Close Reading: Looking Closely at “The Feminist Critique”

Please mark up the article as thoroughly as you can in the next 5-10 minutes. Underline things that seem important, circle vocabulary words you don’t know, write questions in the margins, make notes of any passage that reminds you of something else you’ve been thinking about.

The Feminist Critique

The upsurge of feminist theoretical writing is among the most striking intellectual phenomena of the period under discussion. Simone de Beauvoir became symbolic ‘mother’ to a generation with *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949), for all that she was later criticized for over-dependence on Sartrean terminology and a refusal (until 1971) to identify herself as a ‘feminist.’ However, she joined the Mouvement de libération des femmes (MLF) in that year because, she said, she had come to realize that women must fight for an improvement in women’s actual situation before achieving the socialism they hope for. The importance of the women’s movements—it would be an over-simplification to use the term in the singular—is not difficult to account for. Women had very little control over their own fertility until the sale of contraceptives was legalized in 1967; abortion did not become legal until 1975 (and was not available free of charge until 1982); political organizations and parties of the Left often demonstrated sexist attitudes towards women, traditionally seen as good for little besides typing, coffee-making, and sex. The upheaval of 1968, in which women participated massively, began to change this, and inspired the foundation of the MLF two years later figuring the shift away from a centralized, even monolithic, drive for social change, epitomized by Leninist organization and the communist party, towards the greater pluralism and the wider range of voices that is one of the leitmotifs of this chapter.

On a separate sheet, briefly do the following:

1. Write down what you think is the main point of the reading.
2. Write down any connections you were able to make.
3. Make a list of questions you have about the article.
4. Make a list of vocabulary that you need to look up.

More questions? Contact the Avery Point Academic Center at 860-405-9058 or email us at apac@uconn.edu.