Introduction to Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies

*This syllabus is modeled on a version of the course with in-person instruction. In the event that this course runs online due to precautions against COVID-19, course objectives, goals, and readings will remain the same. Electronic access to all readings will be made available, and all assignments—including exams—will be modified for distance learning.

Course Objectives and Goals

This course introduces the major issues, concepts, and questions central to Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. What is gender? What is sex? How are they different from sexuality? And what is feminism, anyway? We will engage a wide range of material in various media as we interrogate the historical, cultural, legal, and political contexts which inform gender and sexuality in our society. Looking both to historical and to contemporary sources and movements, we will consider how cultural myths and institutions shape the lives of people of all genders. While we focus on these topics mainly within the U.S. context, we will also examine sex and gender in a global context to understand how these structures and identities function transnationally.

At the end of this class, students will be familiar with the following key concepts: the history of U.S. women’s movements; various feminisms, sexualities, and masculinities; gender identity and expressions; trans issues; oppression; intersectionality; social constructionism; gender violence; and global women’s issues.

In order to pass this class, students will need to demonstrate the following skills:
1) Ability to use gender and sexuality as analytic categories
2) Ability to perform feminist analysis
3) Ability to think critically, construct an argument, and write coherently

Required Texts

The following text is available in the Campus Bookstore. If you prefer to order elsewhere for financial reasons or convenience’s sake, please make sure you match the ISBN provided. All other course readings will be available on Canvas.

**Assignments & Grades**

- **Participation & Attendance**
  - *including in-class worksheets* 20%
  - Daily Journal 15%
  - Exam 1 20%
  - Feminist Analysis Paper 25%
  - Exam 2 20%

**Participation & Attendance**: The success of a discussion-based course such as this depends on your sustained participation and personal investment in the classroom community. Come to class having read the material and be prepared to contribute in some meaningful way to each class period. Please bring the day’s text and notetaking materials with you every day.

**Note**: Participation is not necessarily based on the number of times you speak in discussion, but on what you offer to the intellectual environment of the classroom. We all contribute to this ongoing work in different ways, and I’m committed to collaborating with you to ensure our discussions are as inclusive as possible of the various backgrounds and perspectives we bring to this course. If at any point you are concerned about your participation, please feel comfortable coming to talk to me.

You are allowed **two absences, no questions asked**. Each additional absence will result in your final grade being lowered one-third of a letter grade (whereby, for example, an A- becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B, etc.). Persistent absence may result in failure of the course. Please notify me of any special circumstances which might require your prolonged absence.

**Journal**: As preparation for class discussion, you will post to your ‘journal’ on Canvas **prior to 8AM the morning of class**. This journal is private, viewable only by you and me. These entries should be around a short paragraph in length and can take a variety of forms:

- testing out ideas about readings before class
- posing a question about a reading and offering a possible answer
- offering a critique of a reading with evidence to support it
- putting forward something you don’t understand in the reading or in a class session and trying to work it out
- introducing a contemporary example and considering the relationship among our readings, our current world, and your lived experience, etc.

You are allowed to miss one post over the course of the semester; late posts will receive partial credit. Since this journal is an exploratory, informal, and creative space, I will not be assigning grades for each entry. As long as you submit every day and demonstrate a genuine engagement with the course material, you will receive full credit for this assignment. I will read all entries and will attempt to respond briefly where able.

**Exams**: The first exam will be in class on **Wednesday, May 27**, near the halfway point of our course. The exam will be **open-note, open-book**. You will be tested on foundational terms and concepts, your understanding of the history of feminist movements, your ability to recall the main arguments of
our readings, and your ability to demonstrate an introductory understanding of the analysis of gender
and sexuality. Material from in-class discussions and/or films will also be included on the exam. The
exam may include multiple choice, passage identification, matching, fill in the blank, short answers,
and brief essay responses.

The second exam will be Friday, June 5. It will resemble the same format as Exam 1, and will also be
open-note. The second exam is not cumulative, though short answer and essay questions might ask
you to draw on important course-long concepts. You must be present on the days of the in-class
exams; no late exams will be given.

Feminist Analysis Paper: In this 5-6 page paper, you will perform a feminist analysis of a current event
or issue using relevant concepts from the course material. I will distribute a writing prompt during the
first week of the course and we will discuss this assignment in more detail. Preparation for the final
paper will include in-class exercises and a written proposal submitted to me for feedback. Students are
encouraged to make use of office hours for additional one-on-one feedback sessions.

Course Policies

Course Content: We will read texts this semester containing content which may be difficult. I
acknowledge that each of you comes to this course from your own specific background, identity, and
body, and that these realities have an impact on how you interact with texts. And while I understand
that certain reactions are often unanticipated, I ask you to generally familiarize yourself with the
subject matter of our course texts ahead of time, and if for any reason you believe you will be unable to
participate in a discussion of certain themes or elements, please feel that you can contact me
beforehand and/or seek the support of any of the formal or informal resources available to you on
campus (some of which are included in this syllabus). I am open to working on an individual basis to
negotiate between potentially traumatic content and necessary course concepts.

Civility: It is essential to the objectives of this course that students feel comfortable expressing views,
exploring alternatives, raising challenges, and asking questions in an atmosphere of open but respectful
dialogue and debate. Remember that our perspectives are informed by our own positionalities, and be
aware and mindful of how your forms of communication might affect your fellow students. I expect
every student to contribute to a climate of intellectual accountability and respect. No degree of
incivility will be tolerated in the classroom.

Deadlines & Extensions: You are all individuals with diverse responsibilities and obligations, and I
understand that certain circumstances may arise to interfere with our assignment deadlines. I accept
extension requests made at least one day in advance of the deadline, and am willing to make
limited and reasonable accommodations for extensions. Once an agreement has been reached, I expect
it to be honored. If you have not made prior arrangements with me, overdue assignments will be
penalized one-third of a letter grade per calendar day.

Email & Technology: Please use email to contact me outside of class. I will make every effort to
respond to your emails within 24 hours, but please realize that sometimes this may not be possible and
try to plan accordingly. I may also send emails with reminders or updates about course activities and
assignments.
Laptops and other technologies will not be allowed for use in class, unless designated by me ahead of time in special circumstances. Cell phones are to be silenced and out of sight during class time. If you require certain accommodations regarding technology, please come talk to me. If you should need to keep your phone on you for a given class period in the event of an ongoing emergency, please notify me beforehand and take what actions you can to be as discreet as possible.

**Academic Integrity:** All students are expected to adhere to [Washington University’s Academic Integrity Policy](https://www.wustl.edu/academic-integrity/). If you have any doubts or questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me for guidance.

**Preferred Name & Pronoun Policy:** I recognize that many students prefer to use names other than their legal ones to identify themselves. This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you have a preferred name or gender pronoun not yet reflected in the enrollment system, please let me know so that I can refer to you in the appropriate manner.

**Gender Neutral Bathrooms:** Washington University is committed to providing access to safe and inclusive spaces for all people to use restrooms on campus. The gender neutral bathrooms nearest to our classroom are [TBA*].

**Accessibility:** I am committed to working together with you to create an inclusive classroom. If your work for this class requires special arrangements because of a disability, please let me know. Please also contact Cornerstone at 935-5970, or via email at cornerstone@wustl.edu, so that I can receive timely guidance, in writing, from Cornerstone. Please also feel free to come talk to me about your individual learning needs and how this course can best accommodate them.

**Student Well-Being:** Please be aware of resources available to students, if needed, via [Mental Health Services](https://www.mhs.wustl.edu/) and the [Office of Sexual Assault and Community Health Services](https://www.wustl.edu/sexual-assault/community-health-services/). As an instructor, I am a mandatory reporter of sexual abuse and other harmful behaviors. I do always encourage students to talk to me about any personal issues our course material may bring up, but I cannot guarantee confidentiality. For confidential disclosure and support, contact Kim Webb, Director of the Office of Sexual Assault and Community Health Services, via phone (314) 935-8761 or email (kim_webb@wustl.edu).
Course Schedule

Week 1: Introductory Concepts & Early Feminist History

Monday, May 18
- Introduction to the Course
- Natalia Cecire, “New at This”
- Marilyn Frye, “Oppression”
- Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”
- Cobble, Gordon, and Henry, “Preface” and “Prologue” in Feminism Unfinished

Tuesday, May 19
- Launius and Hassel, “The Social Construction of Gender”
- Sam Dylan Finch, “Transgender 101”
- C. J. Pascoe, “Making Masculinity”
- Feminist Analysis Paper Assignment Given

Wednesday, May 20
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Declaration of Sentiments”
- The Sojourner Truth Project
  from Dorothy Sue Cobble, “More Than Sex Equality: Feminism after Suffrage,” in Feminism Unfinished

Thursday, May 21
- Combahee River Collective Statement
- bell hooks, “Black Women Shaping Feminist Theory”
- Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”

Friday, May 22
- Betty Friedan, “The Problem That Has No Name”
- Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience”
- Feminist Analysis Proposal of Topic Due

Week 2: Sex, Sexuality, & Intersectional Feminisms

Monday, May 25
- Michel Foucault, “We Other Victorians” and “The Repressive Hypothesis” in The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1
- John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity”

Tuesday, May 26
- Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality”
Wednesday, May 27

EXAM 1
Gloria Anzaldúa, “Towards a New Consciousness”

Thursday, May 28
Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”
Kathleen Guidroz and Michele Tracy Berger, “A Conversation with Founding Scholars of Intersectionality: Kimberlé Crenshaw, Nira Yuval-Davis, and Michelle Fine”

Friday, May 29
Astrid Henry, “From a Mindset to a Movement,” from *Feminism Unfinished*
from Laura Briggs, *How All Politics Became Reproductive Politics*

**Week 3: Contemporary Issues in Feminism**

Monday, June 1
Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”
Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?”

Tuesday, June 2

view Tarana Burke, “MeToo is a Movement, Not a Moment” (16 min. TEDTalk)
Ashwini Tambe, “Reckoning with the Silences of #MeToo”
Josephine Livingstone, “Time is a Feminist Issue”

**Feminist Analysis Paper DUE**

Wednesday, June 3
Dean Spade, “Mutilating Gender”
Andrea Long Chu, “My New Vagina Won’t Make Me Happy”
Kai Cheng Thom, “The Pain—and Joy—of Transition”
Katelyn Burns, “It’s Time to Retire the Media’s Sad Transgender Trope”

Thursday, June 4
Rosemary Garland-Thomson, “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory”

Friday, June 5

**EXAM 2**

from Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*