

**WGSS 201: Gender & Difference: Critical Analyses
Fall 2018**

Prof. Elizabeth Williams
M, W: 2:30-3:45pm
South College Room W101

Office: W415 South College
Office Hours: Tu, Th: 1:00-3:00pm
ewilliams@umass.edu



Course Description:

Students in this course will:

- Become familiar with foundational texts in Feminist and Queer Studies.
- Gain an understanding of how sexuality intersects with other forms of identity, including race, class, gender, religion, ability, nation, etc.
- Understand some of the key current debates within the field.
- Learn how to read academic texts strategically, looking for argument, evidence, and approach.
- Hone skills in academic writing, with a focus on argumentation, organization, and analysis.

Course Readings

1. Lorde, Geraldine Audre. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name: A Biomythography*. Crossing Press, 2011.

All other class readings can be found on the course Moodle site:
<https://moodle.umass.edu/course/view.php?id=48711>

Course readings appear on the syllabus under the day on which they will be discussed. Therefore, if a reading is listed under the heading “Sept 10,” students must complete that reading by class time on September 10.

Assignments:

Attendance & Participation = 10%
Reading Quizzes: 15%
Zami Assignment: 25%
Student’s Choice Assignment: 25%
Buzzfeed Listicle Assignment: 25%

Participation: Showing up to class is the single best thing you can do to improve your grade. Your participation grade is based on 1) class attendance and 2) demonstration that you have done the reading and are actively engaging with the ideas discussed. One way to do this is to speak up in class; if you can answer my questions or if you have thought of your own questions to ask, I will know that you are keeping up. However, I understand that many people are uncomfortable speaking up in class. While I encourage you to try to speak up anyway, since this is a skill that you’ll be called upon to use throughout your lives, if you know that you are a person who has difficulty participating vocally you can let me know. Together, we will come up with an alternative way for you to participate.

Absences: If you are absent from class because of illness or a family emergency, I will excuse the absence provided you complete a short assignment summarizing the day’s readings and listing several thoughtful questions or comments. If you are absent for other reasons (traffic, oversleeping, etc.) you will not be allowed to make up the day. Lateness counts against your attendance grade, so try to be on time.

Reading Quizzes: Students will complete five quizzes on the readings over the course of the semester. After beginning the quiz, you will have ten minutes to finish. A total of ten quizzes will be available: students may take more quizzes if they wish to raise their grade. Quizzes that are not attempted will be recorded in the gradebook as a zero, but the lowest 5 scores will be dropped. Quizzes must be completed by 2:00 pm on Wednesdays. On weeks when a major assignment is due, there will be no quiz.

***Zami* Assignment:** Students will carefully read *Zami* and then create a class plan which uses the novel to explain the concept of intersectionality. Full details will be posted on the Moodle site. **Due Oct 5 by 5pm.**

Students’ Choice Assignment: Students will identify a **scholarly** article or chapter on a topic that they feel should be discussed in class. You will write a short paper summarizing your chosen piece, and explaining how it expands our understanding of gender/sexuality/race etc. Two of your selections will be assigned to the class during Week 12. Full details will be posted on the Moodle site. **Due Nov 9 by 5pm.**

Buzzfeed Listicle Assignment: For their final project, students will prepare a BuzzFeed-style listicle (article in the style of a list) which summarizes the literature on a particular aspect of gender studies. For example, students might compose an analysis of “10 things you should know about Disability Studies” or “10 ways the voices of women of color are silenced in the media.” Your project should include links to relevant current events, blog posts, or videos which will help readers understand your analysis. Students should also provide references for the scholarly texts which they consulted. Full details will be posted on the Moodle site. **Due Dec 19 by 5pm.**

Late Assignments Policy: Students who anticipate that they will need an extension on an assignment should speak to me as soon as possible. Extensions will be granted on a case-by-case basis. Assignments received late will be marked down by a third of a grade letter for every day they are late (so an assignment that would have been an A will be an A- if turned in one day late, a B+ if turned in two days late, etc.). However, students should still make every effort to turn in assignments—a late assignment will always be worth more than a missed assignment.

Academic Dishonesty (is bad): All students should be familiar with the University’s policies governing student conduct and academic integrity. For a complete overview, see: <http://www.umass.edu/honesty/>

Plagiarism is totally unacceptable in my class, and I will fail any assignment that fails to cite an author whose words or ideas are invoked or that reproduces other people’s work without quotation marks. We will talk more about what constitutes plagiarism in class. The best way to avoid plagiarism is to work on your assignments well ahead of time. Most students are tempted to copy other people’s work in moments of panic directly before a due date. Don’t put yourself in that position, and if the choice is between plagiarism and taking a late penalty, always take the penalty.

Disabilities: If you have a disability (documented or otherwise) I will make every effort to accommodate you. You can help me do this better if you alert me to your situation as soon as possible. You can also consult the University’s Disability Resource Center: see <https://www.umass.edu/disability/>

Content Warnings: In this class, we will be talking (at length) about challenging issues like gender, race, and sexuality. If you are uncomfortable reading and discussing this material, this may not be the best class for you to take. On the first day of class, students will be asked to fill out a worksheet asking them to identify topics that they would like to receive warnings about ahead of time. Such warnings are intended to provide students with a heads-up so that they can take whatever precautions are necessary for self-care.

Schedule:

Week 1: Intro; Genealogies

Sept 5: Introductions; Syllabus

Lorde, Audre. "Age, Race, Sex, and Class: Women Redefining Difference," paper delivered at Amherst College, April 1980. Reprinted in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing Press, 1984.

Week 2: Constructing Gender & Sex

Sept 10:

Gloria Steinem, "If Men Could Menstruate," in Saraswati, L. Ayu, Barbara Shaw, and Heather Rellihan. *Introduction to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: Interdisciplinary and Intersectional Approaches*. 1 edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Fausto-Sterling, Anne. "Of Gender and Genitals" and "Should There Only Be Two Sexes?" in *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000.

Sept 12:

Halberstam, J. "Drag Kings: Masculinity and Performance," in *Female Masculinity*. 1 edition. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 1998.

Week 3: Oppression and Privilege

Sept 17:

Andrea Smith: "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing," in *Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology*. Reprint edition. Duke University Press Books, 2016.

DiAngelo, Robin. "White Fragility: Why It's So Hard to Talk to White People About Racism -." *The Good Men Project*, April 9, 2015.

<https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/white-fragility-why-its-so-hard-to-talk-to-white-people-about-racism-twlm/>.

Sept 19:

Lee, Megan, "Maybe I'm not class-mobile; maybe I'm class-queer: poor kids in college, and survival under hierarchy," in Yee, Jessica, ed. *Feminism for Real: Deconstructing the Academic Industrial Complex of Feminism*. Our Schools/Our Selves, 4th v. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2011.

Week 4: Normativities

Sept 24:

Warner, Michael. "Chapter 2: What's wrong with Normal?" in *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. New York: Free Press, 1999: 41-80.

Sept 26:

Lennard, Davis, "Constructing Normalcy," in McRuer, Robert, and Anna Mollow, eds. *Sex and Disability*. Duke University Press Books, 2012.

Week 5: Race and Sexuality

Oct 1:

Briggs, Laura. "The Race of Hysteria: 'Overcivilization' and the 'Savage' Woman in Late Nineteenth-Century Obstetrics and Gynecology." *American Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (June 1, 2000): 246–73

Oct 3:

Aizura, Aren Z. "Where Health and Beauty Meet: Femininity and Racialisation in Thai Cosmetic Surgery Clinics." *Asian Studies Review* 33, no. 3 (2009): 303–317.

ZAMI ASSIGNMENT DUE Oct 5 by 5pm.

Week 6: Reproduction

TUES Oct 9:

Angela Davis, "Reproductive Rights," in Grewal, Inderpal, and Caren Kaplan. *An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World*. 2 edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill Education, 2005.

Desjardins, Michel. "The Sexualized Body of the Child: Parents and the Politics of 'Voluntary' Sterilization of People Labeled Intellectually Disabled." In *Sex and Disability*, edited by Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow, 69–85. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2012.

Oct 10:

Joyce, Kathryn. "The Quiverfull Conviction: Christian Mothers Breed 'Arrows for the War.'" *The Nation* 283, no. 18 (2006): 11-18.

Week 7: Sex/Work

Oct 15:

Pande, Amrita. "Commercial Surrogacy in India: Manufacturing a Perfect MotherWorker." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 35, no. 4 (2010): 969–992.

Oct 17:

Fritsch, Kelly. "Intimate Assemblages: Disability, Intercorporeality, and the Labour of Attendant Care." *Critical Disability Discourses/Discours Critiques Dans Le Champ Du Handicap* 2, no. 0 (September 29, 2010).

Week 8: Trans

Oct 22:

Wilchins, Riki. *Read My Lips: Sexual Subversion and the End of Gender*. Riverdale Avenue Books, 2013.

Oct 24:

Towle, Evan B., and Lynn Marie Morgan. "Romancing the Transgender Native: Rethinking the Use of the 'Third Gender' Concept." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8, no. 4 (2002): 469–497.

Week 9: Let's Talk About Sex

Oct 29:

Scherrer, Kristin S. "Coming to an Asexual Identity: Negotiating Identity, Negotiating Desire." *Sexualities* 11, no. 5 (2008): 621–41.

Oct 31:

Hester, Jessica. "[Feast of Burden: The Transgressive, Disturbing World of 'Feeding' Porn.](#)" *Bitch Magazine*, August 17, 2009 **AND** selected comments

Week 10: Transnational Perspectives

Nov 5:

Bunting, Madeleine. "[Opinion: African Homophobia Has Complex Roots.](#)" *The Guardian*, May 21, 2010.
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/may/21/complex-roots-africa-homophobia>.

Macharia, Keguro. "[Opinion: Homophobia in Africa Is Not a Single Story.](#)" *The Guardian*, May 26, 2010.
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/may/26/homophobia-africa-not-single-story>.

Epprecht, Marc. "Gay Shaka," in *Heterosexual Africa? The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS*. New African Histories Series. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008.

Nov 7:

Augustín, Laura. "[The Soft Side of Imperialism.](#)" *Counterpunch*, January 25, 2012.

Mohanty, Chandra. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Feminist Review* 0, no. 30 (1988): 61.

STUDENTS' CHOICE ASSIGNMENT DUE Nov. 9 by 5pm

Week 11: Queer Imperialism

Nov 12:

No Class-- Veteran's Day

Nov 14:

Alexander, M. Jacqui. "Imperial Desire/Sexual Utopias: White Gay Capital and Transnational Tourism," in *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. Durham N.C.: Duke University Press Books, 2006.

Fall Break: Nov 18-25

Week 12: Students' Choice!

Nov 26: TBA

Nov 28: TBA

Week 13: Current Debates

Dec 3: Trigger Warnings

Carter, Angela M. "Teaching with Trauma: Disability Pedagogy, Feminism, and the Trigger Warnings Debate." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (May 19, 2015).

Neutill, Rani. "My Trigger-Warning Disaster: '9 1/2 Weeks,' 'The Wire' and How Coddled Young Radicals Got Discomfort All Wrong." *Salon*.

http://www.salon.com/2015/10/28/i_wanted_to_be_a_supporter_of_survivors_on_campus_and_a_good_teacher_i_didnt_realize_just_how_impossible_this_would_be/.

Dec 5: Laura Kipnis

Laura Kipnis, "Sexual Paranoia Strikes Academe," *The Chronicle of Higher Education Review*, Feb. 27, 2015. <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Sexual-Paranoia-Strikes/190351>

Cooke, Rachel. "Sexual Paranoia on Campus – and the Professor at the Eye of the Storm." *The Observer*, April 2, 2017.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/02/unwanted-advances-on-campus-us-university-professor-laura-kipnis-interview>

Wellesley Statement from CERE faculty re: Laura Kipnis Freedom Project visit and aftermath:
<https://www.thefire.org/subject-facstaffdiscuss-statement-cere-faculty-re-laura-kipnis-freedom-project-visit-aftermath/>

Week 14: Wrap-Up

Dec. 10:

Cox, Lara. "Standing Up against the Rape Joke: Irony and Its Vicissitudes." *Signs* 40, no. 4 (2015): 963-84.

Dec 12: Feminist bingo!!!

Dec 19: BUZZFEED ASSIGNMENT DUE by 5pm