WGSS 187: Gender, Sexuality, and Culture
SPRING 2012

Professor: Dayo F. Gore  
Office: 261 Bartlett Hall  
Email: dfgore@wost.umass.edu

Office Hours: Mon 11:30am-12:30pm and by appointment

Lectures: Monday & Wednesday, 10:10-11:00 @ Bartlett 65
Discussion Sections: Fridays (see times below)

Discussion Section Instructors (all discussions on Friday)
You Must Attend the Discussion Section For Which You Are Registered

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Course Description

Women Gender Sexuality Studies (WGSS) is a vibrant interdisciplinary field, spanning the humanities, social, natural and physical sciences. Scholars in WGSS have developed frameworks, theories and methods to study and understand our natural and social worlds and ourselves. Placing gender and women at the center of analysis, this class introduces some basic concepts and perspectives in Women Gender Sexuality Studies. Focusing on both historical and contemporary conceptions of gender, we will examine women and men’s lives with a particular emphasis on the intersections of gender and race, class, sexuality, and power. The central aim is to foster critical reading and thinking about gender and the ways in which the interlocking systems of colonialism, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, ageism and heterosexism shape women’s and men’s lives; and how women have resisted these inequalities and worked to create new systems of change.
One 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” always depends on when, where, how and who we are discussing. 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. Because WGSS interrogates traditional academic and cultural understandings on many issues, it is often viewed as “political.” We will argue that all knowledge is political and explore how academic knowledge and histories are both shaped by and shape our intellectual histories and knowledge.

This is a challenging course. 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 your own lives. Therefore, throughout the course, we have assignments that ask you to connect the course material to events outside the classroom and your own lives. Some of this material may be new to some of you, and challenging to others. You may agree passionately with the ideas presented, or passionately disagree. We welcome engaged responses and arguments, but insist that you are respectful of others in all conversations and debates.

**Importance of General Education**

This course fulfills two general educations requirements (interdisciplinary, “I” and domestic diversity, “U”). One goal of higher education is to nurture the potentials in all students. General education aims at 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.

Diversity is central to our conceptions of “women” and “gender” – there is no generic, universal “man” or “woman.” Individuals are always located in networks of other social variables including race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, nationality, ability etc. We will stress the intersectional nature of all identities both in our theoretical and experiential explorations. Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies is also fundamentally an interdisciplinary field. While the course will introduce you to a variety of philosophical, theoretical and methodological practices within the field, we will also engage and apply these ideas to lived experiences and encourage you to share your own college experiences and questions about professional life and training. In this course we will challenge you to hone your critical thinking skills, which will be essential for you to function productively in a diverse and rapidly changing world.

Our main objectives are to help you to begin to:

- Think critically and creatively and to conduct self-directed learning projects
- Work effectively and collaboratively with diverse groups
- Understand diverse perspectives, different philosophies, & how different cultures & groups relate
Integrate and synthesize knowledge and to use quantitative and symbolic reasoning
Communicate clearly, concisely and effectively both in writing and speaking tasks
Demonstrate knowledge of self in diverse cultural contexts
Acquire knowledge in a variety of scholarly modes and contexts
Recognize diverse disciplinary viewpoints and methods
Understand the intersectionalities of our lives, their similarities and differences
Bring an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary focus to your scholarship, practice, and community work.

**Course Requirements**

- You must be registered for **BOTH** the lecture and discussion section. Attendance at **BOTH** is required.
- Reading assignments must be completed *by the class period for which they were assigned*. Readings marked “recommended” are not required but offer an additional perspective. They may be referred to in lectures and discussions, but they will not be included on tests or quizzes.
- Since this course fulfills a general education requirement (IU), we will pay particular attention to your writing. Let us know (early on) if you have special learning or writing needs. We also have a writing TA, Shakuntala Ray - shakunta@english.umass.edu, who will hold regular office hours.
- You are responsible for knowing when assignments are due and handing them in on time. Dates of major writing assignments are in this syllabus. Additional other assignments will be given in your discussion sections. Absence from these sections on the day the assignment is due is no excuse for not handing in the assignment on time. It is each student’s responsibility to find out about assignments from someone in your discussion group or from your Teaching Assistant. All sections may not have the same assignments.
- Discussion sections will provide the opportunity to talk critically and analyze issues and topics. You will be expected to have completed and thought about all of the readings for each class. **Discussion sections begin this Friday January 27th.**
- Videos and guest lectures are part of the class material. You are responsible for this material.
- We will follow all university policies on issues of Academic Honesty, Grading, Attendance, Examinations, and Absences due to Religious Observance.

**Written Assignments and Exams**

- **A MINI EXAM ON THEORY:** Given on Friday February 17th in Discussion Section
- **WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1:** 2-3 pp. due on Friday March 2nd in Discussion Section. Guidelines forthcoming. *All Papers must always be typewritten and double spaced*
- **A MIDTERM EXAM:** Given on Friday March 15th in Discussion Section
- **WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2:** 2-3 pp. due on Friday April 20th in Discussion Section
- **A FINAL EXAM:** During Finals Week. *Do not make plane reservations or plans to leave before you check the final exam schedule.* Note: the final exam will focus on material covered after Spring Break, but you will be responsible for key concepts and frameworks from the entire class.
Unannounced pop quizzes in lecture or discussion section 2% each (five highest grades considered).

Discussion groups are an important and integral part of the class. Attendance and participation in discussion sections are factored into the final grade. Two unexcused absences will result in your grade being marked down. Non-attendance or attending only to hand in assignments will result in an “F.” If you have an excused absence, in addition to an official note excusing you, you must submit a two-page reflection paper based on the readings assigned for that week. The paper is due the next class day. Please check with your section syllabus and forthcoming handouts for more details regarding assignments.

Incomplete will not be given except in unusual circumstances. See your TA as soon as possible.

LATE PAPER POLICY: Papers will be marked down 5 pts for each day they are late and will not be accepted after a week past the deadline. Do not assume you can hand in a paper late. In some cases, with a documented excuse of a medical or family emergency, you can submit a paper late, but you need to discuss this first with your TA.

MAKEUP EXAM POLICY: If you miss or cannot take the midterm or final on the designated day, you must provide documentation of a medical or family emergency, and discuss your situation with your TA. Again, do not assume you can make up the exam(s) – you must document and discuss this with your TA and if necessary the professor.

Grading

Your score on each assignment will be accessible on Spark at different points in the semester, and you are responsible for checking to make sure the posted scores are accurate. However, your final letter grade is determined at the end of the course based on class distribution.

Final grades will be computed as follows:

- Discussion sections (includes attendance, class participation assignments, in-class presentation and essay outline-details in section syllabus) 15%
- Mini-Exam (February 17th) 10%
- Writing Assignment #1 (March 2nd) 15%
- Mid-Term Exam (March 15th) 15%
- Writing Assignment #2 (April 20th) 15%
- Final Exam (Date To Be Announced) 20%
- Pop Quizzes (In Lecture or Discussion – highest 5 grades) 10%
- Extra Credit (as available) 5%

Discussion Sections

Discussions sections are NOT optional or add-ons. They are designed to be an integral part of the course and to provide an opportunity to clarify issues in your readings, films and lectures, as well as debate and discuss these issues. We expect you to have completed and thought about all of the readings for that week before your section meets and to be ready to engage in meaningful dialogue. In addition to their strictly academic function, sections are also places where students may talk about the
ways in which the topics we address in this course may have touched their lives. **Attendance and participation in discussion groups and assignments constitute 15% of the course grade. If you miss section for any reason, you must still inform your section leader and arrange how to make up the work (see written assignments above).**

**Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated and you are responsible for educating yourself about the University’s official policy on academic honesty. Following is a summary (you can read it in full at [http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/)): “Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty.”

**Ground Rules**

The challenge in such a large class is faculty/student interaction. We invite you to stop by our office hours to discuss the course material, clarify readings, or just introduce yourself. We will try to foster as much active participation in the course as is possible. Discussion sections have been designed to continue the dialogue. Make use of office hours to continue class discussions, clarify confusions or to discuss any other problems you are having with the course. Because of the class size and the nature of the subject matter, it is necessary to set some ground rules:

- A large number of people in one classroom can present a difficult situation on many levels. One major concern is **NOISE**. Talking, even whispering is **disruptive to both the instructor and other students**. Please be courteous to everyone.
- **Use of cell phones, Internet, texting etc. are also very disruptive and not allowed in the classroom.** This holds both for lecture and section.
- This class is **50 minutes** and we expect you to remain for the entire period. Late arrivals and those who pack up 5 minutes before the class ends disrupt the class for everyone.
- Make up exams or paper extensions will only be given to students who have a **documented** conflict, such as a medical or family emergency. Ignorance of this rule is not a valid excuse. See specifics above under section on written assignments and exams.
Required Readings/Resources

E-Reserves: Many course readings are in articles form available online through the library’s electronic reserves. You must register for electronic reserves. To access readings enter Gore as instructor or WOST187 in listed courses and enter the password: Power

SPARK: We will use SPARK throughout the course for required readings as well as announcements and assignments. Once you are registered for the course, you will automatically be added to the course on SPARK. You will use your OIT username and password to sign into the course SPARK and access course information. Please contact OIT if you have any problems. Every student needs to be familiar with the site and check it regularly (https://spark.oit.umass.edu/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct). Many important announcements and assignments will be posted there and you are responsible for this information.

Course Outline

Thirty years ago, there were only a few universities and colleges across the country that had Women’s Studies departments or programs. Today the majority of institutions offer courses in Women’s Studies. Feminist scholarship spans academic disciplines across the humanities, social sciences, physical and natural sciences. Scholars have challenged traditional paradigms and knowledge within disciplines as well as developed new interdisciplinary frameworks, methods and theories. What is the field of Women’s Studies? Who are the scholars? What do they study? Why is it important? How have they transformed our knowledge about the natural and social worlds? What frameworks do feminist analyses bring to our discussions? This course introduces basic concepts in Women’s Studies by focusing on select topics.

The course material is organized into several sections– Feminisms and Theories, U.S. Women’s Histories, and Gender Politics in Contemporary Society. While these sections will explore the different disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches in Women’s Studies, several themes will be emphasized throughout the course. Please keep these themes in mind throughout the course:

- **Intersectional/Integrative Analysis:** We emphasize the need to understand “women” and “gender” as multiple and diverse, embedded in a complex network of interlocking variables of race, class, sexuality, ethnicity and nationality.
- **Levels of Analyses:** We will analyze the material using multiple levels – micro, meso, macro and global levels.
- **Feminism(s):** There is no unitary “feminism” but rather “feminisms.” We understand feminism(s) as multiple, shifting and contested movements – historically and in contemporary times.
- **Knowledge Construction**: We will explore feminist interventions in the politics of knowledge – disciplinary and interdisciplinary – as well as popular discourse.
- **Feminist Theory**: We emphasize a notion of feminist theorizing that includes description and analysis as well as envisioning change.
- **Activisms**: We emphasize women’s resistance to oppression and work for progressive change.

### Course Calendar

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>What You Need to Know</th>
<th>Homework</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mon, Jan. 23</td>
<td><em>What You Need to Know</em>: How to prepare for Class /Resources /Discussion Sections*</td>
<td><em>Begin class readings for Weds and go to the course website on SPARK.</em></td>
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#### Feminisms and Theories

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Who Knows? Theories, Theorizing and the Politics of Knowledge</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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| Fri, Jan. 27 | Discussion Sections Begin: In preparation for your section: Ask five people you know: What does one learn in a Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies course (WGSS)? What do they think majors in WGSS study? Record their answers. Also note their tone of voice and facial expressions. | |

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<tr>
<th>Mon, Jan. 30</th>
<th>Sex/Gender/Class/Race/Sexuality: What Do We Do with Difference and Power?</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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**Recommended**  

**Fri, Feb. 3**  
**Discussion Section**

**Mon, Feb. 6**  
Note: LAST DAY TO DROP/ADD  
*Intersectional Identities/Social Location: Theorizing Experience*  
Defining Sex/gender/race/ethnicity/class/sexuality

**Readings**  
[Web] Heterosexual Privilege Checklist  
http://sap.mit.edu/content/pdf/heterosexual_privilege.pdf

**Wed, Feb. 8**  
**Gender and Performance**  
Guest Lecture: Dawn Lovegrove, Teaching Assistant,

**Readings**  

**Fri, Feb. 10**  
**Discussion Section:**

**U.S. Women’s Histories**

**Mon, Feb 13**  
**U.S. Women’s Multiple Histories: Intersections and Historical Context**

**Readings**  

**Wed, Feb. 15**  
**Colonization: The Shaping of Nations and Empire**

**Readings**  
http://www.feminist.com/resources/artspeech/genwom/iroquoisinfluence.html

**Fri, Feb. 17**  
**Discussion Section: MINI EXAM ON THEORY**

**Mon, Feb 20**  
**PRESIDENTS DAY – NO CLASS**
Wed, Feb. 22  In Bonds of Slavery & Freedom: Women’s Experiences in the Founding of the U.S.


Fri, Feb. 24  Discussion Section:

Mon, Feb. 27  Contested Freedoms: Abolitionism and the Emergence of “First Wave” Feminism

[E-Reserves] Mankiller, Navarro and Steinem, “Feminism and Feminisms”  

Wed, Feb. 29  Movement, Migration and Immigration at the Turn of the Century


Fri, March 2  Discussion Section: WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - Due at start of section

Mon, March 5  A Women’s Era, 1880-1920s


Wed, March 7  World War II and Women in the Postwar Years, 1941-1955

Readings  [E-Reserves] Nancy Woloch, Chp. 18 “The Impact of World War II” and “Postwar Prospects, pp. 471-485  
[Web] Japanese interment  

Fri, March 9  Discussion Section:

Mon, March 12  “Revolution in the Air:” The Civil Rights Movement and Social Change

Tues, March 13  Note: LAST DAY to WITHDRAW with a “W”

Wed, March 14  The Many Voices of Feminism

Readings  
[Web] National Organization For Women Statement of Purpose  
http://www.cwluerstory.org/CWLUArchive/now.html  

Fri, March 15  Discussion Section: MIDTERM EXAM

SPRING BREAK MARCH 16 to SUNDAY MARCH 25

Gender Politics in Contemporary Society

Mon, March 26  Politics of the Body

Readings  
[SPARK] Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, Chapter 3, Readings 16 (Chernik), 17 (Morrison), 19 (Ka’ahumanu), 20 (Wade), and 21 (Thomson), pp. 121-130, 140-162 in Women’s Lives: Multicultural Perspectives, Kirk and Okazawa-Rey editors, 4th ed., McGraw Hill.  
http://www.haverford.edu/psych/ddavis/p109g/steinem.menstruate.html

Wed, March 28  Gender and Media Representation  
Guest Lecture: Eve Ng, Teaching Assistant, Ph.D. candidate Communications.

Readings  

Fri, March 30  Discussion Section

Mon, Apr. 2  Women Prisons and Policing  
Guest Lecture: Erika Arthur, Teaching Assistant, M.A. candidate, History

Readings  
Wed, Apr.  4  \textit{The Politics and Economics of Families and Marriage}


Fri, Apr. 6  \textit{Discussion Section}

Mon. Apr. 9  \textit{From Reproductive Rights to Reproductive Justice}


Wed, Apr. 11  \textit{The Struggle to End Violence Against Women}  
\textbf{Guest Lecture: Ananda Timpane, Social Justice Education, UMass}


Fri, Apr. 13  \textit{Discussion Section}

Mon, Apr. 16  PATRIOTS DAY – NO CLASS

Tues, April 17  MONDAY CLASS ON TUESDAY SCHEDULE  
\textit{Women and Work}


Wed., Apr. 18  \textit{Beauty Work: Intersectionality and Social Location}  
\textbf{Guest Lecture: Miliann Kang, Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies - UMass}


Fri, Apr. 20  \textit{Discussion Section: WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2 Due}
Mon, Apr. 23  
**Gender, Sexuality, and Sports**

**Readings**


[Web] Feminist Majority Foundation,  
http://feminist.org/research/sports/sports2.html

[Web] Women’s Sports Foundation,  
http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/

Wed, Apr. 25  
**Militarization, Gender, and Cultures of Violence**

**Readings**


[Web] Alvarez and Frosch, “A Focus on Violence By Returning GI’s, *New York Times*, 2009:  

[Web] NPR- “Out and Proud After Don’t Ask Don’t Tell Repeal”:  

Fri, April 27  
**Discussion Section**

Mon, April 30  
**Movements for Change – LAST DAY of CLASS Wrap-up/Reflect**

Guest Lecture on LGBT Activism – Donovan Lessnard, TA, Sociology

**Readings**

[SPARK] Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore, article TBD

[Web] Feministing Young Feminist, Blogging, Organizing, Kicking Ass: review most recent posts at:  
http://feministing.com/

“I change myself, I change the world”  
-- *Gloria Anzaldúa*

“Sentences that begin with ‘all women’ are never, never true.”  
- *Margaret Culkin Banning*

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”  
- *Audre Lorde*

“I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is; I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat.”  
- *Rebecca West*

“Don’t compromise yourself. You are all you’ve got.”  
- *Janis Joplin*