

Women's & Gender Studies

Spring 2018 Course Descriptions

WGS 150 MULTICULTURAL AMERICA (3U; CD, HU)

LEC 201 Online Section Taught by Megan Yahnke

As its focus, this course examines gender at the intersections of sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class. In this class, we will focus on various institutions and systems that construct meanings and reproduce gendered power structures. We will examine how individuals and communities negotiate social categories to create their own identities. In this interdisciplinary service-learning course, affiliated with both the Women's and Gender Studies and Cultures and Communities programs, we will discuss cultural differences, focusing mainly on how they are gendered and socialized across multiple communities in the United States. More specifically, we'll analyze structures of domination and privileges in the social construction of one's gender. We will read selections from feminist theory, women's studies, cultural studies, social psychology, popular culture, and memoir.

Along with reading about gendered, sexual, ethnic, and racial identities/experiences, students will also explore their own identities, through regular reflections on course readings and service learning experiences, as well as through telling their own autobiographical narratives.

Additionally, to deepen our knowledge of the course topic, students are required to complete a community-based service learning assignment as part of and in tandem with this course. The assignment will involve ~1.5/2 hours a week (15/20 total hours/semester) of civic engagement over the course of the semester in a community partner placement. You will pick one of three sites at which to volunteer this semester, and we will review the specifics of each site in the beginning of the semester. Students will have an opportunity to place curricular concepts in the context of real-life situations and to analyze and synthesize these concepts in service to the community.

WGS 200 INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN'S & GENDER STUDIES: A Social Science Perspective (3U; SS)

LEC 001 11:00am – 12:15pm MW Taught by Jess Howard

LEC 002 12:30pm – 1:45pm MW Taught by Sarah Cooke

This course is designed as an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of Women's and Gender Studies (WGS), an academic area of study focused on the ways that sex and gender manifest themselves in social, cultural, and political contexts. The primary goals of this course are to familiarize students with key issues, questions, and debates in WGS, and to develop a feminist lens for scholarly analysis. This semester, we will become acquainted with the history and influential members of the women's rights movements in the United States. We will also look at the critical questions and concepts feminist scholars have developed as tools for thinking about gendered experience. In addition, we will study intersections among systems of oppression (such as sexism, racism, classism, ethnocentrism, homophobia/heterosexism, transphobia, ableism, and others). We will also learn to analyze gender, exploring how it impacts one's understanding of and experiences in the world. Together and with our course texts, we will analyze competing perspectives and integrate various bodies of knowledge across traditional academic boundaries. In addition, we will apply critical thinking skills to identify and assess gender-based assumptions and biases in order to recognize their consequences on an individual, social, and cultural level. Topics include feminist histories, gender development, body images/representations in media, violence against women, health and reproductive justice, the family, women's labor and activism.

WGS 201 INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN'S & GENDER STUDIES: A Humanities Perspective (3U; HU)

LEC 001 9:30am – 10:45am TR Taught by Katie Witz

LEC 002 11:00am – 12:15pm TR Taught by Julia Anderson-Ives

LEC 003 2:00pm – 3:15pm TR Taught by Jill Hoffman

This course is designed as an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of Women's Studies, an academic area of study focused on the ways that sex and gender manifest themselves in social, cultural, and political contexts. The primary goal of this course is to familiarize students with key issues, questions, and debates in Women's Studies scholarship, both historical and contemporary. We will become acquainted with many of the critical questions and concepts feminist scholars have developed as tools for thinking about gendered experience. In addition, we will study interconnections among systems of oppression (such as sexism, racism, classism, ethnocentrism, homophobia/heterosexism, transphobia, ableism, and others). We will also learn to "read" and analyze gender, exploring how it impacts one's understanding of and experiences in the world.

Together and with our course texts, we will analyze competing perspectives and integrate various bodies of knowledge across traditional academic boundaries. In addition, we will apply critical thinking skills to identify and assess gender-based assumptions and biases in order to recognize their consequences on an individual, social, and cultural level

WGS 211 FOUNDATIONS OF WOMEN'S & GENDER STUDIES WRITING AND RESEARCH (3U)

LEC 001 2:00pm – 3:15pm TR Taught by Casey O'Brien

Course taught partially online. Online meetings: 2/1/2018; 2/15; 3/1; 3/29; 4/12; and 4/26

This course will explore what is meant by feminist research, how it is practiced, and how feminist research methods affect and influence scholarship. We begin by examining the current issues and debates regarding feminist research methods, methodology and epistemology. Further, we will examine and practice critical writing and thinking skills necessary to do, produce, and understand feminist research. Since research is a craft best learned through practice, and since the ideas and concepts we discuss in our readings and class discussions will be better understood by doing feminist research, a significant portion of the course will be devoted to engaging in the research process ourselves. In the form of carefully research personal narrative, students will be asked to research their own histories and the ways in which their experiences are informed by the intersections of class, race, gender, and sexuality. Research projects will examine ways in which scholarship in women's studies has influenced areas of interest specific to the student. Additionally, these research projects will serve as an additional text in our class.

WGS 301 QUEER THEORY (3U)

LEC 001 12:30pm – 1:45pm TR Taught by Cheryl Kader

In the 1970s, feminists of color, among others, began to interrogate the concept of a unified gender identity, calling for a feminist theory and practice that would take into account the intersections of gender, race, class and sexuality. In a comparable move, the critical theory and practice engendered by the term "queer" problematizes unitary lesbian and gay identities in favor of critique and resistance. "Queer," however, has not simply replaced older conceptualizations of lesbian and gay identities; it exists, alongside those identity categories, opening up new possibilities and problems for inquiry and activism. Consequently, queer theory works to investigate the norms of identity, disturbing our most cherished preconceptions about the relations of sex, gender, sexuality and desire.

Furthermore, queer theorists take issue with the marginalization of lesbian and gay lives within a binary model of identity. Pointing to ways of knowing and being that naturalize heterosexuality, and homosexuality, they subject sexual and gender relations to critical analysis. Queer theory defies rigid definitional limits, exploring, in the words of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “the multiple, unstable ways in which people may be like and different from each other.”

“To queer” means to quiz, to spoil, to bend and to displace, a set of actions rather than a specific category of sexuality or gender. In this class, we shall approach queer theory as a perspective or critique from which to challenge regimes of the normal and to destabilize identity categories. In the process, we shall look at the “body” as a mode of queer practice by means of which identity is performatively generated and organized, and conclude by discussing the political efficacy of “queer” and its possibilities for social change.

WGS 302 GENDERED BODIES: Body Politics and Cross-Cultural Perspective (3U)

LEC 001 2:00pm – 3:15pm TR Taught by Xin Huang

When we ask what is a “woman”, a “man”, and gendered “other”, it is important to understand how these categories are embodied, and the various ways the gendered body has been conceptualized, understood, represented, produced, and reproduced by individuals, institutions, and social processes. This course provides an interdisciplinary and transnational feminist survey of how historical and contemporary body politics shapes the ways different bodies are perceived, valued, and controlled across different communities, societies, and time periods. In particular, it investigates how the shifting meanings of race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and national identity are embedded and embodied in global body politics through institutions such as law, medicine, and the state, as well as through culture, science, and globalization.

This course also introduces feminist critiques of the social body, practices of embodied resistance and activism, and strategies for individual and social transformation. It provides a comparative perspectives by emphasizing the transnational linkages and through the incorporation of experiences and practices from regions outside of the U.S.. It intends to help students begin to understand the key issues and concepts on body politics, to critically interrogate assumptions, practices, and “texts,” and to develop ability to examine, challenge, and transform the world in which we currently live.

WGS 411/711 WOMEN’S STUDIES RESEARCH METHODS/ADV. WGS RESEARCH METHODS (3U/G)

LEC/SEM 001 2:00pm – 3:15pm MW Taught by Anna Mansson McGinty

Undergraduate and Graduate level jointly offered this semester.

What is feminist research? What makes a research project feminist and how does it differ from other kinds of researches? What kinds of ideas and purposes inform and drive a feminist research project? This course covers a wide range of qualitative and quantitative research methods that has been instrumental for feminist research. Attentive to the intersectionality of gender, race, class, sex and other social identities, students will survey feminist debates, choices, and dilemmas around research motivations and processes, ethics, voice and subjectivity, ethnography, fieldwork, participant observation, interviewing, analysis, representation and presentation. The course considers the kinds of opportunities and challenges presented by diverse methods while emphasizing the link between the development of a research question and the selection of methodological approaches. It also explores how feminist research, carried out with self-reflexivity, could contribute to the construction of knowledge of emancipation and bring about positive social changes.

WGS 799 ADVANCED TOPICS IN WGS: Gender, Sexuality, and Material Culture (1-3G)

SEM 001 5:00pm – 7:40pm Wed Taught by Merry Wiesner-Hanks

Women's and gender studies and many related fields have over the last several decades experienced a "material turn," in which objects as well as texts are crucial subjects of analysis. In this turn, WGS has drawn on material culture studies, another interdisciplinary field, which is both a method by which one can evaluate and analyze objects, and a theory about the role of objects and the relationships between things and people—what Ian Hodder calls "entanglements"—in the creation and transformation of society and culture. Material culture studies was originally quite androcentric, and either oblivious or hostile to using gender or sexuality as categories of analysis, but the critiques and research of feminist art historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, artists, historians, literary scholars, and those in other fields have begun to change this.

This seminar explores feminist material culture studies in a range of fields, examining the ways that gendered analysis has and can shift our understanding of the things that surround us, from the skin of our bodies to the built environment. Readings will include studies of clothing, foodways, tools, household goods, buildings, and other objects, and how these were and are crafted, used, touched, consumed, owned, and commissioned in processes that create cultural codes through which people fashion their social, sexual, ethnic and other identities. Course materials will also include objects themselves and their visual representations, and throughout the semester we will be joined by scholars and artists from different fields who will share their insights. Students from any graduate program are welcome.