WGSS 201
Gender & Difference: Critical Analyses
Fall 2018

Professor Laura Ciolkowski
W475 South College
lciolkowski@umass.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course is an interdisciplinary introduction to key concepts and analytical categories in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. The course grapples with gender in its complex intersection with other systems of power and inequality, including: sexuality, race and ethnicity, religion, class, and nation. Topics may include: Transnational feminisms, gendered labor and the global economy, feminist and queer theory, sexual violence, carceral politics, gender justice and rights-based advocacy, science and technology, visual cultures.

COURSE GOALS/OBJECTIVES:
• Acquire the tools to analyze gender in its complex intersection with other systems of power and inequality
• Develop interdisciplinary, transnational, and intersectional thinking
• Develop a critical vocabulary, drawing on a range of methodological approaches and intellectual traditions, for deep critical thinking about gender, sexuality, and feminisms, intimate and global, in the US context and transnationally
• Develop broad knowledge of the major themes, critical questions, and political debates at the heart of women’s, gender, and sexuality studies research, scholarship, and activism
• Learn to apply the critical and analytical skills developed in the course to other courses, other fields of study, and to work, life, and experience beyond the university

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
• PARTICIPATION (15%): Active participation and regular attendance are expected. No more than two unexcused absences are permitted. If you miss a class for any reason, you will be responsible for what you have missed as well as for obtaining any in-class handouts or course assignments.
• **READINGS**: Readings for class should be completed by the date listed on the course calendar, below. Please bring copies of all readings to class. There are two required texts on reserve for our class in the UMass Library and also available for purchase (Sapphire, *Push* and Una, *Becoming Unbecoming*). Unless otherwise noted, all other course materials are available on Moodle.

• **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**: All papers must be typed in *Times New Roman*, 12 point, and double-spaced with 1-inch margins. Writing assignments must be submitted on time (as specified below) unless a prior arrangement has been made and/or documentation from a doctor or dean has been supplied. Grades on late papers will be reduced by 1/3 of a grade for each day overdue. **Writing support**: Kate Litterer is the WGSS Writing Tutor. Her hours are Tuesdays 10:30am-2:30pm & Thursdays 11am-3pm in W414 South College. For additional information or to make an appointment, go to: [www.wgsswritingtutor.com](http://www.wgsswritingtutor.com).

• **CAMPUS EVENT REPORTS (5%)**: Attend two scheduled lectures or panel presentations held at the 5 Colleges this fall and related in any way to the themes of our course. Please sign up for the [WGSS events listserv](mailto:wgss-events-listserv) to get alerts about upcoming events of interest to the WGSS community. Make sure, also, to keep up to date on “My UMass,” which includes a complete calendar of campus events. After attending each event, please submit a 1-2-page report in the following format:

  o **Part I**
    **Summary**: Event description? Main points of discussion/debate?

  o **Part II**
    **Reflections**: Your thoughts and ideas about what you have heard.

*Report #1 must be completed by or before October 16. Report #2 must be completed by or before the last day of class in December.*

• **MEDIA FILE PROJECT (30%)**:  
  1. Select a general topic that is connected in some way to our course theme of Gender & Difference.

    Examples of topics include: reproductive justice, body politics, violence (state, intimate, gender-based, etc.), labor (domestic and/or transnational), mass incarceration, trans* politics, sex education, gender/sexuality and the law, etc.
A written proposal, consisting of your chosen topic and one or two lines of description, will be due on Thursday, November 1. Please don’t hesitate to come in to meet with me before (or after) November 1st to discuss your ideas!

2. Select at least three different media sources that are connected to your general topic for in-depth analysis. Sources may include film, video, social media, television, music, advertising, etc. Annotate 2 of your media sources (details, below).

3. Craft a 5-page, argument-driven essay that explicitly addresses the ways in which gender and sexuality interact with other structures of power and difference to produce the cultural message(s) about your chosen topic.

Your media file will consist of two parts:

Part I (due 11/29): Annotations of two of your media sources. Annotations should be short but dense (no more than 2 pages each) and should be organized as follows:

1. Authorship (Who made this text?) and context (Where is the source from and when was it produced?)

2. Purpose: What is the explicit message? Who is speaking? Who is the target audience? At which social group is the text aimed and how do you know?

3. Analysis: Why is this media source interesting or important? What do these sources assert or imply about the nature of gender & sexuality and how they are connected to other forms of power – for example: class, nation, race, ethnicity, religion, etc., etc.? How does this source rely on and/or challenge any of the familiar hierarchies, assumptions, basic principles or relationships that we have studied?

Each annotation must be accompanied by a media link to the source.

Part II (due 12/6): 5-page argument-driven essay and presentation. Using course materials and class notes to help ground your intersectional analysis, craft a persuasive, evidence-based essay that is focused on the ways in which media messages about your chosen topic rely on, reinforce, challenge, and/or transform ideas about gender and sexuality and their interactions with other structures of power and difference. You will have an opportunity to share your project with the class in the form of a 7-minute presentation, scheduled during the last week of the semester. Presentations should be designed in Power Point (or Google Slides or comparable) and should include the following: *Description of your project thesis *Brief analysis of 1-2 visual examples from your project to illustrate your thesis.
Media File: Guidelines and Recommendations

Overview of expectations:
A successful essay persuasively supports a clear, succinct thesis through close analysis. The essay will be well organized, with each point leading back to the thesis and body paragraphs developing points in a sequential progression. Points will be made by close reading of the media sources, which entails analyzing specific elements of the sources, rather than broadly summarizing or simply quoting from them.

Selecting media
Remember that this project requires at least three different types of sources, such as film, television, music video, print advertisement, etc. If you include film or television, you should focus your analysis on a short (1-2 minute) clip. There isn’t enough space in a 5-page analysis to tackle an entire film, for example.

Thesis
A good thesis should be arguable, specific, and have a reasonable scope. You should be able to condense your thesis into one or two sentences. If this is not possible, then your topic may be too broad or too complex for a short (5 page) paper.

- ARGUABILITY: Your thesis should make a claim that you can argue about the “cultural work” that is done by your media sources. This means that your thesis can be defended with evidence, but it could also be disputed. If every reasonably intelligent person (such as all your peers at UMass) would agree with it, then it is not a thesis. You should be able to think of a hypothetical counterargument. You do NOT need to make the counterarguments in your essay. However, you should consider whether it would be possible to do so, in order to decide if you have articulated a good thesis. Important Tip: a thesis is not a statement of belief or a matter of personal taste. “I like these ads” or “these ads are racist and sexist” are judgments; they are not analytic statements that can be supported or disputed with evidence.

- SPECIFICITY: The language of your thesis should be specific. Use descriptive, vivid terminology. Don’t be vague! Example: “These representations of sexual harassment reproduce and challenge normative assumptions about sexual harassment” is TOO VAGUE. Why? Because this sentence doesn’t specify which “normative assumptions” are being challenged, nor does it allude to which media sources reproduce or challenge normative assumptions and how they do so.

IMPORTANT DATES:
- 11/1: Proposal Due
- 11/29: Annotations Due
- 12/6: Essay Due
- 12/6 & 11: PRESENTATIONS
RESPONSE PAPERS (30%):

Two times over the course of the semester, please select a text assigned for the day’s class and compose a 2-3 page response essay. Your paper must be submitted on the same day that the text you have selected appears on the syllabus for class discussion. Response Paper #1 must be completed by or before October 16th and Response Paper #2 must be completed by or before December 6th.

You may use the following format as a general guide, but you may also choose to approach this exercise in another format that makes more sense to you:

Part I: Summary
Describe clearly and in detail the primary argument of the text, using direct quotations from the text (with page citations) to support your claims.

Part II: Response
This is the analytical portion of your essay and should engage with the basic argument you introduced in Part I. Some questions to think about in your response, include:

- What is especially interesting or important, frustrating or provoking about the argument you identified in Part I?
- What are some of the basic assumptions on which this argument depends?
- What is the larger impact of this argument?
- What are possible counterarguments to the text’s claims?
- What are its limitations?

You are encouraged (and your grade will positively reflect) your efforts to make connections and explore similarities and differences, conflicts and contradictions, among a range of course texts. Some questions to consider include:

- What are some of the ways your texts are in conversation with each other?
- What are some of the important ways in which the texts agree? Disagree? Address different aspects of an issue? Formulate a problem in different ways?
- In what ways (if any) does the information or argument of one text strengthen or weaken the argument of
others? Does integrating the claims in two or more of the texts advance your understanding of a larger issue?

- **MIDTERM EXAM (20%)**:

  The midterm for our course is an open-note exam. It will give you an opportunity to step back and reflect on some of what you have read and also to put some of the course materials in dialogue with each other.

  You will be asked to select 6 passages from a list of 8 passages provided on the exam. For each passage, write 1-2 paragraphs (approximately 150-200 words) in which you do the following:

  1. Identify the source and address the central argument of the text from which the passage has been taken.
  2. Put the passage in dialogue with other course materials as well as some of the central themes, questions, and issues at the heart of our course.

  The purpose of this exam is to NOT to trick you with an obscure or ambiguous passage, or to expose what you might not know. Rather, this exam is designed to give you the chance to show what you DO KNOW, to apply what you have learned, and to make connections and test out new insights about the class material.

  GRADE SUMMARY: Response Papers: 30% • Midterm Exam 20% • Media File Project & Presentation: 30% • Event Reports: 5% • Participation: 15%

  There will be at least THREE extra credit opportunities available this semester: 1) “Mapping Gender, Race, and Power” in Week Two 2) “Thinking Intersectionally” in Week Three 3) “Social Justice Feminism Interview Project” in Week Five. Additional opportunities may be added later. More info TBA.

Please note: Laptops are not permitted in class, unless a student has a registered accommodation on file with Disability Services, Learning Disabilities Support Services, or Psychological Disabilities Services. Please do not hesitate to speak with me in connection to accommodations of any kind or for any other reason! If you require an accommodation, please talk with me sometime before the end of the second week of the semester.
ACADEMIC HONESTY STATEMENT
(http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/)

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. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. It is important to understand that academic dishonesty is not only harmful to yourself; it is also harmful to your peers and colleagues at UMass as we come together as a community of learners. While there is a zero-tolerance policy of academic dishonesty in this course, we will work together to clear up misunderstandings about appropriate use of sources, appropriate citation and documentation, and the uses of intellectual property. Please see the Academic Honesty Guide for Students for some helpful additional information and resources.

WARNING – This class addresses sexuality, violence, racism, homophobia (among many other things) and contains materials with explicit content, including rape and sexual violence. WGSS scholars and activists have been engaged in a long and arduous struggle for the right to teach these materials. This class explores some of the reasons and ramifications of these struggles and the crucial debates they continue to inspire.

COURSE BOOKS (on reserve in the library and available for purchase)

- Sapphire, *Push*
- Una, *Becoming Unbecoming*
COURSE SCHEDULE
This syllabus is a living document. I expect it to evolve and change, with readings substituted, added, or removed, depending upon the interests of our group this semester. Please make sure to read the material assigned for each class session before coming to class and don’t forget to check Moodle for updates!

Tuesday 9/4: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Thursday, 9/6: ADVOCATING FEMINISM

- bell hooks, “Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression”
- Jia Tolentino, “How ‘Empowerment’ Became Something for Women to Buy”
- Audre Lorde, “The Uses of Anger”
- Sara Ahmed, “Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects)”
- Tavia Nyong’o and Kyla Wazana Tompkins, “Eleven Theses on Civility”

Tuesday, 9/11: KEY TERMS

- Margaret Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins, "Race, Class, and Gender"
- Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, selections
- June Jordan, “Report from the Bahamas”

**Syllabus Quiz**

Thursday, 9/13: GENEALOGIES OF FEMINISM

- Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement"
- “Women’s March on Washington: Guiding Vision and Definition and Principles”
- Julia Serano, “Trans Woman Manifesto”
- Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”
- Patrisse Cullors, “On A Lifetime of Activism and the Founding of BLM” (podcast)

Tuesday, 9/18: RESISTANCE, SOLIDARITY, & TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST PRAXIS

- Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes"

Thursday, 9/20: RESISTANCE, SOLIDARITY, & TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST PRAXIS II

- Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?"
Tuesday, 9/25: THINKING INTERSECTIONALLY I

- Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”
- Flavia Dzodan, “My Feminism Will Be Intersectional Or It Will Be Bullshit”
- Amber Hollibaugh and Margot Weiss, “Queer Precarity and the Myth of Gay Affluence”
- VIDEO: Kimberle Crenshaw, ”The Urgency of Intersectionality"

Thursday, 9/27: THINKING INTERSECTIONALLY II

- FILM: Major!
- Jack Halberstam, ”Towards a Trans* Feminism”
- Sassafrass Lowrey, ”Shifting My Pack"

Tuesday, 10/2: MAPPING THE MARGINS

- Kimberle Crenshaw, ”Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color”
- Linda Burnham, ”The Absence of a Gender Justice Framework in Social Justice Organizing"

Thursday, 10/4
MIDTERM REVIEW

Tuesday, 10/9
UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY – NO CLASSES

Thursday, 10/11
MIDTERM EXAM

Tuesday, 10/16: PATRIARCHY & POWER

- bell hooks, “Understanding Patriarchy”
- Lisa Wade and Myra Marx Ferree, “Inequality: Men and Masculinities”
- C.J. Pascoe, ”Dude, You're A Fag: Adolescent Male Homophobia”
- Amanda Marcotte, “Overcompensation Nation”

***LAST DAY to submit your FIRST CAMPUS EVENT REPORT***

***LAST DAY to submit your FIRST RESPONSE PAPER***
Thursday, 10/18: QUEERING THEORY/THINKING SEX


Tuesday, 10/23: QUEERING THEORY/THINKING SEX II

- Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality”
- Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?"

Thursday, 10/25 – PERFORMING GENDER

- Judith Butler, "Performativity in Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory"
- Paul B. Preciado, Testo-Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era (excerpts)

Tuesday, 10/30: READING GENDER, SEXUALITY, & RACE IN VISUAL CULTURE

- John Berger, "Ways of Seeing"
- bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze”
- Caroline Heldman, “Sexual Objectification”

Thursday, 11/1: READING GENDER, SEXUALITY, & RACE IN VISUAL CULTURE II: BEYONCÉ, SERENA, & THE POLITICS OF BLACKNESS

- Jaime Schultz, “Reading the Catsuit: Serena Williams and the Production of Blackness at the 2002 U.S. Open”
- Britteny Cooper, “The Beyoncé Wars”
- Janelle Hobson, “Feminists Debate Beyoncé”
- Destinee Jackson, "Beyoncé, BEYONCE, Lemonade”
- Nicholas Mirzoeff, “Persistent Looking In Times of Crisis”

Tuesday, 11/6: BODIES OF EVIDENCE: SEX, GENDER, & SCIENCE

- Emily Martin, "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed A Romance Based on Sterotypical Male-Female Roles"
Thursday, 11/8: DISABILITY, DIS-EASE, AND EMBODIMENT

- Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept
- Karen Soldatic and Shaun Grech, “Transnationalising Disability Studies: Rights, Justice and Impairment”
- Mia Mingus, “Moving Toward the Ugly: A Politic Beyond Desirability”
- Andrea Ritchie, “Policing (Dis)Ability”

Tuesday, 11/13: TESTIFYING INTERSECTIONALITY I

- Sapphire, PUSH
- Rebecca Solnit, “A Short History of Silence”

Thursday, 11/15: TESTIFYING INTERSECTIONALITY II

- Sapphire, PUSH (continued)

THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS (November 20 & 22)

Tuesday, 11/27: GENDER, SEXUALITY AND THE STATE: INTERROGATING CARCERAL FEMINISMS

- Kristin Bumiller, “Feminist Collaboration with the State in Response to Sexual Violence: Lessons from the American Experience”
- Elizabeth Bernstein, “Carceral politics as gender justice? The ‘traffic in women’ and neoliberal circuits of crime, sex, and rights”
- Angela Davis, “The Prison-Industrial Complex”
- Victoria Law, “Against Carceral Feminisms”
- VIDEO: “Ruth Wilson Gilmore: Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex”
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTPjC-7EDkc

Thursday, 11/29: GENDER, SEXUALITY AND THE STATE: INTERROGATING CARCERAL FEMINISMS II

- Andrea J. Ritchie, “Law Enforcement Violence Against WOC”
- FILM: Mothers of Bedford

***MEDIA ANNOTATIONS DUE***
Tuesday, 12/4: REFraming Gendered Violence

- Anne McClintock, “Who’s Afraid of Title IX?”
- Caroline Heldman and Bailee Brown, “A Brief History of Sexual Violence Activism in the US”
- Vanessa Grigoriadis, *Blurred Lines: Rethinking Sex, Power, and Consent on Campus* (selections)
- Alexandra Brodsky and Elizabeth Deutsch, “The Promise of Title IX: Sexual Violence and the Law”
- Una, *Becoming Unbecoming*

Thursday, 12/6: Feminist Futures: Activism and Social Movements

- *Signs* interview/Cathy Cohen
- “Trans Action for Social and Economic Justice”
- Dorothy Roberts, Angela Davis, and additional readings TBA
- MEDIA PRESENTATIONS #1

***MEDIA FILE DUE***

Tuesday, 12/11 – Media Presentations/ Last Class

***LAST DAY to submit your second Campus Event Report***

Gabrielle Le Roux, in collaboration with trans activists – Proudly African & Transgender