

WMST-200: Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

COURSE INFORMATION

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Office: Johnson Center 240K

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Time and place: M-W 10:30-11:45, Horizon 4008

Office hours: Monday 12:00-1:00, Tuesday 11:00-12:00 (in-office or Zoom), and by appointment.

Women and Gender Studies Commitment to Diversity Statement

Women and Gender Studies seeks to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

Mason Course Catalogue Description

Interdisciplinary introduction to women's, gender and sexuality studies, encompassing key concepts in the field, history of women's movements and women's studies in America, cross-cultural constructions of gender, and a thematic emphasis on the diversity of women's experience across class, race, and cultural lines. Limited to three attempts.

Course Description

This course is an introduction and invitation to the study of women, gender, and sexuality studies through their various intersections, including race, ethnicity, nationality, class, religion, sexuality, and disability. This course invites students to approach diverse situated experiences, social realities, struggles, and ideas from a historical perspective that can't be reduced to progress-based narratives, predominant in Western modern paradigms.

We will engage with histories and present-day realities from the United States but also Latin America and the Global South to develop a critical perspective about the connections of gender and sexuality with other global systems (patriarchy, capitalism, white supremacy, extractivism, and colonialism).

We will center historically marginalized voices and knowledges and reflect on the consequences of the imposition of Euro and Anglocentric epistemologies in our ways of seeing and understanding the world, specifically gender and sexual identities and histories. In this way, we will not only learn about history and ideas but also how to be self-reflexive about our engagement with structures of power and critical about our positions in the world.

The materials of the course include scholarly articles, films and documentaries (as assigned work and in-class screenings), YouTube videos of different gender and sexuality-based projects, photography, podcasts, and additional relevant articles. We will construct a learning environment (individually and collectively) that is deeply invested in exploring the nuances of gender and sexuality today through their many historical underpinnings.

Student Learning Objectives

- Learn the basic vocabulary of feminist and queer theories to add nuance to difficult conversations around contemporary issues.
- Practice listening and observation skills (i.e. critical analysis) using feminist lenses through dialogue, research, and reflection.
- Discuss histories of feminism as a social movement and feminist theories of social transformation.
- Reflect deeply on our own social positions and the ways that political, biological, and cultural concepts and structures make sense of our lives.

Mason Core Learning Outcomes (Social and Behavioral course):

- Explain how individuals, groups or institutions are influenced by contextual factors.
- Demonstrate awareness of changes in social and cultural constructs.
- Use appropriate methods and resources to apply social and behavioral science concepts, terminology, principles and theories in the analysis of significant human issues, past or present.

Course Materials

Required Books:

adrienne maree brown. [*We will not cancel us*](#). *And other dreams of transformative justice*.

\$10 paperback and \$5 ebook using that link.

Alok. [*Beyond the Gender Binary*](#). Paperback, ebook or audiobook.

♦ Unless indicated, all assigned readings are either in PDF or as links in Blackboard

Technical Help

If you have difficulty with accessing Blackboard, please contact the ITU Support Center at 703.993.8870 or support@gmu.edu

If you have trouble with using the features in Blackboard, email courses@gmu.edu

Email and other forms of communication: You can reach me by email, by coming to office hours or scheduling an appointment. I think that meeting in person is the best way to communicate about any concerns or questions about readings, research ideas, etc. I will do my best to respond to your email in 24 hours. Friday is my writing day and I usually do not respond to emails until Monday. But if your email is urgent please add -time sensitive- in the title so that I know you need an answer soon. I do not respond to emails on weekends.

Grading

Attendance and Participation: 20 points

Podcast Mini-Project: 20 points

Written Thought Experiments (5): 25 (4 points each + 5 for responding to others)

Discussion Questions: 10

Final Project: 25

Total: 100 points (100%)

I. Attendance and Participation

- Attendance is expected and crucial for your success in this course. Attendance, preparing for class, bringing your questions, and engaging (in your own way) will result in a good grade in participation.
- After the final 'add' date, you get one absence without penalty, no questions asked. After that, any absence from class without a good reason that is documented and communicated to me in writing will result in a 10% reduction to your participation grade. If you are absent 6 meetings or more, you will automatically fail this course.

II. Podcast Project

This is a new element for this course. We will be playing with making podcasts!

Stay tuned for all the details.

III. Written Thought Experiments (5) and Responses

Five times during the semester, you will submit brief creative writings and meanderings based on the readings, films, or materials assigned for that day. Each will be worth four points. These will be posted in discussion board format on Blackboard so you can read and comment on one another's reflections. The purpose of the thought experiments is to consider the ideas and topics at hand widely and to imagine some of the various angles and nuances that are a part of it. The length should be around 500 words (a minimum of 400). Six points will be given for your engagement with others' posts. You should respond to at least three posts throughout the semester.

*You can pick when to write these based on your interests, time, etc., but if you prefer to follow a plan, I will indicate in the syllabus suggested days for the 'Written Thought Experiments' that will spread them out and help you organize your work.

You will be graded based on originality, depth and by expressing your own voice and thoughts in direct relation to the ideas in the texts. You may quote or paraphrase from the materials but keep it at a minimum because we want to hear what you have to say.

IV. Discussion Questions

As you read/watch/listen to the assigned materials for each class, please come up with two or three questions for our class discussion. These may be based on a specific quote or may link several sources. You may keep these questions in your notebook/laptop or cloud but

make sure you have them handy each class. You will need to submit these questions for points on week 7 and 15.

V. Final Project

The final project for this class will be an opportunity to share your knowledge, research skills, and creativity in a way that helps you develop digital skills for **publicly engaged humanities**.

You will have the option to work collaboratively to create a podcast, video essay, or other digital product around a topic that you learned about in this class.

In week 5 we will discuss the objectives, steps, and resources to help you prepare for this project.

Recommended Events & Current Climate: Throughout the course, I will make you all aware of events in and beyond the campus and in the DMV area that are relevant to the course material. I will also include a section on Blackboard where you all can share events and resources with one another. Secondly, this course will always find much relevance in relation to the current social-political climate. We are always free (and encouraged) to tie what is going on in the world and in *our* worlds with class material and discussions.

Life Happens

- **If you need to miss one or more classes** due to extenuating circumstances (including for example, illness, self-quarantine, unexpected travel) please contact me as soon as possible so that we can work together make appropriate adjustments and chart a way forward.

Please keep in mind that this is an in-person class and it will be difficult to fully participate in a hybrid modality – e.g. by ‘zooming’ into class. Taking part in in-depth discussion of the texts and meaningful group work will be a key part of taking the class, and this will be challenging if you are not present in person. We can always find make-up options and workarounds in case of an emergency – but they will not substitute for being present in person.

- **Assignment due dates are set to support you in moving through the class material in a productive way, so wherever possible, it is best to stay on track if you can.** However, because life happens, you can have a “life happens pass” per semester that will grant you a 48 hour extension on one assignment. No questions asked or explanations needed. This does not apply to your final project.

The key here is good planning and good communication. It will be a less stressful semester for you if you plan your assignment schedule carefully and always, always make regular back-ups of electronic files. If you run into difficulties, please don’t hesitate to get in touch with me: there is always a way forward and we will figure it out together.

- If you cannot attend a class or may need flexibility regarding an assignment deadline due to **religious observance**, please let me know in advance so that we can plan for this

together, including opportunities to make up work or material missed and/or adapting the assignment schedule as appropriate.

There are two non-negotiable constraints on the flexibility I can offer:

1. Instructors are not permitted to accept any additional work after final grades have been entered, so it is important to communicate with me about any problems or delays, especially towards the end of the semester.
2. A grade of 'incomplete' can be awarded to provide the opportunity to complete missing work as long as (a) this is requested and agreed in writing (email is fine for this) before final grades are entered, and (b) 60% of the coursework has been completed and you are on track to pass the course.

Office of Disability Services

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474.

All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

Diversity/Religious Holidays

If there are any issues related to religious holidays, please inform the instructor the first week of class. See also <http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=5&navoid=104>

Academic Integrity

See the last page of the syllabus for the University's policy on academic integrity. All written assignments for this course must be in MLA format. If you are unsure about a citation, ASK! Plagiarism is much more than submitting a paper you found online. If you do not include a works cited or fail to follow MLA or APA correctly in your papers, you will not receive a passing grade for the assignment and I am obligated as an instructor to report your case to the Honor Committee. Please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process or visit <https://oai.gmu.edu/>, the Office of Academic Integrity's website.

What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form.

Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions.

AI-Generated texts (Chat GPT and others)

Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments should be prepared by the student, and sources should be clearly quoted and cited.

AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism.

Artificially generated content, which includes, but is not limited to, the use of artificial intelligence tools in taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or other assessments, is not permitted in this course.

Statement on Inclusion and Safe Learning

It is my intent that this learning community be a space for learning and growth, both in and out of class, where students from all diverse backgrounds, perspectives and learning needs be well-served. A community where the diversity that the students bring be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

Important note: Given the sensitive and challenging nature of the material discussed in class, it is imperative that there be an atmosphere of trust and safety in the classroom. I will attempt to foster an environment in which each class member is able to hear each other.

It is expected that some of the material in this course may evoke strong emotions, please be respectful of others' emotions and be mindful of your own. Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom, by either myself or other students, is particularly troubling or causes discomfort or offense. While our intention may not be to cause discomfort or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course is not to be ignored and is something that I consider to be very important and deserving of attention. If and when this occurs, you may:

Discuss the situation privately with me. I am always open to listening to students' experiences and want to work with you to find acceptable ways to address the issue.

Discuss the situation with the class. Chances are there is at least one other student in the class who had a similar response to the material. Discussion enhances the ability for all class participants to have a fuller understanding of context and impact of course material and class discussions.

(Adapted from Prof. Lynn Hernandez, Brown University)

Names and Pronouns

Our names are closely attached to who we are and our sense of self, as well as how we are seen by others. Appropriate pronoun use is a basic requirement for inclusivity and mutual respect. In the first class, I will invite everyone to share their name and gender pronouns and to let us know how best to address them. If you make a mistake about someone's name or pronoun, acknowledge your mistake, apologize (briefly), correct and move on: we all make mistakes, what matters is that we strive to relate to each other with care and respect.

Mason allows students and employees to use a chosen or preferred first name and indicates their pronouns where possible (i.e.: class rosters, Blackboard, and PatriotWeb). See here for additional information: <https://registrar.gmu.edu/updating-chosen-name-pronouns/>

My pronouns are '*she/her/ella*' and I go by "Professor Claudia" in my role as an instructor (in class and class-related emails).

Student Privacy and Video Recordings

All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course sites are private; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.

Anti-Racism Statement

As a member of the George Mason University community, I will work to create an educational environment that is committed to anti-racism and inclusive excellence. An anti-racist approach to higher education acknowledges the ways that individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural manifestations of racism against Black individuals, indigenous people, and other people of color contribute to inequality and injustice in our classrooms, on our campuses, and in our communities. Anti-racist work strives to provide our community members with resources to interrupt cycles of racism so as to cultivate a more equitable, inclusive, and just environment for all of our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends, regardless of racial background. I believe that the work of anti-racism starts with each individual; together students and faculty in this course will build knowledge and take actions rooted in principles of equity, inclusion, and justice that we will carry with us throughout our lives.

Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination and a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been

sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. University Policy 1202: Sexual Harassment and Misconduct speaks to the specifics of Mason's process, the resources, and the options available to students.

Confidential student resources are available on campus at the Student Support and Advocacy Center (<http://ssac.gmu.edu/>), Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://caps.gmu.edu/>), and Student Health Services (<http://shs.gmu.edu/>).

As a faculty members and designated "Responsible Employees," **I am required** to report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per university policy 1412. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact the Student Support and Advocacy Center (703-380-1434) or Counseling and Psychological Services (703-993-2380). You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator (703-993-8730; titleix@gmu.edu).

Resources

WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES CENTER; JC 240K (703) 993-2986; <http://wmst.gmu.edu/center/>

The Women and Gender Studies Center sponsors programs and events that are relevant to this course. It has a library of material that may be checked out. We support several student organizations and provide internship opportunities. We also offer free printing to all of our enrolled students and minors. Hours: Mondays-Thursdays 9-6 and Fridays from 9-2.

LGBTQ+ Resources: <https://lgbtq.gmu.edu/>

Student Engagement for Racial Justice: <https://ccee.gmu.edu/serj/>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): (703) 993-2380; <http://caps.gmu.edu/>

Office of Disability Services (ODS): 703-993-2472 <http://ods.gmu.edu/>

Student Support and Advocacy Center: <http://ssac.gmu.edu>

University Libraries: <http://library.gmu.edu/>

Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>

For a full list of student support resources, please see the Stearn's Center:
<https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/knowning-mason-students/student-support-resources-on-campus/>

Writing Center

The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>]. You can now sign up for an Online Writing Lab (OWL) session just like you sign up for a face-to-face session in the Writing Center, which means

YOU set the date and time of the appointment! Learn more about the [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/tutoring/email--tutoring). See ([http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/ tutoring/email--tutoring](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/tutoring/email--tutoring))

Counseling and Psychological Services

The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu>].

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), also known as the "Buckley Amendment," is a federal law that gives protection to student educational records and provides students with certain rights. [See <http://registrar.gmu.edu/privacy>].

CALENDAR

Please find the calendar on a separate page on Blackboard. Also, follow the readings and homework in folders created for each class.