

WGSS 187: Gender, Sexuality, Culture Spring 2020

Instructor: Derek Siegel

Office: South College W412

Class Meetings: Tu/Thurs 1-2:15pm

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Office Hours: Tues 11-12 (**and by appt**)

Classroom: South College W219

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to some of the basic concepts and theoretical perspectives in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Drawing on disciplinary, interdisciplinary and cross-cultural studies, students will engage critically with issues such as gender inequities, sexuality, families, work, media images, queer and trans issues, reproductive rights, and history.

Throughout the course, students will explore how experiences of gender and sexuality intersect with other social constructs of difference, including race/ethnicity, class, and nationality. Special attention will be paid to various ways historical, cultural, social, political, and economic constructs have influenced the contexts of our lives; and the social movements at the local, national and some transnational levels which have led to key transformations.

This is not only a challenging course, but it also has the potential to be transformative. We are interested not only in your understanding and command of the course material, but also in your ability to apply these frameworks to analyzing our current times, politics and to your own lives. Therefore, we have designed assignments that ask you to connect the course material to events outside the classroom and to your own lives. Some of this material may be new, and challenging. You may passionately agree or disagree with the ideas presented during the course. We welcome engaged responses and arguments, but insist that you are respectful of others in all conversations, written work, debates and discussions in class and online.

Course Objectives

- to think critically and creatively about pressing current issues
- to understand diverse perspectives and how different cultures and groups relate
- to integrate and synthesize different forms of knowledge
- to communicate clearly, concisely and effectively both in writing and speaking
- to deepen self-understanding of personal strengths and challenge
- to bring an interdisciplinary feminist perspective to your scholarship, work, and life

This course fulfills two general education requirements (interdisciplinary, “I” and U.S. diversity, “U”). One goal of higher education is to nurture the various potentials in all students through critical thinking skills, personal enrichment, cultural awareness, and breadth of knowledge.

Readings

Although I’ve included lots of readings this semester, I rarely assign full journal articles, so pay attention to the pages numbers I’ve assigned below! I try to assign no more than 20-30 pages per session, or 40-60 per week, so I hope that you in good faith do your best to read everything, as carefully as your schedule permits. I’ve done my best to assemble a collection of classic texts and authors alongside a diverse set of contemporary scholars, mixing in digital resources and non-journal articles whenever possible. **Please note that readings and assignments will be due on the date they are posted in the schedule below. Everything will be available on Moodle.**

Electronics Policy

Mounting research on student success suggests that university students retain information better and participate more effectively when taking notes by paper and pen. Research has also shown that simply having one's own smartphone or laptop within sight, even when they aren't being used, significantly decreases concentration on attention-demanding tasks. Based on this research, we will have a low-tech classroom for 187. Please refrain from using laptops or smart phones (unless for an in-class assignment). Please always bring paper and pens and your notes to class. I understand that some students need to use laptops to process lecture information. If you require a laptop for note-taking, meet with me and/or provide an accommodations letter.

Academic Honesty & Writing Support

I expect you to write your own original content and adhere to high levels of academic honesty. Any student found guilty of academic dishonesty or plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary action and will receive an "F" in the course. You are encouraged to read and discuss these issues widely; however, make sure to use your own words and cite others when you're referencing ideas that are not your own. If you're overwhelmed, please don't plagiarize! I'm a resource for you, as well as the research librarians and the Writing Center, which provides free, one-on-one help by appointment. I also highly recommend the short text "They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter In Academic Writing" by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein for quick skills on how to be a more effective academic writer.

Disability & General Accommodations

Whether or not you have official disability accommodations, I encourage you to meet with me in office hours or via email to discuss any issues you may anticipate this semester. The sooner we talk, the better! All of my policies have been chosen for pedagogical reasons, given my goal of creating the best learning environment that I can. Which is to say that I'll do my best to reasonably accommodate your needs as possible.

Mandatory Reporting Statement

I feel obliged to share with you all that as a university employee, I'm a mandatory reporter of sexual assault. This means that if you disclose your assault to me, I must send a report to my supervisors and the dean. There are a few non-mandatory reporters on campus, if you would prefer reaching out to them: **Center for Women and Community** and **Center for Counseling and Psychological Services**. I also want to share some other hotline resources with you, each of which are open 24/7 and have online chat features: RAINN (sexual assault), National Domestic Violence Hotline, and HopeLine (suicide and self-harm).

Email Etiquette

I welcome appropriate email queries and will respond to them within a reasonable amount of time (24-48 hours is normal). Before you email, review the syllabus and Moodle to check whether your question has already been answered. For example, office hours, due dates, assignment instructions, etc. are listed there, as are all changes to readings, due dates, etc. **If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate. This is why it's important to have the contact information of at least two classmates.** If you still have questions after speaking with a classmate, then it's a good idea to reach out or come to office hours. Office hours are also a good place to review feedback from your assignments and talk about how to improve.

Course Requirements & Evaluation

1. Active Participation (20%)

- Attend all classes. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class, and **students are allowed up to two absences with no explanation required.**
- Participate in class discussion (this includes full class and small group work). You will not be evaluated for “right” or “wrong” answers but on engaging the material. Halfway through the semester, I’ll provide feedback on your participation.
- Be present during class. **Follow our electronics policy.** Being present also includes active listening to other students, asking clarifying questions, etc.

2. Pop Quizzes (10%)

There will be 8 in-class quizzes, unannounced and held during the first 5-10 minutes of class. These quizzes will assess your knowledge of main concepts and arguments in the readings (will mostly be short-answer questions). While there will be no make up quizzes, I will drop your lowest 3 grades. The highest 5 grades will each count 2% of your final grade.

3. Short Response Papers (10%) – 250-300 Words

There will be 5 response papers due on the following days, each counting for 2% of our final grade: **Jan 23, Feb 6, March 10, March 31, and April 21.** The prompts for each assignment are written on the course schedule below. All assignments should be submitted on Moodle by the beginning of class the day it is due. Half-credit will be accepted for late submissions, but once 48 hours have passed, I will no longer accept late submissions.

4. Short Essay Papers (40%)

For each short essay, you must complete a 4-5 page paper (**specific prompts to be announced at least one week before the deadline**). These are not text summaries, but rather you will be graded on your ability to articulate your own position in relation to the authors we have read. This means you will explain how the authors’ arguments help bolster your position. Each paper must be uploaded onto Moodle by 11:59pm on the due date. Any late submissions should be e-mailed to me, and without pre-approval for an extension, each day you will drop half a letter grade.

Short Essay #1 – **Due Tuesday February 18** (10% of the final grade)

Short Essay #2 – **Due Friday March 16** (15% of the final grade)

Short Essay #3 – **Due Tuesday April 28** (15% of the final grade)

5. Final Exam (20%)

Our final exam will take place in May (**date TBD**). It will be comprised of short answers (mostly defining key terms from the course). You’ll receive a study guide at least one week in advance.

While I do not offer any extra credit opportunities, if you are concerned about your grade, we can always meet to strategize about how to improve on your future assignments!

Course Schedule (This includes your assigned readings & short response prompts)

Tuesday January 21 – *Intro to Syllabus*

Will Be Posted on Moodle (*Please Read Ahead of Time*)

Unit 1: Navigating Identity in the Context of Structural Inequalities

On one hand, gender refers to our most intimate experiences of self and body. On the other hands, the meanings and practices of our individual gender experiences are shaped by the interrelated structures of patriarchy, capitalism, white supremacy, and colonialism. What does it mean to claim an identity when these systems of inequality facilitate and constrain our lives?

Thursday Jan 23 – *Gender as a Structure*

1. Johnson, Allan G. 1988. "Patriarchy. The System: An It, Not a He, a Them, or an Us." *Women's Lives: Multicultural Perspectives.. pp.68-76.*
2. Kincaid, Jamaica. 1978. Girl. The New Yorker.
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1978/06/26/girl>

Short Response Paper #1 Write 250 words based on Kincaid's "Girl," entitled "Girl" or "Boy" or "None of the Above." What kinds of instructions did you hear growing up about what it meant to be a boy or a girl? (This may've been particularly complicated if you identify as trans or non-binary, unless you were supported in that, or some other queer path.) How was race and national origin inscribed on your girl/boy/other identity? You can construct the speaker as mother, father, or some other adult role that was both advisory and at least a little disciplinary. Turn in via Moodle and bring a printed copy. Late submissions accepted for people who transfer in late.

Tuesday Jan 28 – *Race & White Supremacy*

1. Smith, Andrea. 2015. "Heteropatriarchy and the three pillars of white supremacy: Rethinking women of color organizing." **Pp. 66-73.**
2. McIntosh, Peggy. 1989. "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." **Pp. 1-7.**
3. MTV Decoded (Franchesca Ramsey, 2016): "When Did You Realize Your Race?"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5nQmLbbWz0>

Thursday Jan 30 – *Capitalism as a Structure*

1. Center for Popular Economics. 2014. "Economics of the 99%" **p. 9-14.**
2. Coontz, Stephanie. 1992. "The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap." **p. 23-38.**

Tuesday Feb 4 – *Nation & Citizenship*

1. Grewal, Inderpal and Caren Kaplan. 2006. Gendered Identities in Nations and States. Pp. **149-54** in *An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World*. NY: McGraw-Hill. 2nd Edition.
2. Colen, Shellee. 1995. "Like a Mother to Them" Stratified Reproduction and West Indian Childcare workers and their employers in New York." P. **78-83.**
3. Pryce, Jessica. <https://theconversation.com/the-long-history-of-separating-families-in-the-us-and-how-the-trauma-lingers-98616>

Thursday Feb 6 – **Intersectionality (Key Term)**

1. Coaston, Jane. <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>
2. Glenn, Evelyn N. 1992. "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor." *Signs* 18(1): pp. 1-16.

Short Response Paper #2: In a 1-2 page response, briefly answer the following three questions: 1) what did Crenshaw mean by intersectionality in the context of her original essay, 2) is this similar or different from how you've heard the term intersectionality be used, and 3) how is the article by Evelyn Nakano Glenn an example of intersectionality?

Tuesday Feb 11 – **Intersectionality + Social Movements (Manifestos)**

1. Combahee River Collective Statement, 1979. <http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>
 2. Transfeminist Manifesto (Introduction, Primary Principles, and Postscript); Black Lives Matter Guiding Principle; An Intersex Manifesto; Undocuqueer Manifesto
- Links on Moodle – Please Read/Watch All these Short Manifestos.**

Unit 2: Social Constructionism and Engaging Our Physical World

Social constructionism generally argues that we know as "gender" emerges from a set of cultural practices and ideologies. But if what it means to be a "woman" differs based on time, place, and social context, then is there a pre-social state before gender? How have gender differences become meaningful in the United States? What does it mean to describe the gendered body as simultaneously biological and social?

Thursday February 13 - **Key Terms – Social Construction**

1. Vance, Carole. 2002. Social Construction Theory: Problems in the History of Sexuality. Pp. 28-31 in *An Introduction to Women's Studies*.
2. Crawley, Sarah L. et al. 2007. *Gendering Bodies*. P. 1-11. Rowman + Littlefield Publishers.

Tuesday February 18 – **No Class (Monday Schedule)**

Thursday February 20 – **"Doing Gender" + Performativity**

1. West, Candace and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987 "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society*, 1(2), pp. 125- 127; 137-140.
2. Butler, Judith. 1988. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40 (4): 519-524.

Tuesday Feb 25 – **Queer/Trans Critiques of the Gender Binary**

1. Serano, Julia. 2013. "A Word About Words." "On the Outside Looking In." "On Being a Woman." *Excluded*. Seal Press, pp. 8-36.
2. Dennis, Riley J. Trans women are not "biologically male." YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWVRzGMVXbM>
3. Driver, Betsy. Interface Project: Communicating the Experience of Intersex People. <https://www.interfaceproject.org/stories#/betsy-driver/>

Thursday Feb 27 - ***Social Construction + Indigeneity + Colonial Violence***

Guest Speaker: Talia Anne London (UMass Amherst – Social Justice Education)

1. Garrouette, Eva Marie. 2003. "What If My Grandma Eats Big Macs?" *Real Indians and the Survival of Native America*. University of California Press, pp. 61-73.
2. Deerinwater, Jen. <https://rewire.news/article/2019/12/09/paper-genocide-the-erasure-of-native-people-in-census-counts/>

Thursday March 3 – ***Social Constructionism & Disability***

1. Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. 2011. "Misfits: a Feminist Materialist Disability Concept." *Hypatia*. (26)3, pp. 591-609.
2. Brown, Lydia. (Please Read & Watch the Short Video)
<http://www.autistichoya.com/2013/03/constructing-disability-deviant-bodies.html>

Thursday March 5 – ***Feminist Science Studies***

1. Subramaniam, Banu. 2001. The Aliens Have Landed! Reflections on the Rhetoric of Biological Invasions. *Meridians* 2 (1): pp. 26-40
2. Willey, Angela. 2017. "Engendering New Materializations: Feminism, Nature, and the Challenge to Disciplinary Proper Objects." 131-132, 139, 147-149.

Unit 3: Eugenics & Reproductive Justice

Not all people have the same resources or support when it comes to building a family. Which bodies and populations are dis/advantaged? What are contemporary examples of positive and negative eugenics? How does reproductive justice provide a framework for understanding social inequalities and organizing against them?

Tuesday March 10 – ***Positive & Negative Eugenics***

McWhorter, Ladelle. 2009. "Managing Evolution: Race Betterment, Race Purification, and the American Eugenics Movement." P. 203-217; 222-224

Short Response Paper #3: In 1-2 pages, define and explain the concepts of negative and positive eugenics. For each of these concepts, you should include an example from the reading **and** a contemporary example not from the reading (in total you should have four examples).

Thursday March 12 - ***Killing the Black Body***

Roberts, Dorothy. 1997. "From Norplant to the Contraceptive Vaccine: The New Frontier of Population Control." In *Killing the Black Body*, pp. 104-137.

[SPRING BREAK]

Tuesday March 24 – *What Is Reproductive Justice?*

Guest Speaker: Tannuja Rozario (UMass Amherst – Sociology)

1. Ross, Loretta and Rickie Solinger. 2017. “Reproductive Justice: An Introduction.” P. 58-73
2. Fried, Marlene Geber. 2008. “10 Reasons to Rethink Reproductive Choice.” Pp. 1-4.
3. Population and Development Center @ Hampshire College, “10 Reasons to Rethink “Overpopulation.” (Moodle)

Thursday March 26 – *Abortion and Reproductive Justice*

Parker, Willie. 2015. “Going to Mississippi: If I Don’t, Who Will? The Pursuit of Reproductive Justice.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4g4GuQBwuM>
Watch from beginning to 26:45.

Unit 4: (Re)Thinking Gender & Violence

Generalizations about gender-based violence abound: that it only refers to physical harm inflicted by one individual to another (specifically a cisgender man harming a cisgender woman). This narrow definition makes other forms of violence invisible. What is the advantage of viewing economic, political, and psychological inequalities as violence? What kinds of organizing are possible when we recognize violence committed by the state and other structures?

Tuesday March 31 – *Domestic Violence + Sexual Harassment*

1. Johnson, Michael P. 1997. “Domestic Violence: The Intersection of Gender and Control” in A. Cherlin, Public and Private Families, fifth ed., Pp. 277-286
2. Burke, Tarana. 2019. “Me Too is a movement, not a moment.” Full Video (16 min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zP3LaAYzA3Q>

Short Response Paper #4: Spend 5-10 minutes researching the term “rape culture” and write about what you learned. In 1-2 pages, relate it to at least one other concept we’ve discussed so far this semester (this can include patriarchy, white supremacy, intersectionality, doing gender, reproductive justice, or more). Make sure to properly cite your sources!

Thursday April 2 – *Sex Work + Decriminalization*

1. Jackson, Crystal and Jennifer Reed. 2016. “Missing Rights + Misplaced Justice for Sex Workers in the United States.” pp. 15-21
2. Sankofa, Jasmine. <https://www.amnestyusa.org/from-margin-to-center-sex-work-decriminalization-is-a-racial-justice-issue/>
3. Scaccia, Annamarya. <https://rewire.news/article/2018/04/02/sesta-already-devastating-impacts-sex-workers-just-like-predicted/>

Tuesday April 7 – *Race + Sexual Violence*

Guest Speaker: Candace King (UMass Amherst – African American Studies)

McGuire, Danielle L. 2010. “They’d Kill Me If I Told.” In *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance*. Pp. 1-28.

Thursday April 9 - **Class Cancelled, Passover**

Please still read the Executive Summary of U.S. Transgender Survey (2015, National Center of Transgender Equality) – **On Moodle, pp. 1-16.**

Tuesday April 14 - **Transphobic Violence**

Bettcher, Talia. 2007. Evil Deceivers and Make Believers: On Transphobic Violence and the Politics of Illusion. *Hypatia*, 22(3): **pp. 43-65.**

Unit 5: Crafting Solidarities Across Difference

In order to combat gender inequalities, individuals have mobilized around the category of “woman” and participated in various feminist movements. How have feminist movements dealt with social and political differences among women? How do we fight for gender justice without replicating other forms of violence and oppression? How do our own social positions impact our participation in feminist movements?

Thursday April 16 – **Thinking Solidarities**

Guest Speakers: Daniela Ochoa Diaz (Physicians for Reproductive Health) and Victoria Kim (National LGBTQ Task Force)

1. Abu-Lughod, Lila. “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others.” **pp. 783-790.**
2. Jordan, June. 1982/2003. Report from the Bahamas. *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism* 3 (2): **pp. 6-16.**

Tuesday April 21 – **So What Are Identity Politics, Exactly?**

1. Fuss, Diana. 1989. “Lesbian and Gay Theory: The Question of Identity Politics.” *Essentially Speaking*. London: Routledge. **pp. 97-107**
2. Smith, Sharon. 2008. “Marxism and Identity Politics.” <https://socialistworker.org/2008/07/11/marxism-and-identity-politics>
3. Walters, Suzanna D. 2017. “In Defense of Identity Politics.” <http://signsjournal.org/currents-identity-politics/walters/>

Short Response Paper #5: In a 1-2 page response, provide a definition of identity politics that combines elements of all readings we have done for today. Before taking this class, had you heard of the term identity politics? If so, how do the definitions the authors provide differ from how you’d heard it used? If not, after providing a definition, write about a news story or event you’ve heard about over the past few months that might be an example of identity politics.

Thursday April 23 – **Incommensurability & Different Forms of Justice**

Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang. 2012. “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*. 1(1), pp. 1-28; Conclusion (35).

Tuesday April 28 – **Last Day Of Class**

No Planned Readings. Come prepared to discuss the final exam.