

WGSS 201: Gender and Difference: Critical Analyses

University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Spring 2017

MW 5:30-6:45

South College W211

Instructor: Adina Giannelli, JD

gender pronouns: she, her, hers

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Office Hours: South College W412 | MW 4-5 and by appointment

-COURSE DESCRIPTION-

This 200-level, interdisciplinary seminar will consider the issue of gender, race, sexuality, and class in a transnational context, drawing on sociological literature, social critiques, policy papers, case law, documentary, personal narrative, and fiction. In the context of this course, we will critically examine and reflect upon issues of gender and difference in a transnationally. We will explore the social construction of sex, gender, and sexuality across time and space; develop an understanding of the ways in which sex, gender, and sexuality intersect and are imbricated with—and are mutually constituted by—categories including race, nationality, citizenship, language, and dis/ability. We will develop close reading, critical thinking, analytical, and writing skills in the context of a theoretically rich, intellectually challenging—and supportive—environment.

- GUIDELINES -

[I] GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

1. Students are expected to come to class on time, having carefully read the material assigned, and ready to engage in serious discussion. **Students are expected to silence and put away their cell phones and computers for the duration of class.** Participation is required, and critical to your success in this class. In addition, everyone is asked to do the following:

- (i) **Respect your classmates' rights to speak**, and listen attentively to what is being said, even if you disagree with what your peers might have to say. **You don't have to agree with everything that is said in class, but you are expected to use discretion and sensitivity when speaking, and be respectful of everyone present.**
- (ii) **Be willing to consider new ideas.** Over the course of the semester, we will explore themes, concepts, and material that may be new, challenging, and unfamiliar. **This is the art of a good education. Keep an open mind.**
- (iii) **Participate actively.** We all learn best when we are present and engaged in the course material. **Don't be afraid to ask questions (of me, and of one another).** This is why we are here!
- (iv) **If you have a question, an issue, a problem, or concern that cannot be addressed in class or in our online forum, please send me an email at your earliest**

convenience, so that we can resolve it promptly.

[II] COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your grade in this course will be based on the following components:

Component	Percent of Grade	Due Date(s)
Class Participation	20%	ONGOING
Take Home Exams:	20%	February 8; March 8; April 12 (you complete 2)
Midterm/Book Review	10%	Monday, February 27 in class
Final Project Meeting	ungraded but mandatory	Meetings scheduled between 2/27-3/10
Final Project	30% (project=20% presentation=10%)	PRESENTATIONS: 4/18-5/1
		PROJECT: Monday, May 1 in class
Final Exam	20%	(Due electronically Thursday, May 11 last day of finals)

Regarding Class Participation: Is mandatory. (For additional information on attendance and participation, see “[III. Regarding Attendance and Participation” below.)

Regarding the Midterm: Your midterm will take the form of a book review. Students will read and critically review a text, selected from a list provided during the second week of class, in consideration of course themes, readings, and discussions. **More information and guidelines to follow.**

Regarding the Final Project: Your final project will be student-directed and self-designed, in consultation with your instructor. This may take the shape of a creative project (poetry, documentary film, etc.), a traditional paper, website, or another form. **More information and specific guidelines to follow.**

Regarding the Final Exam: The final assignment will assume the form of an open-book, open-note take-home examination, due electronically by the last day of final exams (Thursday, May 11, 2017). **More information and specific guidelines to follow.**

[III] REGARDING ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance is mandatory and critical to your success in this course. All students are allowed two unexcused absences over the course of the semester. Please note: Each additional unexcused absence will result in a 2-point reduction of your final grade.

For an absence to count as excused, it must relate to an illness, emergency, religious observance, or

athletic conflict. The instructor reserves the right to require documentation for excused absences.

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE ARE NOT THE SAME THING. IN OTHER WORDS, SHOWING UP WILL NOT SATISFY PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS. WE WILL DISCUSS THIS IN GREATER DEPTH AND DETAIL IN THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASS.

[IV] REGARDING WRITTEN WORK

IF YOU WOULD LIKE FEEDBACK ON ANY ASSIGNMENT BEFORE IT IS DUE, I AM HAPPY TO PROVIDE THIS. SIMPLY EMAIL ME A COPY OF YOUR WORK NO LATER THAN 48 HOURS PRIOR TO ITS DUE DATE, AND I WILL READ AND RETURN THIS TO YOU WITH MY COMMENTS AND SUGGESTED REVISIONS.

COURSE READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS (subject to change) <i>Note:</i> All readings are available on the course Moodle, and are due on the date listed. (In other words, the reading for Wednesday, January 25 is due on that date.) I will regularly assign short, non-academic readings derived from current events in addition to the readings outlined below.	
Week One: Introductions	
Day One Mon. Jan 23	INTRODUCTION TO COURSE Review of Syllabus, Course Expectations, Survey, Preliminary Questions
Day Two Wed. Jan 25	SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION Lorber, Judith. "The Social Construction of Gender." pp. 99-101 Vance, Carole S. "Social Construction Theory: Problems in the History of Sexuality." http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/06/16/how-fluid-is-racial-identity/race-and-racial-identity-are-social-constructs
Week Two: Genealogies	
Day Three Mon. Jan 30	Combahee River Collective. "A Black Feminist Statement." Lorde, Audre. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference." "Girl," Jamaica Kincaid
Day Four Wed. Feb 1	Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes." Mukherjee, Bharati, "A Four Hundred Year Old Woman"
Week Three: Intersections	

Day Five Mon Feb 6 INTERSECTIONS	INTERSECTIONALITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Crenshaw, Kimberle. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color.” ■ Desmond-Harris, Jenée. 2017. “To Understand the Women's March on Washington, You Need to Understand Intersectional Feminism.”
Day Six Wed Feb 8	EXAM. In anticipation of class, visit: University Gallery exhibit: <u>Emancipating the Past: Kara Walker’s Tales of Slavery and Power.</u>
Week Four: Histories & Contexts	
Day Seven Mon Feb 13	Ann Petry, “Like a Winding Sheet” Tillie Olsen, “I Stand Here Ironing” Alice Walker, “Everyday Use”
Day Eight Wed Feb 15	WHAT IS FEMINISM? WHY IS FEMINISM? Identify a feminism-related reading. Read it. Bring it (in hard copy) to class.
Week Five: Transnational Feminisms	
Day Nine Mon Feb 20	University Holiday— NO CLASS
Day Ten Wed Feb 22	Basu, Amrita. “Introduction,” <i>Women’s Movements in the Global Era: The Power of Local Feminisms.</i> Volpp, Leti. “Disappearing Acts: On Gendered Violence, Pathological Cultures, and Civil Society.”
Week Six: Indigeneities/Mestizaje	
Day Eleven Mon Feb 27	Anderson, Kim. “Affirmations of an Indigenous Feminist.” <i>In Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture.</i> Smith, Andrea. “U.S. Empire and the War Against Native Sovereignty.” In <i>Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide.</i> Harjo, Joy. (Mvskoke). “Perhaps the World Ends Here.” (poem) Bruchac, Marge (Algonkian), “Captives” (poem)
Day Twelve Wed Mar 1	Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. <i>Borderlands-La Frontera: The New Mestiza.</i> Excerpts. <i>Ibid.</i> “Toward a New Consciousness.”
Week Seven: Activisms	
Day Thirteen Mon Mar 6	Simone, Nina. 1966. “Four Women” Pough, Gwendolyn. 2015. “Do the Ladies Run This? Some Thoughts on Hip Hop Feminism.” Wegerif, Maya; Putuma, Koleka; Ikpi, Bati. “Three Women: a Poem in Honor of Fezeka.”

<p>Day Fourteen Wed Mar 8</p>	<p>TAKE HOME EXAM Readings: Gay, Roxane's "Bad Feminist" (excerpts); additional readings will be provided in anticipation of assignment. In lieu of class, attend INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION Center for Women and Community 4:30-6:30pm. Essay due electronically Friday, March 10.</p>
<p>Week Eight: Resistance, Postmodernity and the Global</p>	
<p>Day Fifteen Mon Mar 20 RESISTANCE</p>	<p>Abu-Lughod, Lila Abu. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" Al-Ali, Nadje. 2015. "Gendering the Arab Spring." Excerpts, <i>Woman at Point Zero</i>, Nawal El Saadawi</p>
<p>Day Fifteen Wed Mar 22 AFROFUTURES</p>	<p>Brooks, Kinitra. 2011. "Finding the Humanity in Horror: Black Women's Identity in Fighting the Supernatural." Morris, Susana M. "Black Girls Are from the Future." Lordi, Emily. 2013. "Calling All Stars": Janelle Monae's Black Feminist Futures.</p>
<p>Week Nine: The Body</p>	
<p>Day Sixteen Mon Mar 27</p>	<p>Martin, Emily. "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles." Richardson, Sarah S. "Sexing the X: How the X Became the "Female" Chromosome." Winterson, Jeannette. <i>Written on the Body</i> (excerpts).</p>
<p>Day Seventeen Wed Mar 29</p>	<p>Grosz, Elizabeth. "Bodies and Knowledges." Brief excerpts. Butler, Judith. "Bodies that Matter." Brief excerpts. Holloway, Karla F. C. 2011. <i>Private Bodies, Public Texts: Race, Gender, and a Cultural Bioethics</i>. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011. Brief excerpts. Rapp Black, Emily. "Solving the Body Problem at the Bikini Bar."</p>
<p>Week Ten: Normativity</p>	
<p>Day Eighteen Mon Apr 3</p>	<p>Spade, Dean. 2006. "Multilating Gender." <i>The Transgender Studies Reader</i>. Eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle. New York: Routledge, 2006. 315-322. Somerville, Siobhan. "Scientific Racism & the Invention of the Homosexual Body." Ross, Marlon. "Beyond the Closet as a Raceless Paradigm." Excerpts, <i>Stone Butch Blues</i></p>

<p>Day Nineteen Wed Apr 5</p>	<p>Tarter, Jim. 2002. "Some Live More Downstream than Others: Cancer, Gender and Environmental Justice." In <i>The Environmental Justice Reader</i>, ed. Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002.</p> <p>Joann Carmin and Julian Agyeman, eds. 2011. <i>Environmental Inequalities Beyond Borders: Local and Global Perspectives</i>. Cambridge: MIT Press. Chapter 1 & 12.</p>
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Week Eleven: Carcerality

<p>Day Twenty Mon Apr 10 Carcerality</p>	<p>Sudbury, Julia, Ed. <i>Global Lockdown: Race, Gender, and the Prison-Industrial Complex</i>. Excerpts.</p> <p>Angela Davis, Excerpts</p> <p>Law, Victoria. 2014. "Against Carceral Feminism."</p> <p>CHOOSE ONE:</p> <p>Luibhéid, Eithne. 2002. <i>Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border</i>. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. Excerpts TBD.</p> <p>Wright, Melissa. "Necropolitics, Narcopolitics, and Femicide: Gendered Violence on the Mexico-U.S. Border."</p>
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<p>Day Twenty-one Wed Apr 12</p>	<p>EXAM: <i>Lemonade</i>. Parameters TBA</p>
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Week Twelve: Futures

<p>Day Twenty-two Mon Apr 17 PRESENTATIONS</p>	<p>READINGS TBA</p>
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<p>Day Twenty-three Wed Apr 19</p>	<p>READINGS TBA</p>
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Week Thirteen: Narratives/Student Presentations

<p>Day Twenty-four Mon Apr 24 WRITING AS RESISTANCE/ PRESENTATIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Kaplan, Caren. “Resisting Autobiography: Out-Law Genres and Transnational Feminist Subjects.” In <i>De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women’s Autobiography</i>. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. ■ Blake, Debra J. 2008. “Reading Dynamics of Power-Oral Histories, Feminist Research, and the Politics of Location.” In <i>Chicana Sexuality and Gender: Cultural Refiguring in Literature, Oral History, and Art</i>.
<p>Day Twenty-five Wed Apr 26 WRITING AS RESISTANCE/ PRESENTATIONS</p>	<p>Baldwin, James. “A Letter to My Nephew.”</p> <p>Rodriguez, Jessica. “Estudiantes”</p> <p>Chin, Stacyann. “Feminist or Womanist.”</p>
Week Fourteen: Presentations/Wrap-Up	
<p>Day Twenty-six Mon May 1 WRITING AS RESISTANCE</p>	<p>Angela Y. Davis, “The Meaning of Freedom.” In <i>The Meaning of Freedom and Other Difficult Dialogues</i>. San Francisco: Open Media Series/City Lights Books, 2012, 135-51.</p> <p>June Jordan, “Some of Us Did Not Die.”</p>

[V] **REGARDING EVALUATION OF YOUR WORK**

If you are dissatisfied with any evaluation of an assignment or your performance in this class, you may petition your grade **in writing, no earlier than 24 hours after I have returned graded work to you**. To do so, you need to submit to me a typed explanation detailing why you believe the grade is unwarranted, what grade you feel you deserve with arguments in support of your request, a reply to my comments on your work (e.g. if I say that your explanation is too brief, you should argue why it is not), and a copy of the original piece of written work.

[V] **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic cheating are serious violations of your contract as a student and will be treated severely. Work may be checked via TurnItIn. Any act of plagiarism will result in an assignment grade of zero. Plagiarism is any representation of another person’s words or ideas in a manner that makes it seem as if they were your own. This means that you may not copy another person’s published or unpublished work (except if you are explicitly citing them), but it also means that you should not use another person’s **unique phrases or ideas** without making it clear to your audience from where those words or ideas originated. This **includes material from online sources**, even when they are anonymous, such as Wikipedia. For additional information, visit the University of Massachusetts [Academic Honesty Policy](#) page.

[VI] **ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE**

If you experience difficulty understanding or keeping up with the course material, please contact me at your earliest opportunity. I am here to help. I may be reached anytime at adina.giannelli@gmail.com. Generally: To request academic accommodations due to a disability, contact **Disability Services** 161 Whitmore at 413-545-0892 or <http://www.umass.edu/disability/>.

