“What does it matter who is teaching feminist political theory? What does it matter who is teaching?” This is how we four responded to the question whether one of us (Johnson) should or should not be teaching a course in which the other three were enrolled. But answering a question with a question is not particularly satisfying, nor were we content with the responses we received from our peers. When we presented a talk to faculty on teaching about gender and the relation of gender to the content of a course on the classics of political theory and a course on feminist theory, we were surprised by hostile skepticism from tenured women faculty in three different departments. The discussion quickly polarized. Some senior women faculty who had fought to get gender issues and feminist concerns into the curriculum were not willing to entertain the possibility that a man could teach feminism, because they felt gender was a blinding filter. Apparently the position they were attacking was one that held that anyone could teach feminist theory because gender doesn’t matter. There is no middle ground between these positions as they saw them. However, denying men the opportunity to teach feminist theory is a precaution
that feminist theory does not need to take. All that is required is a recognition that gender does matter in teaching, and that this acknowledgment should not prevent teaching. In fact, appreciating the role that gender plays can often improve a course regardless of the gender of the professor. This essay reflects our experiences surrounding a course on feminist political theory that was taught by a man.

Government 313: Feminist Political Theory was offered for the first time at Saint John’s University and the College of Saint Benedict during the fall semester of 1994. Seventeen students, eleven men and six women, enrolled in the class. We began by comparing Susan Estrich’s argument in *Real Rape* to the discussion by Katie Roiphe in *The Morning After*. Following that we surveyed some of the claims made in the history of political thought from Plato, through Rousseau, to Freud. Most of the semester required an investigation of the feminist response and positive critique. We used Rosemarie Tong’s introductory textbook and read selections from theorists representing liberal, existential, Marxist, radical, and socialist feminisms. We considered the debate over Adrienne Rich’s “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” as well as that over Gilligan’s theory of *A Different Voice* and an ethic of care. Finally, we considered Naomi Wolf’s conception of power feminism and tried to see whether it fit easily into any of our original categories. The course was challenging and the reading load heavy, but most of the students were successfully able to examine critically the ideas presented.

Feminist political theory is often assumed to be more than theory because the point of feminism is to change the world; in other words, feminist theory without action is not really feminist theory. Feminist political theory is a human activity through which women have sought to establish their equality, though different versions of feminist theory have different programs for change. Historically, women also have used feminist theory to argue for greater particularized benefits for themselves as a class or group. Students sometimes have
difficulty separating the analytic portions of a theory from its policy recommendations. They often want the right answer and unreflectively accept whatever is placed before them unless they suspect that it has a partisan bias. Of course, feminist theory is unabashedly partisan in favor of the equality of women and men, so many students seem to think of it as propaganda instead of a proper subject for study. On the other hand, some may feel that men cannot present feminist theory sympathetically because they are not supposed to belong to the group that feminist theory is meant to benefit. We argue that both positions are mistaken. Feminist theory simply cannot be dismissed as political indoctrination, but because of the baggage that the recent backlash has attached to the subject, special care must be used in its teaching.

As a group, we believe that a critical approach to feminist political theory allows all students, male and female, to gain a hold on difficult material, assess its strengths and weaknesses, and decide for themselves whether to adopt the perspective advocated by each variety of feminist thought. We maintain that it is not possible to simultaneously and consistently hold and act on all the varieties of feminist political theory, since the debates and differences among feminists are significant and real. We obviously do not believe that men teaching feminist theory are essentially any better than women at maintaining a critical perspective on the subject matter, but we suspect the tension between teaching feminist theory and engaging in political activity, which is inherent in the subject matter itself, explains some of the questioning each of us experienced during the fall of 1994. In what follows we will describe those experiences.

Shaughnessy's Experience

The first person I told that I was taking feminist theory from Scott Johnson immediately had a question: "Is he qualified?" It struck me as odd that this person could not believe that a male could ever be
qualified to teach feminist theory. Others asked similar questions, such as, "Why would he want to teach that?" and "What interest does he have in women's issues?" No one had ever questioned the qualifications of any of my other professors. Furthermore, when we gave the talk midsemester, Johnson's senior colleagues dismissed my ability as a student to talk about what I had learned in his class, and they often ignored what he had to say. The room was tense. It looked to me as if it had become a power struggle between two young students as new wave feminists and an older generation of women protecting their authority as longtime feminist scholars. Men were excluded. It seemed that they thought gender was only about women and only women could teach or talk about it.

I, on the other hand, thought it was a great idea that a male was teaching feminist theory, because it could bring a fresh perspective to issues I thought demanded a new look. I was surprised that people assumed that because Johnson was male, he was either unqualified or lacking legitimate interest in the subject matter. I felt that questioning the qualifications of my professor in this class but not in others was injecting partisan concerns into the realm of academics. When we gave the talk, Johnson's senior colleagues even seemed to dismiss my experience as a woman because I was learning about gender and feminism from a man. My friends' responses to the class reflected the polarizing public debate over feminism. Women could love or hate feminism, but not choose the middle ground. Men, on the other hand, were expected to oppose feminism and rarely allowed to be sympathetic or supportive. Treating feminism like any other academic subject—a middle position—was not acceptable. So it seemed the idea of a man being an authority on feminist theory was simply not believable.

From the beginning, I was comfortable in the classroom. For the first time, as a woman, I didn't feel nervous about the possibility (and later the reality) of disagreeing with the feminist mainstream. Johnson did a wonderful thing: he never once laid out what he thought
feminist theory was or should be. That was the question that (thankfully) plagued us through the entire semester. His refusal to define it for us was a key reason the class worked for me. In some ways he was more of a very educated sounding board. I could ask any question or bounce my ideas off him and usually get a ton of questions back. He would never insist that there was a single set way of viewing these ideas. We weren't forced to accept or reject a standard definition of feminism.

As a woman and a student, I found this important. I had always felt uncomfortable being called a feminist because I wasn't really sure that I agreed with all the standard popularized definitions. In this class, I was given the room to find and grow into my own definition of feminism. Johnson would constantly question parts of the definitions that each of us came up with, so that by the end of the semester, I understood and could defend exactly what I believed in.

I felt that Johnson was open to many new ideas and new theories, some of which were highly critical of earlier versions of feminist thought. He gave us a wide variety of readings offering many visions of feminism. This gave us, as a new generation, an opportunity to see that along with the liberal, Marxist, radical, and socialist feminists there were lesbian, minority, and even conservative feminists. To know the history and development of these different strands of theory is of course important and necessary. But we need to know where feminism is today and where it is going in the future.

In my opinion, the historical struggle to form a cohesive women's movement ironically resulted in a loss for individual women of the opportunity to choose their own personal identities. The individual "I" was subsumed in and lost to the ideological "we," defined as all oppressed women. Older versions of feminism obviously can speak for and about all women, but less and less do they speak for and about individual women. They certainly don't speak to me. I think these older versions of feminism have become authoritarian. They seem like a club with particular rules, like those proscribing the en-
joyment of sex because women’s sexuality has been created by the male patriarchal structure for men’s enjoyment, or rules insisting that men cannot be part of the solution because they are the problem. I don’t think that that kind of feminism, as it has been popularized and satirized in the media, will work for me or my generation of individual women and men working together for greater equality.

Maybe Johnson presented a more humanistic approach to feminism. By more humanistic, I mean more inclusive and maybe more cooperative. I now believe that feminist theory does not have to divide men and women but can lead to a better search for human equality. I learned that feminism should not make me feel as if I had to choose between men and women. This made me realize that both men and women have to take responsibility and action in order to change thoughts and institutions. I did not have to be a male-basher to be a feminist. Nor did I have to feel left out of the fight for equality just because I did not agree with nor accept all the philosophy or theories that women before me had believed in.

With Johnson’s knowledge, guidance, and support, I was able to see the males and females in my class, as well as my professor, as all part of the same struggle to recognize the equality of all human beings. I don’t know whether Johnson was more open to this because of his identity. Maybe he was trying to make a genuine effort to reflect on how everyone, including himself, is implicated in the problems, concerns, and triumphs of feminism. This attempt at reflection shows us a human view of equality and feminism. It is what made the class work for me.

**Seibert’s Experience**

Every college student knows how important the choice of professor is to the success of a course. If you find the perfect professor, then even the worst class you can think of can be made worthwhile. How-
ever, even the most interesting subject matter can be made deathly dull by the wrong professor.

These thoughts occurred to me as I signed up for a class on feminist theory, a class being taught by, I might add, a man. For some reason it did strike me as odd that a woman was not teaching the course, but I had to take the course anyway so I signed up. Initially, I thought a male professor in this class would have to be either completely effeminate—bordering on gay—or else totally opposed to everything he was teaching. On the other hand, I thought any woman teaching this class could not help but become adamant about one aspect of the movement or another because of her personal experiences. I couldn’t see any middle ground between these positions. As I look back, it is clear to me that the gender of the professor affected the view I took of the class.

Feminism has always given me the creeps. In part, this is because I had been confronted with only the most radical, abrasive, and outspoken examples of the feminist movement. These are the ones that make good press and grab the spotlight. None of the history behind feminism is ever presented, and we men are not often allowed to see the real tenets behind the different waves of feminism. It is difficult to discover the entire picture of feminism because of the media’s distortions. For men to be sympathetic to feminism, they need to see the origins of the movement and the reasons for its existence.

I will be the first to admit that the fact that Johnson was a male helped me in this class. I knew full well that he was bringing his own prejudices to the classroom and that these prejudices were as much a struggle for him as mine were for me. Because he is a man, I was more open and felt more comfortable asking the questions I thought were important. I did not feel I was being viewed as the enemy. I believed he had probably gone through all the same struggles that I have in trying to figure out who he is in relation to the material he was trying to teach us.
In the past, whenever I tried to discuss with women issues like rape, gender identity, power, and the family unit, they always made me feel as if I had no clue whatsoever about what was happening in their world. I was made to feel as if I were incapable of empathizing with them and their plight. Encounters such as these made me think that I had no way of ever understanding what was happening to them because I was not a woman. Sitting there in class listening to and talking with another man who was obviously well versed in the tenets of feminist theory made me see that I did have the ability to grab hold of the concepts involved. Accusations were not thrown at the class at any point with regard to patriarchal structures or the rape of women. When we examined these topics, we examined hypothetical causes in light of the evidence that was presented by the theorists. Arguments, not accusations, were the central subject of the class. This shifted the focus away from what men had done to women over the years and toward a consideration of the implications of those actions and the question of what we should do now. Thus ideas were always fair game, but the individuals in the class were not.

I found myself becoming a better man for struggling through the course. Johnson knew what he was talking about, and that is what made the class run the way it did. I am glad that he allowed the class to run itself when it would, and could keep it going when the tone of the class required intervention. He had no problem acquainting us with the theoretical frameworks of the wide variety of feminist theories, but at the feeling level he seemed to be learning right along with us. This provided the atmosphere that people need in order to learn. The class became a group endeavor. The process becomes much more effective if the person you are looking up to is trying as hard as you are to really grasp the impact of the issues involved. Johnson let us see what it was like to struggle through the issues. I do not think the gender of my professor hampered the class or in any way diminished the knowledge I gained. If the world wants men to become better men, then more men should teach feminist theory and more men
should take classes in it. The information and theories contained in
the movement hold the power for both halves of the population to
be liberated.

Johnson's Experience

It might help for you to know that I am a political scientist, broadly
trained in public policy and political theory at Carleton College, the
University of Chicago, and Stanford University. I have worked
closely with Susan Moller Okin, Elisabeth Hansot, and Jennifer Ring,
as well as other political theorists here and there. I teach political
theory and American politics at Saint John's University, an all-male
college offering a coeducational curriculum in conjunction with the
all-female College of Saint Benedict located a few miles down the
road. About a third of my teaching focuses on gender issues: male,
female, straight, and gay. I participated in the construction of a new
gender studies and women's studies minor and work on a men's de-
development research group. I designed the course taught last semester
based on syllabi from Okin and Ring, and I teach it here because no
one else in my department has the training and desire to offer the
same kind of course, despite the obvious need for one in our depart-
ment.

Since I am writing this essay with three of my students as an op-
portunity for each of us to reflect on who we are in relation to the
class, I think it helps to have some idea as to who I am, especially as
my students were often asked whether I knew anything about the
subject or why I had an interest in teaching feminist theory. I have
learned a lot about myself by teaching this course and writing this
essay. The sections about my coauthors' experiences suggested to me
that they learned more from the class than I could possibly have put
into it, and surprisingly, each of them seems to have taken a slightly
different class.

Of the many things that unnerved me during the semester I taught
Feminist Political Theory, some of the comments written by my coauthors were the most disturbing. When I first began studying feminist theory, the backlash against the movement had barely moved into full swing. While it seemed that few men were truly interested in the material, no one, male or female, appeared really put off by the work. Everyone in the classes I had taken was there because they wanted to be. Therefore, when I walked into Feminist Political Theory, I was somewhat unprepared for a hostile female audience in a class with almost twice as many men as women enrolled. None of the men were pro-feminist; at best they were indifferent. Some students had signed up for the class simply because they needed a political theory class that semester and had no idea, much less cared, what the topic of the course would be. Even my coauthors report that they initially came into the class with their prejudices firm and their critical capacities somewhat dormant.

I suppose I always had known that by teaching this class I was going to step on toes and tweak a few noses, so I should not have been surprised by the reported assaults on the course's legitimacy based solely, as it seems, on the fact that I am male. Some of the questioners were students, but others were faculty. Earlier we discussed the polarized reception to a public talk we gave on teaching gender in a variety of courses. Some of my students have reported that they were contacted by senior faculty and questioned about the class content and my approach. When faculty privately question another professor's credibility, that can have a serious effect on a class, even if those questions never become public. For all these reasons, I was surprised that the course worked as well as it did. Fortunately, my department has approved the course as a regular offering for as long as I would like to teach it.

I teach my upper-division undergraduate courses by using discussion. As one student has already reported, in class I see my role as being a highly receptive, highly concentrated, highly critical audience
of one who reflects information back to students in order to help them improve their performance. The more I can leave initiative to the students, the better. A teacher must use the energy and experience that the students bring to a class meeting, and the students must be aware of how I see my role as well as theirs.

The philosophy of teaching that I am describing here, the development of the professor into an audience of one, puts an obligation on the student to take responsibility for his or her own learning. A teacher as an audience of one cannot work effectively if the students do not do their work competently. This means that I am often only as good as my students; but it also means that as an attentive audience, I take whatever they bring to the classroom and mold it through careful criticism. I reflect their input, individually and collectively, so they can better see themselves and what they are learning.

When playing the role of an audience of one, I may appear to be doing nothing to the casual outside observer, but by the intensity of my concentration, by the focus of my attention, I will be communicating to the students what they need to know. This self-effacement does not come easily, but I believe it is a necessary characteristic of good teachers. It also hides the amount of preparation that goes into the design of a syllabus, the selection of the readings for each day, the thinking through of the possible as well as the probable course of that day’s conversation, and the effort that effective reflection requires to draw out the students’ criticisms of the reading.

I developed this approach to teaching from my work in theater. Tyrone Guthrie first argued that a director is primarily an audience of one in the same way that I have suggested a teacher is. Much research on teaching suggests that a student-centered approach helps students go beyond mere knowledge acquisition and begin applying the concepts they have learned. It was only after having settled on this philosophy of teaching that my research on feminist theory uncovered several discussions of feminist pedagogy that recommended
a similar approach. These found that while men tended to be granted authority in the classroom automatically, women were often denied it. The authors of these discussions then tried to design a feminist pedagogy that simultaneously made a virtue out of an unfortunate reality.

In my classes, I attempt to shed the authority normally granted to professors so that my students can see me as a learner, much like them, who simply has been studying feminist political theory for a bit longer than they have. I certainly do not want them to confuse my opinions with the right answers to the many questions I ask in my classes. In fact most of my questions have no single right answers even though some have demonstrably wrong ones. It was ironic that an older generation of feminists did not accept my authority to teach feminist political theory even though my philosophy of teaching was based on shedding some of that authority in the classroom. The attack on my authority by others not in the class actually helped break down the barriers between the students and myself as their professor.

This teaching strategy cannot guarantee successful learning any more than its alternatives. By successful learning I mean that the student has critically engaged opposing arguments and found ways to discover or strengthen his or her own position. A failure occurred when a student could never quite see past his or her own prejudices and his or her critical faculties remained in hibernation. Thus a failure doesn't mean the student declined to become a feminist, only that he or she declined to think. A student who still cannot distinguish between MacKinnon and Okin yet believes in everything each says without noticing or questioning their differences is a flop, yet a student who spends an entire semester engaging in the arguments while still rejecting all feminist theory in favor of traditional patriarchal family values can count the course as a successful learning experience if and only if he or she has thought through the reasons for and against patriarchy and can construct a cogent argument for their tra-
ditional position. The main goal informing my philosophy of teaching is getting students to think for themselves, which ultimately may allow them to change their beliefs but does not require it.

In reflecting on who I am in relation to my teaching style and the particular subjects I teach, I believe the key factor has been comfort. I am comfortable with who I am and how I go about what I do. I can shed authority in the classroom because the loss of rank does not threaten my sense of who I am, and I think students can read that in my approach to them. This allows my students greater freedom to find themselves in relation to the difficult issues raised in the books and articles assigned and discussed. Shedding authority might be easier for men because they are automatically granted it, but the main point I want to emphasize is that a cooperative style of teaching that empowers students to make their own learning choices and then holds them responsible for those choices is an effective teaching strategy regardless of subject matter or the teacher’s gender.

I am not female and cannot actually experience for myself much of what some feminists theorize. But I am also not Plato, nor Hobbes, nor Rousseau, and I cannot directly experience much of what they wrote about either. For me the fact that I am neither female nor Plato has some effect on my teaching, but it does not prevent me from challenging my students to reflect on who they are in relation to the material at hand or who the authors were in relation to what they wrote. Being male does affect how I see the world, but I can recognize that bias and must accept it in order to work through it. Being male gives no extra insight into knowledge. Who I am is simply a precondition, a set of changing filters, through which I experience the world. The identities of readers and writers, teachers and students, are clearly germane to many classroom discussions, but only to the extent that such discussion furthers the consideration of ideas. If the discussion of identity degenerates into ad hominem attacks as a way of avoiding ideas and critical thought, then no one is learning.
Kellen's Experience

When I first signed up for this class I thought that I would be very closely related to the subject matter, simply because of my gender. I expected the course to focus primarily on women's experiences and issues that had been excluded from the political canon (and history in general) and on how this exclusion had affected and, more important, hindered women. I was more or less expecting to hear a one-sided version of the story—the one side of the story that had been lost in history, the one side of the story that had been forced to take a backseat to the male version of the story. I was drawing this conclusion under the assumption that the experiences, issues, and events that had already been published in the political theory canon (and history) were "male."

I also had several questions about what feminism was, or how it could be defined, and what the role of feminist theory has been and could be. Above all, I wanted to know how I, as a woman, fit into all this (feminism, feminist theory, etc.). As the class progressed, I learned that most feminist theorists, especially the political theorists, have written their texts in response to or as rebuttals of the standard, widely accepted canon composed of works by Locke, Hobbes, Plato, and so on, all of whom have excluded women and women's experiences from their texts. One of the chief reasons for feminists' responses is an attempt to redress the imbalance and the imperfect vision of the political theory canon. These attempts at intervention reexamine aspects of human experience that have been ignored because they have been assumed to be just like the male experience. A second reason for the responses is that participation in the canon is in part determined by reflection and redeployment of issues already extant in the canon. Locke responds to Filmer and Hobbes, Wollstonecraft critiques Rousseau and Burke. After participating in the class and learning of the exchange between feminist theorists and traditional theorists, I expanded my view of how the world worked. I
had a better sense of the relationship between political theory and my politics.

As the course progressed I realized that both women and men had been falsely represented in the political theory canon, as well as in history. Furthermore, approaching the class as something valuable solely for women, or expecting to learn just about women and to “set the story straight” was extremely shortsighted on my part. I had entered the class under the false assumption that the world as we knew it, or as it had been presented to us in the traditional political theory canon, was a true and accurate representation of what is “male.” Eventually I began to understand that not only had women’s experiences been left out of things, but so had many men’s experiences. Traditional, unreflective conceptions of gender roles had been damaging for both genders—hindering all our experiences. Therefore, to experience the vast spectrum of characteristics that our humanity is composed of, we need to begin to recognize and understand that all of us have been limited by the canonical expectations.

To understand the world, we need to understand both sides of the story, and we need to fuse both fragments together to see the big picture. It is fairly accepted that to argue effectively it is advantageous to know your opponent’s argument. I think the same strategy can be applied to understanding “how the world works”—we need to gather all the information and viewpoints and experience that we can from all the fragments that constitute the world, then we need to fuse them together, and hopefully, looking at this big picture, we will gain some insight on how to understand things.

The claim that only women can teach feminist political theory is based on the false assumption that only women can learn, understand, or teach about issues related to women. This is a damaging assumption not only because it limits men, but because it limits women as well. From what I learned in class, and the way I understood it, the women’s movement is working toward equality that will allow women (and men) to experience their full humanity. This
equality suggests an abolition of essentially gender-specific roles of the kind that divide all activities into women’s work and men’s work. If only women can teach feminist theory because it is about women, then the standard feminist charge against the mainstream (male) canon suggests that women cannot teach political theory because it is only about men. This is both ironic and sexist. Women are capable of teaching, learning, and understanding subjects that they have been historically excluded from, and so are men. Feminism, as I now understand it, expands how we approach, view, and understand the world.

It is important to view feminist theory in an objective way, although the subject matter is often very conducive to a subjective approach. But I think it is dangerous to approach feminist theory in a narrow and fragmented way. As with any subject, approaching feminist theory in a narrow way limits and excludes valuable information. Studying, learning, or understanding feminist theory in narrow and noninclusive fragments seems to be contrary to what feminist theory is actually trying to do—broaden the information in the old canon, expand our understanding and definition of equality, and expand our understanding of female and male.

This course had a tremendous impact on me. We need to understand men and women in order to understand how the world works. If men are included in the quest to learn from, understand, and teach feminist political theory, we all might better be able to gain new insights from the old canon as well as develop new political theories about how the world works and why. More important, this course helped me understand that feminism was just one version of the human quest for equality for all. I have come to believe that it is impossible to achieve equality in a one-sided manner, or by focusing on only one side. True equality would inevitably affect all people; therefore, it cannot be approached as something one side fights for, or something one side “gives” the other side. It needs to be approached
Conclusion: No Middle Ground?

Feminist political theory is an appropriate academic subject for undergraduates to learn and faculty to teach. There is a distinctive core to the subject: it is grounded in the study of the relationship between equality and difference with regard to sex and gender. Part of the rhetoric that was used to justify the inclusion of women’s studies as an academic discipline was the claim that all previous work has been the study of men by men. In part this claim was true, but most if not all of that work never considered questions of gender or what being a man really meant. Even today some versions of the new men’s studies movement try to borrow the insights of feminist theory and apply them directly to the study of men, thus once again failing to consider critically what differences there might be between men and women. Other versions of men’s studies are crude illustrations of the backlash against the gains of feminist political activity, and once again ignore the actual study of men and their differences from women.

Feminist theory focuses on the relationship between gender difference and gender equality. This study can be done by men or women. To prejudge the conclusions of such study based on the gender of the investigator reflects poorly on the holder of that prejudice. This is not to say that all prejudices or assumptions can be ignored. They must be sought out, identified, recognized, and analyzed. What we tried to do in this class was to examine a wide variety of texts and notice how certain assumptions held prior to the research would make the conclusions of the studies congregate within narrow ranges. Radical feminists will find that men as a class dominate women as a class, while liberal feminists will find that changing the rules may allow
the supposed domination to lessen over time. In no case did we find
that the gender of the writer was the most important assumption
needed to get to the conclusion. We found that regardless of gender,
those who chose to work in a radical framework would come to rad-
cial conclusions, just as if we chose to use liberalism as our frame we
would come to conclusions consistent with its predictions.

Teaching feminist political theory unsympathetically or uncritically
calls into question political theory—not just feminism—as well as
the merits of the professor. We do not expect any theory to be taught
as if it were unquestionable, but we also do not expect theories to be
taught as if they have no merit. If the course were designed to pre-
vent students from becoming feminists or political theorists, then the
course would be a failure. But teaching feminist theory as an aca-
demic subject need not create a classroom of feminists. Nor should
teaching feminist theory simply be preaching to the choir. Our argu-
ment is plainly that a critical approach to thinking about feminist
theory leads to a better understanding of its variety and impact and
does not depend on the gender of the professor or the student.

The identity of the professor is germane to a conversation about
teaching only to the extent that identity affects or biases ideas. Of
course identity serves as a filter, but that filter need not remain unex-
amined. Like all assumptions, identity too should be examined, or it
certainly might bias conclusions. But the contrary assumption we
faced in this course—that males are essentially unqualified to teach
feminist political theory—suffers from a lack of critical examination.
In our experience in this course, identity did matter, it was examined,
and it helped us all toward a better understanding of the material.
We believe that those who challenged the course failed to consider
adequately their own assumptions and grounds for their challenge.
While we started with the polarized debate whether men can or can-
ot teach feminist political theory and found little middle ground in
this binary opposition, we ended with a different formulation of the
issue. By looking at what we feel must have been the reason behind
the opposition, we think we have found a solution. This is the obvious compromise: identity is an assumption that should be examined by everyone when teaching or learning feminist theory. The claim that suggests that only male identities be examined seems to us just as untenable as the claim that only women have a gender. Each of us, male and female alike, learned about ourselves as we learned about feminism.

NOTE

The authors gratefully acknowledge the help received from Gail Wise, Jane Opitz, and Katherine Mayberry.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
