counter, resist, or even perhaps implicitly support. There can, of course, be no apolitical scholarship."

— Chandra Mohanty, Under Western Eyes

• Waves of (Western) Feminism

I think it is incredibly important to analyze the authors behind the waves of feminism. These movements and generalizations of historical movements is incredibly biased in Western interpretations and advancement, not encompassing the exploitation of women of colour by Western feminists, during the liberation periods.
But, for the sake of understanding Western Feminist Thought, it is important to understand how their discourses are centered. So, here is a general summary, I will provide one for the intersections of race and gender soon to provide a contrast.

• **First Wave of Feminism**

The first wave refers to the movement of the 19th through early 20th centuries, primarily in Europe and the United States.

Key Issues:

- “Women’s suffrage (the right to vote)
- The right to education
- Better working conditions
- Marriage and property laws
- Reproductive rights which dealt mainly with suffrage, working conditions and educational rights for women and girls”

• **Second Wave of Feminism**

The second wave was from the 1960’s-1980's, again primarily in the North.

Key Issues:

- “Raising consciousness about patriarchy
- Raising consciousness about gender based violence, domestic abuse and marital rape
- Inequalities in the workplace
- Legalizing abortion and birth control
- Liberation of women's reproductive identities”

• **Third Wave of Feminism**

The third wave of feminism is from the 1990’s to the 2000’s, and maybe even now? (Open to interpretation)

Key Issues:

- “Intersectionality
- The diversity of "women" is recognized and emphasis is placed on identity, gender, and race
- Changes on stereotypes, media portrayals and language used to define women
- Orientations and gender identities”
Commodity/Popular Feminism

This type of feminism, is an extension of both internalized misogyny, and patriarchal values. It is a movement that attempts to co-opt the aims and claims of any feminist movement to further their own agenda, which is usually done at the expense of gender-based exploitation, and oppression.

An example would be “I Am A Feminist” T-Shirts, which are made by women in sweat shops across the Global South, but advocated by feminist celebrities in an attempt to make feminism accessible.

These movements, generally consisting of Western Feminism beliefs, seem beneficial superficially, but again, are reproducing misogynistic and oppressive narratives over and over and over again.

"Third World" Feminism

"By women as a category of analysis, I am referring to the critical assumption that all of us of the same gender, across classes and cultures, are somehow socially constituted as a homogeneous group identified prior to the process of analysis. This is an assumption which characterizes much feminist discourse.

The homogeneity of women as a group is produced not on the basis of biological essentials, but rather on the basis of secondary sociological and anthropological universals. Thus, for instance, in any given piece of feminist analysis, women are characterized as a singular group on the basis of a shared oppression. What binds women together is a sociological notion of the "sameness" of their oppression.

It is at this point that an elision takes place between "women" as a discursively constructed group and "women" as material subjects of their own history. Thus, the discursively consensual homogeneity of "women" as a group is mistaken for the historically specific material reality of groups of women.

This results in an assumption of women as an always-already constituted group, one which has been labelled "powerless," "exploited," etc., by feminist scientific, economic, legal and sociological discourses. (Notice that this is quite similar to misogynistic discourse labeling women weak, emotional, having math anxiety, etc.) The focus is not on uncovering the material and ideological specificities that constitute a particular group of women as "powerless" in a particular context. It is rather on finding a variety of cases of "powerless" groups of women to prove the general point that women as a group are powerless."

— Chandra Mohanty, Under Western Eyes
**White Supremacy**

“...“white supremacy” is a much more useful term for understanding the complicity of people of color in upholding and maintaining racial hierarchies that do not involve force (i.e slavery, apartheid) than the term “internalized racism”- a term most often used to suggest that black people have absorbed negative feelings and attitudes about blackness. The term “white supremacy” enables us to recognize not only that black people are socialized to embody the values and attitudes of white supremacy, but we can exercise “white supremacist control” over other black people.”

— bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*

**Intersectionality**

Coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, Intersectionality came about to express the dire situation of immigrant, women of colour who were outcasted from both feminist movements, as well as civil rights movements (Crenshaw, 1245). It explores the way multiple identities conflict and coincide, within and between different systems, whether they be of patriarchy, capitalism, or Eurocentrism.

This analysis often reveals that social institutions are double, triple, quadruple stacked against those identifying with a multi-minority identity, and that these institutions do not accommodate the complexity that arises when an individual identifies with more than one marginalized group. Intersectionality then, rightly so, refutes the notion that women are homogeneous groups who face the same oppression in any given situation.

It is important to note however, that intersectionality is not about highlighting individual differences to create further grounds for isolation but works towards critically understanding these differences and fathoming how they can be positively expressed within our political society.

"Although racism and misogyny readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices. And so, when the practices expound identity as woman or person of color as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of colour to a location that resists telling."

— Kimberlee Crenshaw, *Mapping the Margins*

**Rape Culture**

“Rape culture is a sociological concept for a setting in which rape is pervasive and normalized due to societal attitudes about gender and women's roles.”
"What a girl wants, what a woman wants is what Freud knew is held precious by every man: self-determination, autonomy within reason, life without undue fear, liberty without causing hardship to others, and the ability to pursue one's happiness. None of those desires can be fulfilled for women so long as we live in a rape culture."

— Emilie Buchwald, "Raising Girls for the 21st Century" from Transforming a Rape Culture

**Oppositional Gaze**

As a counter to the arguments of male gaze alone, oppositional gaze serves to address the ways in which media, and representations of different communities is distorted and othered, way past any feasible point of reconciliation. An example would be distortions of "third world women" here:

"Speaking against the construction of white representations of blackness as totalizing, Hall says of white presence: The error is not to conceptualize this presence in terms of power, but to locate that power as wholly external to us—"as extrinsic force, whose influence can be thrown off like the serpent sheds its skin. What Franz Fanon reminds us, in Black Skin, White Masks, is how power is inside as well as outside: The movements, the attitudes, the glances of the Other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye. I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put together again by another self. This "look" from—so to speak—the place of the Other, fixes us, not only in its violence, hostility and aggression, but in the ambivalence of its desire."

— Stuart Hall, Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation

**Solidarity & Community**

We need to understand what solidarity means, and why we should, why we need to engage in it. I will have a discussion piece for how we can engage in solidarity which I will link here as well. But, here is a backdrop to further understanding.

"We dream that when we work hard, we'll be able to clothe our children decently, and still have a little time and money left for ourselves. And we dream that when we do as good as other people, we get treated the same, and that nobody puts us down because we are not like them .... Then we ask ourselves, "How could we make these things come true?" And so far we've come up with only two possible answers: win the lottery, or organize. What can I say, except I have never been lucky with numbers. So tell this in your book: tell them it may take time that people think they don't have, but they have to organize! ...
Because the only way to get a little measure of power over your own life is to do it collectively, with the support of other people who share your needs.”

— Chandra Mohanty

How Do I Engage In Feminist Discourse?

In order to engage in critical thought, we must engage in discursive analysis of different methodologies. These discourses shape the foundations through which we assert our claims.

What is Discourse?

Discourse refers to the ideological backdrop through which claims are contented against. These contentions refer to the different opinions and ongoing debates over different ideas. It is important to note that along with the contention itself, it is important to analyze the authors of different discourses. Without recognizing the histories behind ideas, we cannot critically discuss them.

Opinion V. Moral Standpoint

Critical discourse not only encourages, but demands differing opinions. This is the basis through which contentions arise, and discourse can be created. However, opinions are different from moral standpoints. Please do not confuse the two.

Your moral standpoint is the precursor to your opinions, again it is the backdrop through which you organize and assert your opinions. If your moral standpoint is one rooted in prejudice, racism, misogyny, classism, homophobia, or any type of discrimination, that is not your opinion, but the root through which you form an opinion about something. While I encourage differing opinions, prejudicial behaviour is not wanted, nor needed. If you gots something to say, confront your privileges and biases before saying it.