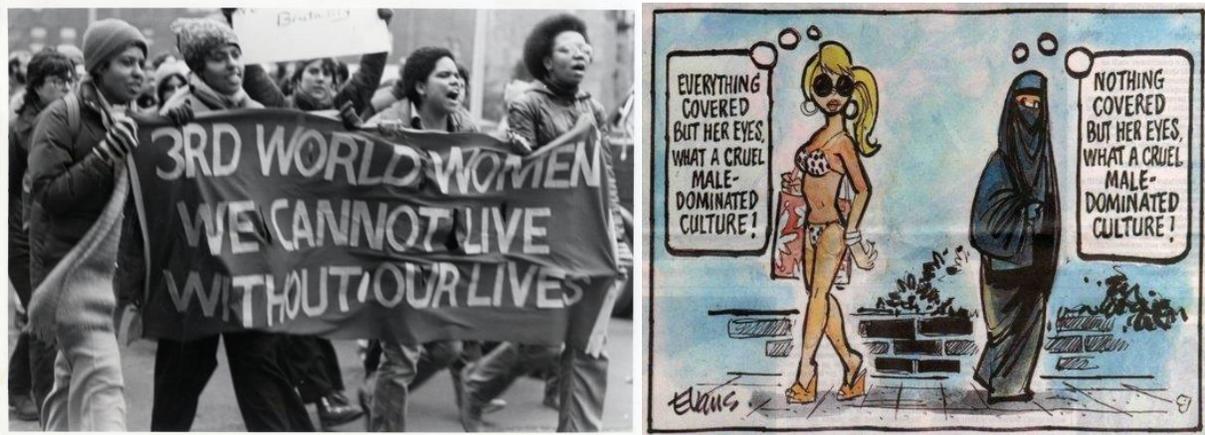


**WGSS 187: Gender, Sexuality, and Cultures**  
**Spring 2021**  
**4 Course Credits**  
**T/Th: 11:30-12:45PM (Fully Remote Class)**  
**(Gen. Ed. I, DU)**



**Instructor: Sandra Joy Russell**  
**PhD Candidate in Comparative Literature**  
Email: sandrarussel@umass.edu  
Office Hours: T 1-2PM and by appointment

**Course Description:**

Welcome to WGSS 187: Gender, Sexuality, and Culture! I'm excited to engage you in this vibrant, interdisciplinary field spanning (and integrating) the humanities, the natural sciences, and social sciences. WGSS scholars have developed frameworks, theories, and methods to study and understand ourselves and our natural and social worlds. Because Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies challenges traditional academic and cultural understandings on many issues, it is often viewed as "political." However, we will insist that all knowledge is "political" and explore how academic knowledge and histories are both shaped by and shape our intellectual histories and knowledges.

By placing race, gender, and sexuality at the center of analysis, this class introduces some basic concepts and perspectives in WGSS. The central aim is to foster critical reading and thinking about gender and the ways in which it is shaped by the interlocking systems of racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, colonialism and globalization; and how feminist movements have resisted these inequalities and worked to create new systems of change. We must remember that gender or any social category is always contingent – depending on the historical, political, cultural, economic and national contexts. What it means to be a woman or a man, black or white, poor or rich, what "rights" we have, how we understand "freedom" or "civil rights" are not timeless concepts. They always depend on who, when, where, and how we are talking about. The course is designed to highlight the similarities and differences across contexts, to have us appreciate how history has shaped who we are, and to understand how our current political, social and economic contexts also profoundly shape our realities and lives.

## **The Importance of General Education**

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. General education requirements will help to prepare you for a lifetime of learning and give you skills for community engagement and informed citizenship. Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies is fundamentally an interdisciplinary field, i.e., you will be introduced to ideas, theories, methods, and concepts from many disciplines. Diversity is central to our conceptions of “women” and “gender” – there is no generic, universal “man” or “woman.” Instead, we are always located in networks of other social variables of race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, nationality, ability and others. We will stress the intersectional nature of social identities and structures both in our theoretical and experiential explorations. While the course will introduce you to the philosophical, theoretical and methodological range within the field of women’s studies, I will ask you to make connections and apply these ideas to our lived experiences. I will encourage you to raise questions regarding your current college life and future goals, while supporting you to hone critical thinking and writing skills to function productively in a diverse and rapidly changing world.

Thirty years ago, there were only a few universities and colleges across the country with women’s or gender studies departments or programs. Today the majority of institutions offer courses in women’s and gender studies as well as majors and minors. This scholarship spans academic disciplines across the humanities, social sciences, physical and natural sciences. The importance of gender has been mainstreamed – whether it be the United Nations in its development training, business corporations or law firms in producing a workforce that can work effectively in diverse groups and across nations, hospitals in training doctors and nurses, or government officials in developing social and public policy, gender has become critically important in all these venues.

### **Class Philosophy**

Learning is a process, both individual and collective. We come to this course with different backgrounds and experiences, yet we are all moving through it together. Though we acquire information, arrive at insights, and develop skills at our own pace, learning is inescapably interdependent. For this reason, we will proceed with respect and patience for each other, especially when we disagree.

### **Course Objectives:**

- To engage with a variety of scholarly modes and intellectual contexts
- To integrate and synthesize different forms of knowledge—quantitative, qualitative, and symbolic
- to bring an interdisciplinary feminist perspective to your scholarship, work, relations and life
- To gain confidence, experience, and poise as a public speaker
- To gain experience working through collaborative projects
- To refine your writing skills through a variety of writing exercises

- To insist on the necessary relationship between theory and the lived experiences of bodies

### **Class Policies:**

- Please arrive on time, prepared, and stay for the entire class period. If you need to leave early, let me know ahead of time either by email or before class.
- Please remain engaged during class.
- Please pay attention to due dates for assignments and upload them to Moodle in a timely manner. **If, for some reason, you are unable to meet a deadline, please get in touch with me.** I am a person, I understand that things happen, but I can't help you unless you communicate with me.
- **Keep up the readings and come prepared to discuss them.**

**All readings will be available via Moodle— there is no need to purchase any books.**

### **Academic Honesty**

Although students are free to study and work together with other students in this course, it is expected that all written work that is turned in will be completed solely by the student whose name is on the work. Furthermore, students must always cite sources that they are using in their written work in order to give credit to the sources for any ideas or observations that they are referencing. This is in keeping with the principles of academic honesty that are followed at this University, and any violations of these standards will be handled according to the University policies. For more information concerning the University's academic honesty policy, please see: <https://www.umass.edu/honesty/>

### **Accommodations:**

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If a student has a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), Learning Disability Support Services (LDSS), or Psychological Disabilities Services (PDS), they may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. Any student with a documented disability that requires an accommodation must notify the instructor, if possible within the first two weeks of the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Please visit the University's website for more details about student's rights for accommodations at: <https://www.umass.edu/disability/students/accommodations-students>

### **Title IX and mandated reporting**

WGSS classes are a place where issues of sexual violence and other sexual misconduct are discussed as a matter of course. It's not a taboo subject, and feminists have long worked to develop theory and activism around sexualized violence, including rape, dating violence, child sexual abuse, and the like. If you want to discuss your own personal experiences of sexual violence in a class, we don't consider that a "report" covered by Title IX (although if you want faculty help and support in reporting sexual violence, we are here to help you do that). Other available resources on campus for addressing sexual violence include both confidential and non-confidential resources—non-confidential resources will keep your concerns private but will report your concerns to the Title IX coordinator, or, the Dean of Students Office who will

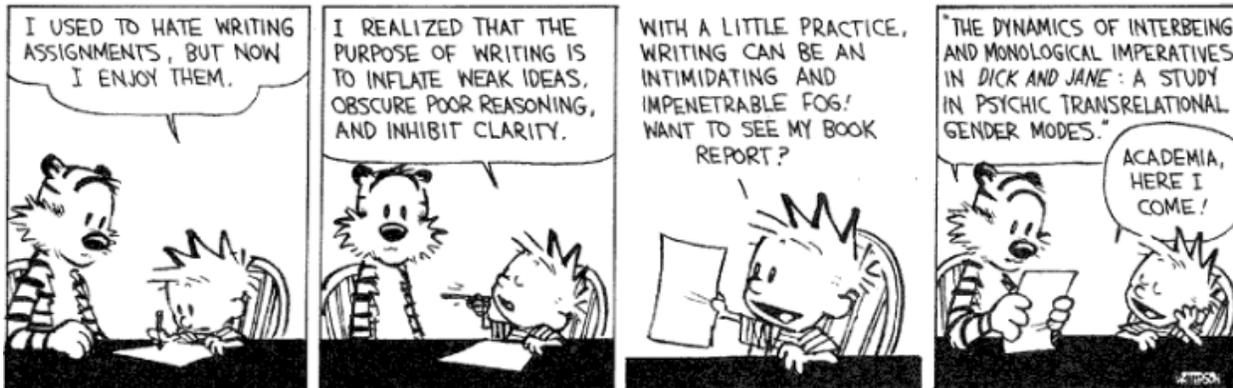
provide you with different options to assist you. Confidential resources will keep your concerns confidential and will provide you support, assistance in addressing safety concerns as well as other services such as providing you with an advocate. The resources can be found at [www.umass.edu/titleix](http://www.umass.edu/titleix)

### Grading Breakdown:

- Attendance and Participation: 20%
- Field notes: 5%
- 2 Short Responses (2-3 pages): 20% (10% each)
- Group Presentation: 10%
- Midterm: 15 %
- Final Project: 25%
- Attend an Event related to the class (via Zoom/online): 5%

### Grading Scale:

A	(100%-93%)	C	(76%-73%)
A-	(92%-90%)	C-	(72%-70%)
B+	(89%-87%)	D+	(69%-67%)
B	(86%-83%)	D	(66%-63%)
B-	(82%-80%)	D-	(62%-60%)
C+	(79%-77%)	F	(59% and below)



### Class Attendance & Participation (20%):

As it is part of your grade, I will take attendance for each of our meetings. Our class discussions are prepared with your learning in mind, so please inform me in advance if you expect to be late or absent. In the event of an absence, do obtain notes from a classmate to review what you missed, and if you have further questions, come to my office hours.

### Short Responses (20% total):

You will be expected to write two short reading responses (2-3 pages, double spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font) relating to some of the concepts we will be covering over the course of the semester. This response is intended to generate ideas about the materials and concepts discussed in class. The goal is to encourage reading, critical thinking, and to work through some of the complicated ideas the authors present. You may also use these short responses to brainstorm for the final paper/project. All reading responses should be submitted online through Moodle.

**Field Notes (5%)**

Twice during the semester (at least one before the mid-term) you will post a “field note” on Moodle connecting the course readings to current events, personal experiences, and popular culture. This is an opportunity for you to connect your learning in the class to the world outside and to engage in public conversation with other students. Details on Moodle.

**Midterm (15%)**

You will have one take-home midterm exam, including short response and essay questions, covering the first part of the semester. This will be uploaded to Moodle.

**Group Presentation (10%):**

You will sign up to give one group presentation (15-20 minutes) on one of the topics we are covering this semester. You can connect this issue to popular culture, politics, film, literature, social media—anything that demonstrates where these issues are visible in our world. The goal is to bring greater complexity and nuance to our thinking and reading. I encourage you to be creative with this presentation and include visuals, video/audio clips, and/or interact with the audience. More details on Moodle.

**Final Paper/Project (25%):**

You will have the option of writing a more “traditional” thesis-driven final essay, or you are welcome to do a more creative project (that will include some writing as well). Further details on expectations and grading criteria for your papers will be announced/distributed in-class in advance of the paper deadlines. All papers should be submitted online through Moodle.

**Outside Event (5%):**

Each student will attend an outside event related to the themes of the class via zoom or the like. There are numerous WGSS-related events in the valley (and beyond!) that would be great to attend. Please check with me first, and I will send some suggestions as well. You should submit a brief (100 word) summary/response about the event (upload to Moodle)

**Course Schedule**

**(This may change as I see fit— please check Moodle and your email regularly)**

**Introduction to the course: Race, Gender, and Place****Week 1**

Tuesday 2/2: Introductions, Icebreakers, Syllabus, read “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid (in class)

For Thursday, write 500 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. Upload to Moodle.

Thursday 2/4:

- “Identities and Social Locations: Who Am I? Who Are My People?” Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey
- *Feminism is for Everybody* (excerpt), bell hooks

### **The Stories We Tell: Why Study Women, Gender, and Sexuality**

#### **Week 2**

Tuesday 2/9:

- From *Why Stories Matter* pp. 1-7, Clare Hemmings
- “Born This Way?” Marie Draz
- Lorde, “Poetry is Not a Luxury”

### **Interlocking Systems of Oppression: The Need for Intersectionality**

Thursday 2/11:

- Andrea Smith “The Three Pillars of White Supremacy”

#### **Week 3**

Tuesday 2/16:

- “Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons,” Anna Carastathis
- [“No Single Issue Politics-Only Intersectionality,”](#) Kimberlé Crenshaw

### **Sexual, Gender, and Domestic Violence are Feminist Issues**

Thursday 2/18: CWC Class Visit

### **What Do We Mean by “Social Construct”? Denaturalizing Race, Gender, and Sexuality**

#### **Week 4**

Tuesday 2/23:

- “Why Race, Class, and Gender Still Matter,” Margaret L. Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins
- “Social Construction Theory,” Carole S. Vance
- “Racial Formation,” Michael Omi and Howard Winant

Thursday 2/25: Guest Speaker— James Elrod, University of Michigan

- “Mutilating Gender,” Dean Spade
- “Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender,” Judith Lorber

### **Short Response #1 Due Friday, 2/26 by Midnight**

### **Women of Color Feminisms**

#### **Week 5**

Tuesday 3/2: All readings from *This Bridge Called My Back (TBCMB)*

- “Preface (1981)” to *This Bridge Called My Back*, Cherríe Moraga, xliv-li
- “The Bridge Poem,” Kate Rushkin, lvii-lviii

- “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” Audre Lorde, pp. 106-109
- “A Black Feminist Statement: Combahee River Collective,” pp. 234-244

Thursday 3/4:

- “Defining Black Feminist Thought,” Patricia Hill Collins
- “Across the Kitchen Table: A Sister to Sister Dialogue,” Barbara Smith and Beverly Smith, pp. 123-140 (*TBCMB*)
- [“Don’t Dance with Me During Pride Month if You Won’t for Philando Castile”](#)

### **Transnational Feminisms**

#### **Week 6**

Tuesday 3/9:

- “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” Chandra Mohanty (excerpt)
- “The Globalization of the Local/Localization of the Global: Mapping Transnational Women’s Movements,” Amrita Basu

Thursday 3/11:

- “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and its Others,” Lila Abu-Lughod

Recommended supplemental reading: “Transnational” Laura Briggs

#### **Midterm Due by Midnight, Friday 3/12**

### **Monogamy, Compulsory Heterosexuality, and Queer Sex**

#### **Week 7**

Tuesday 3/16:

- “Undoing Monogamy: Politics and Possibilities, Introduction,” Angela Willey
- “Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Experience,” Adrienne Rich

Thursday 3/18:

- “Introduction: The Search for Norma” *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1880–1940*, Julian B. Carter

### **Biopolitics, Biopower, and Reproductive Justice**

#### **Week 8**

Tuesday 3/23:

- “Biopolitics” Ruth A. Miller

Thursday 3/25:

- Dorothy Roberts, “Killing the Black Body”
- Laura Briggs, Introduction *How All Politics Became Reproductive Politics*
- [Loretta Ross: Reproductive Justice 101](#)

### **Feminist/Queer Critiques of Science and Environmental Justice**

#### **Week 9**

Tuesday 3/30:

- “The Aliens have Landed,” Banu Subramaniam

Thursday 4/1:

- [“Thinking Fragments: Adiciplinary Reflections on Feminisms and Environmental Justice,”](#) Kiran Asher

### **Short Response #2 Due Friday 4/2 by Midnight**

#### **Foundations of Trans Studies**

##### **Week 10**

Tuesday 4/6:

- “Desubjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies,” Susan Stryker
- “What’s Wrong with Rights?” Dean Spade (from *Normal Life*)
- “A Transwoman Manifesto,” Julie Serano,
- “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto,” Sandy Stone
- Cameron Awkward-Rich, selected poems

Thursday 4/8:

- “Troubling the Waters: Mobilizing a Trans Analytic,” Kai M. Green
- “Trans of Color Critique Before Transsexuality,” Julian Gill-Peterson
- [“The Performance of Transgender Inclusion: The Pronoun Go-Round and the New Gender Binary,”](#) Jen Manion
- [Judith Butler on the culture wars, JK Rowling and living in “anti-intellectual times”](#)

#### **Pornography, Sex Work, and Sex Positivity**

##### **Week 11**

Tuesday 4/13:

- “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Politics of Sexuality,” Gayle Rubin
- Jasmine Sankofa [“From Margin to Center: Sex Work Decriminalization is a Racial Justice Issue,”](#)
- [“5 Reasons to be Wary of Amnesty’s Prostitution Policy,”](#) Darren Geist
- [“5 Reasons Decriminalization Protects Sex Workers’ Rights,”](#) Margaret Huang
- [“Why I Started the Feminist Porn Awards 10 Years Ago,”](#) Chanelle Gallant

#### **HIV/AIDS and Queer Activism**

Thursday 4/15:

- Watch *How to Survive a Plague*

#### **#MeToo, Rape Culture, Masculinity**

##### **Week 12**

Tuesday 4/20:

- “#MeToo and the Promise and Pitfalls of Challenging Rape Culture through Digital Feminist Activism,” Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller
- “The Husband Stitch” Carmen Maria Machado

Thursday 4/22:

- “The Social Organization of Masculinity” Raewynn Connell

### **Mutual Aid and the Politics of Care**

#### **Week 13**

Tuesday 4/27: Conversation between Dean Spade and Mia Mingus (video)

Thursday 4/29: Wrapping Up!

Midterm Due: Friday 3/12 (by Midnight)

Final Project Due: Monday 5/10 (by Midnight)