



# WGSS 187- Gender, Sexuality, and Culture

Mon & Weds: 10:10-11 am, Herter 231

Professor Laura Briggs

## Course Description

Questions of sex, sexuality, and gender are suddenly everywhere in U.S. politics and culture, from hot mike tapes about “grabbing” to Laverne Cox on Time magazine’s cover. Questions of police killings, neo-Nazis, and undocumented immigration, long important to feminism, are all over the news and social media, with queer activists on the front lines. Supreme Court watchers tell us that we are one retiring octogenarian judge away from losing abortion and gay marriage and family rights. This course takes these questions—the role of gender and sexuality in U.S. culture and politics, the resurgence of feminist, labor, and anti-racist activism, and problems like gender violence and the legacies of slavery—as the subjects of its analysis. Where are we and how, historically, did we get here? Using podcasts, critical journalism, video, novels, and academic articles, we will try to develop tools to understand this political and cultural moment.

## What We Will Do

This is not a class where students sit passively and listen to the “sage on the stage.” Even though we’re a large-ish class, we’ll talk to each other, have conversations, do projects, especially in sections. Do the readings for the date on the syllabus before class. Unless you need it for accessibility reasons, don’t bring your laptop or tablet—they’re distracting and keep you from taking notes most effectively and from fully participating. Do bring your best skills—a sense of humor, curiosity, ideas, sociability, and an openness to changing your mind.

The politics of difference—race, gender, class, gender or sexual identity, religion, and others—does not always engender good

## Required books

Available at the UMass, Amazon website, Powells and wherever fine books are sold

- Chimamanda Ngozi Aidiachie, *We Should All Be Feminists* (Anchor Books, 2012 or 2014)
- Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (Doubleday, 1979). Or, you can read the graphic novel version, adapted by Damian Duffy and John Jennings (Abrams ComicArts, 2017), which is stunning.
- Margaret Atwood, *A Handmaid’s Tale* (Anchor, 1998). **The HULU miniseries is a faithful adaptation of the book but isn’t a substitute for reading it.**



## Weekly schedule (see details for readings on Moodle)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Due</b>
<b>Sept.6</b>	Gender, race, place: Overview	
<b>Sept.8</b>	Gender, race, place	<b>2-pp paper</b>
<b>Sept.11</b>	Gendered ways of being seen in the world: Discounted, Demeaned, Misrecognized	
<b>Sept.13</b>	Gendered ways of being seen in the world: Thin	
<b>Sept.18</b>	Let's Talk about the Alt-Right, aka Neo-Nazis, White Supremacists, and White Nationalists, and the "Dirtbag Left": Race and Violence	
<b>Sept.20</b>	Gender	
<b>Sept.25</b>	Feminist Issues: Violence Against Women	
<b>Sept.27</b>	Feminist Issues: Why Place Matters:	
<b>Oct. 2</b>	Popular Culture Grapples with Feminism: What is this thing?	
<b>Oct. 4</b>	Popular Culture Grapples with Feminism: Can you be bad at it?	
<b>Oct. 10</b>	Interlocking Systems of Oppression: Intersectionality	
<b>Oct. 11</b>	Reproductive Politics: Feminism and IVF	
<b>Oct. 16</b>	Freedom Dreams: What is a family?	
<b>Oct. 18</b>	Masculinity	<b>Oct. 20 Midterm</b>
<b>Oct. 23</b>	Trans Politics: The Fight Over Troops, Bathrooms, Health Care, Documents: Politics	
<b>Oct. 25</b>	Scholars, Activists, and Artists	
<b>Oct. 30</b>	Slavery and Freedom: Black women's labor	
<b>Nov. 1</b>	Slavery and Freedom: Slavery.	
<b>Nov. 6</b>	The Google Memo: Brains, Difference, and Science: Brogrammers and the Digital Revolution	
<b>Nov. 8</b>	The Google Memo: Brains, Difference, and Science: Race and Disability	<b>Nov. 10 4-pp paper</b>
<b>Nov. 13</b>	The Other Trans Politics: Transnational, Transmigrants: Hating Mexicans and Muslims	
<b>Nov. 15</b>	Anywhere but Here: Feminism, Elsewhere.	
	<b>Nov.20-26: Thanksgiving break</b>	
<b>Nov. 27</b>	Cultural Politics: Feminist Narratives and Media	
<b>Nov. 29</b>	Cultural Politics: Reproductive and Fertility Politics	
<b>Dec. 4</b>	Feminism and Humor	
<b>Dec. 6</b>	Crip Cultural Production	
<b>Dec. 8</b>	<b>[Section] Handout: final exam</b>	
<b>Dec. 11</b>	Gender, Race, Class, Sexuality, and Place	
	<b>Final Exam: December 19, 8-10am</b>	<b>Herter 231</b>