

WGSS 201: Gender and Difference: Critical Analyses Spring 2014

Instructor: Sonny Nordmarken
snordmar@soc.umass.edu
Office: 628 Thompson Hall
Office Hours: Tue 12-1 PM or by appointment
Class Meetings: Tue/Thu 9:30-10:45 AM
Classroom: 202 Bartlett Hall

Course Description

An introduction to the interdisciplinary field of Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies, this course presents key concepts and engages with the relationships between academic feminism, feminist action and everyday life experiences. In this course, we will explore some major questions in the field. What does it mean to be categorized as or identify as woman, man, trans*, queer, and/or intersex? How do our experiences of or identifications with notions of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability, age and nationality contribute to our understandings of gender and vice versa? How are these categories of difference constructed, imagined, performed, regulated and represented? How do our own complex social locations shape our economic, political, and cultural lives? Grounding our analyses in multiple voices, highlighting the diversity, richness and power of feminist ideas, this course will explore these questions. This is a discussion-based class that requires active engagement, both in and outside of class. Through engagement with course materials, discussion, experiential learning, research, presentations, and writing, we will build a feminist analytical framework, which you will use toward your papers and final project.

Course Learning Objectives

After completing this course, you should be able to:

1. Define, unpack, and apply feminist concepts
2. Think critically about gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, nationality, and disability
3. Understand and explain major feminist theories
4. Build analytical arguments in conversation with feminist thinkers
5. Develop critical thinking, self-reflection, and analytical skills
6. Communicate clearly, accurately, and effectively through writing and speaking
7. Contribute to conversations about gender and power in your local community

Course Assessment

Class Participation. (30%)

****Attendance.***

****Speaking Notes.*** 1+ pages each.

****Class Presentation based on your Speaking Notes.***

****Discussion Participation.***

****Impromptu In-Class Writing Exercises and Homework Assignments.***

Gender Event Reflection Paper. (10%) 1 page.

Analytical Paper. (20%) 4 pages.

Autoethnographic Paper. (20%) 4 pages.

Social Action Project and TED Talk. (20%) 7-minute presentation in teams of two.

Assignment Logic

The assignments for this course are designed to help you develop your analytical writing skills. Instead of generating many pages, we will focus on refining your crafting tools, through workshoping your papers and rewriting drafts. Speaking Notes are meant to help you engage thoughtfully and critically with new ideas. These are low-stakes writing exercises; you don't need to worry about what they look like. The point is to get your ideas down on paper, which you will extend in your papers. You will also share the thoughts you developed in your Speaking Notes in a brief oral presentation to spark discussion once during the semester. The Analytical paper is designed to hone your skills in developing your own, original analysis, writing clearly and persuasively, and crafting a focused, organized argument. The Autoethnographic paper is an invitation to experiment with inter-genre inquiry, combining creative, theoretical, and analytical approaches with critical self-reflection. The Gender Event paper is an opportunity to participate in and reflect on a local feminist event in light of course content. And in your final project, with a partner, you will research a topic of your choosing and engage with the larger community in a creative way, presenting your experience to the class in an organized, rehearsed, collaborative TED talk. In each of these assignments, I will ask you to apply, synthesize, and build on the ideas we are exploring in the readings and developing in class discussions.

All assignments must be stapled, typewritten and double-spaced, unless otherwise specified. Use 12-point Times New Roman font. Include page numbers and word count.

Materials

All course materials will be available on Moodle.

Resources

Each Other: Write down contact information of 3 classmates. If you miss class, contact them to find out what you missed:

Your Instructor: I invite you to contact me to discuss the material, the course, or anything else. Try to attend my office hours at least once this semester. You do not need to have a specific question; we can talk about your progress, you could share with me something interesting you found, or we could talk more about a video or reading you liked. If you feel shy about attending office hours, bring a classmate with you so that you can both get more out of this course.

Disability Services: Students with disabilities: Welcome! It is my effort to move beyond compliance to create a welcoming space for all abilities and learning styles. If you need accommodations due to a disability, please talk to me, and contact Disability Services at 413-545-0892 (Voice/TTY) or ds@educ.umass.edu or 161 Whitmore within the first two weeks of class. All information and documentation of the disability will be confidential.

Center for Women and Community: *“To provide innovative and informed education, leadership opportunities, advocacy, and support services, that address the cause and impact of sexism and recognize the multiple oppressions experienced by women. We offer services to people of all genders.”* <http://www.umass.edu/ewc/>

The Writing Center (<http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/index.html>) provides free, one-on-one help by appointment: writingcenter@acad.umass.edu or 413-577-1293.

OIT: For technical problems with Moodle, call OIT at 545-9400 or go to <http://www.oit.umass.edu/support/moodle/a-quick-tour-moodle-students>.

Expectations and Policies

Conduct: Be on time. Listen to your classmates. Maintain a respectful atmosphere. Communicate professionally, including in email correspondence. In addition to my expectations, we will collaboratively create course agreements for conduct, which I will post on Moodle.

Electronic Devices: You may not use cell phones during class; they are to be turned off.

Communication: All communication from you to me must be in person, either before or after class, in office hours, or by appointment. I will send out announcements via Moodle.

Grading Scale:

Highest	Lowest	Letter
100.00 %	94.00 %	A
93.99 %	90.00 %	A-
89.99 %	87.00 %	B+
86.99 %	84.00 %	B
83.99 %	80.00 %	B-
79.99 %	77.00 %	C+
76.99 %	74.00 %	C
73.99 %	70.00 %	C-
69.99 %	67.00 %	D+
66.99 %	60.00 %	D
59.99 %	0.00 %	F

Late Policy: All work must be submitted **in hard copy** and **on time**. If you have extenuating circumstances, contact me as soon as possible in advance of the due date. Late work will be penalized by 3% per day late (excluding weekends). After an assignment is more than **one** week late, I will not accept it. In-class work cannot be made up.

Academic Honesty: 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. For the University's Academic Honesty Policy, please see: http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/.

Course Schedule

* Speaking Notes are due all days readings are assigned

* Materials subject to change; any changes will be announced in class and via Moodle *

Unit 1: Introductions: Theorizing Bodies, Knowledge, and Power

Jan 21: Introductions

Jan 23: Cherríe Moraga, "La Guera" (8 pgs)
Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Ch 1 (13 pgs), Ch 2 (9 pgs), Borderlands poem (2 pgs)
DUE: Intentions and Goals

Jan 28: Patricia Hill Collins, "Black Feminist Epistemology" (p 251-260; 269-271)
Riki Wilchins, "It's Your Gender, Stupid"
Alva Noë, "Seeing The World Is Like Dancing With It"

- Jan 30: Judith Butler, “Preface” (1999), “Preface” (1990), “Chapter 1: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire,” *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*
Watch Butler clip
- Feb 4: George Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the ‘White’ Problem in American Studies” (13 pgs)
- Feb 6: Jenny Morris, “Impairment and Disability: Constructing an Ethics of Care That Promotes Human Rights” (15 pgs)

Unit 2: Representation and Looking Relations

- Feb 11: bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators” (17 pgs)
Watch: Avatar clip
Watch: Nneka, “Heartbeat” and Interview with Nneka
- Feb 13: Anne McClintock, “The Lay of the Land: Genealogies of Imperialism” (53 pgs)
- Feb 18: No Class, Monday Schedule
- Feb 20: No Class, Online Class Day
Watch online: *Two Spirits*. Dir. Lydia Nibley. 2009.
Qwo-li Driskill, “Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances Between Native and Queer Studies” (18 pgs)
Qwo-li Driskill, “Dragonfly Tongue,” and watch “Stomp Dance: Two-Spirit Gathering. (A Giveaway Poem)”
Homework: Research and write 1 page on: Whose lands (that we call the U.S. and Massachusetts) are non-indigenous people occupying?
- Feb 25: In-Class Writing Workshop
DUE: Paper 1 First Draft. Turn in 2 copies.
DUE: Homework
- Feb 27: Guest Speaker: Strong Oak or
In-Class Consciousness-Raising Exercise
DUE: Final Draft Paper 1

Unit 3: Politics of “Deviant” Bodies

- March 4: Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others” (8 pgs)
Qahera comic

- March 6: Susan Stryker, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage” (16 pgs)
DUE: Mid-Semester Self-Assessment
- March 11: Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation* (excerpts)
In Class: “Monet Refuses the Operation”
- March 13: Cheryl Chase, “Hermaphrodites With Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism” (20 pgs)
Watch Thea Hillman, *Intersex (For Lack of a Better Word)* (excerpt)
- March 18: SPRING BREAK
- March 20: SPRING BREAK
- March 25: Angela Davis, “Reproductive Rights” (4 pgs)
In-Class Writing Workshop
DUE: Paper 2 First Draft. Turn in 2 copies.
- March 27: Screening in class: *Cruel and Unusual: Transgender Women in Prison*. Dir. Janet Baus, Dan Hunt and Reid Williams. 2006.
DUE: Final Draft Paper 2

Unit 4: Feminist Politics, Possibilities, and Futures

- April 1: Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee, Dean Spade, “Building An Abolitionist Queer and Trans Movement With Everything We’ve Got.” (23 pgs)
- April 13: Cathy Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” (26 pgs)
- April 8: Jennifer Nash, “Practicing Love: Black Feminism, Love-Politics, and Post Intersectionality” (20 pgs)
Watch (in class): TED talks
- April 10: Maya Angelou, “Phenomenal Woman,” “Still I Rise”
Lois Gould, “X: A Fabulous Child’s Story”
In-Class Clowning Activity
DUE: Compiled Speaking Notes
- April 15: TED Talks
- April 17: TED Talks
- April 22: TED Talks

April 24: TED Talks
Evaluations

April 29: Summary, Reflections
DUE: Final Self-Assessment
DUE: Gender Event (last day to turn in this assignment)