

**REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN (IN POPULAR CULTURE)**  
**Women and Gender Studies 100-01**

Tuesday and Thursday, 3- 4:15pm

Instructor: Christina Riley

Office Hours: T/Th 2pm

\*Office hours subject to change; I will alert students if so.

Do let me know if you plan on coming by.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

This is an introductory course that seeks to examine the role of gender in various social institutions. We will begin by exploring the origins of sex differences as well as discuss the role of socialization in gender differences. The majority of the semester we will be examining gender as an analytical tool that affects and is affected by individuals, social structures, and their intersection. Additionally, this course explores portrayals of women and gender, primarily by using film and novels, both in the US and globally.

- Student will gain an understanding of the concepts of sex, gender, sexuality and identity
- Students will be exposed to various portrayals of women and gender both in the US and globally
- Students will be exposed to feminist and intersectional theory as a framework for critical analysis of gender and sexuality and institutions as well as in the media
- Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the interconnectedness, difference, and diversity of a global society
- Apply awareness of global issues to a consideration of individual or collective responsibilities within a global society
- Devise analytical, practical, or creative responses to global problems or issues

**TAKE NOTE:**

- Drop/add without penalty: September 5<sup>th</sup>
- Participation is 30% of total grade\*
  - Part of this grade is determined by students bringing in one piece of media that has come out in the last week which addresses themes/motifs we encounter throughout the course. They will shortly present this idea to the class; we will then collectively discuss.
- Final Essay/Presentation (8-10 pages) (5-7 minute presentation)

## REQUIRED TEXTS

*When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*, Joan Morgan

**A SERIES OF ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD.**

**YOU MUST CHECK YOUR EMAIL DAILY AS THIS WILL BE MY PRIMARY MEANS OF COMMUNICATION WITH YOU. FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH INSTRUCTIONS OR DIRECTIONS DISSEMINATED ON EMAIL WILL BE TREATED THE SAME AS FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH INSTRUCTIONS IN THE SYLLABUS!!!! ALSO PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ABOVE SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.**

## **PROCEDURAL MATTERS:**

Although I will be giving lectures, this is primarily a discussion course. Therefore, I expect you to come to class having done the assigned reading. Use the schedule as your guide. There is a lot of reading, try not to get behind! Secondly, I want to point out that some of the material we will cover in this course will be emotionally charged and sensitive, especially to some people. Therefore, please think before you speak and make every effort to be considerate of the feelings and opinions of others. It is only in a safe and open environment that true learning can take place. I will demand that we maintain such an environment. Finally, please be particularly sensitive when I have invited visitors to class.

### Ground Rules:

1. Open, frank discussion without referring to groups by derogatory manner, that is, the use of terms that are or have been used to describe groups of people in a demeaning way will NOT be used in class.
2. Confront ideas, concepts, theories. Do NOT confront/attack individuals.
3. Emotion is great, but so is cognition.
4. To make this course work we'll all need to:
  - a. Afford each other mutual respect
  - b. Confidentiality with regard to discussions in class
  - c. Agree to disagree, agreeably!
  - d. Examine self/explore
  - e. Non-judgmental of others
  - f. Know and say what you feel

- g. Value each other
- h. Be honest with self and others
- i. Show humility and keep an open mind
- j. Use appropriate humor
- k. Be direct
- l. Attack issues not individuals
- m. Listen constructively
- n. Question and participate
- o. Share responsibility

## **REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

Please note that no late work will be accepted. This necessitates students who are absent to email the professor before the missed class, and the professor will clarify expected readings or HW for the following class. Please grant the instructor at least 24 hours to respond.

Students must provide thoughtful and respectful input in discussion for participation grade.

Each class will begin with an overview of current issues regarding women's representation culled from today's [yesterday's] media. Students will receive high participation marks for arriving with a relevant topic of discussion to begin class with as well as a thoughtful response or feedback. Obviously, not everyone will be able to share something every day, but the hope is that each student will have at least one addition to this section of the class.

## **Final Transnational Women's Project:**

Final essay will be submitted to a plagiarism check program.

This is not a research essay. Do not cite other sources (no more than 10%). This is an essay that looks at a primary source document from the transnational sphere- film, book, comic, digital media, art, article, song, dance, creative text, photograph, meme, game, etc- that has been sourced from outside of the Western world. It argues a point regarding this research object. The thesis will stake a claim and then provide supports to uphold that claim.

Ex: The book *Persepolis* asks readers to understand the universality of women's struggles. We see this through the author's usage of American cultural artifacts as well as through the all too human struggles of the main character, Marjane.

Your essays will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Demonstrates complexity and depth in analyses and responses to your primary text and ensuing assertions.
- Provides evidence of significant engagement in the course ideas, focusing on the role and representation of women in an international context
- Shows attention to writing style (e.g., clarity in writing; evidence of having edited and proofread the work)
- Portrays a clear understanding of what transnational feminism means and how their chosen text deepens, adds to, critiques, probes, highlights, influences, etc, transnational feminist concerns.

### ***Class participation:***

Through class discussions and group/individual assignments, you will have the opportunity to discover new perspectives and examine ideas that were previously unchallenged. Open discussion depends on the development of trust and safety of participants as well as risk-taking and effective facilitation. Participation means more than coming to class; it means being fully present in class. It means coming to class ready to participate (having done the readings and otherwise prepared). It means participating in class discussion and debates. It means asking questions. If you are not sure what it means to actively participate in class, ask!

- **Reading memos**

Memos must critically engage with the chosen text. They must concern themselves with the writer's critical response to the text. Does the writer have a personal connection to the subject? Are there related concerns or texts? Memos can include questions from the reading that remain unclear, questions that are designed for further discussion based on the reading, or a critique of the reading. MEMOS MAY NOT SIMPLY BE A SUMMARY OF THE READING. Memos will guide our daily discussions. Grading preference will be given to critiques and questions that are designed for further discussion.

### **Grading**

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Final Essay and Presentation	20%, 10%
Memos/In-class assignments/HW	40%
Class participation	30%
Total	100%

The following grading scale will be used to determine your final grade:

95-100% A	66-69% D+
90-94% A-	63-65% D
86-89% B+	60-62% D-
83-85% B	Below 60% F
80-82% B-	
76-79% C+	
73-75% C	

## SCHEDULE

Week 1: Tuesday, August 29<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, August 31<sup>st</sup>

### ***The Turn of the Century Woman***

Tue: Introductions/What is feminism to you? What is this class about?  
Expectations. Learning environment. \*Brief historical overview of feminisms  
HW: Fuchs-Epstein reading

Thur: Discuss Fuchs-Epstein reading.  
[Women's Roles at the Turn of the Century](#) [WWI](#)

Week 2: Tuesday, September 5<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, September 7<sup>th</sup>

Tue: Chopin's "Story of an Hour"  
Reading: Susan Sontag's "Fascinating Fascism"

### ***The Nazi Feminine Ideal***

Thur: *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*  
HW: memo on Riefenstahl, Dietrich

Week 4: Tuesday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup>

Tue: Marlene Dietrich doc  
HW: memo on Riefenstahl, Dietrich

### ***Hollywood's Heroines***

Thur: The 1950's Woman (adverts)  
HW: find sexist advert, write-up

Week 5: Tuesday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday September 21<sup>st</sup>

Tue: *All About Eve*  
HW: *The Feminine Mystique* excerpt

Thur: *All About Eve* cont'd  
HW: memo viewer response

Week 6: Tuesday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, September 28<sup>th</sup>  
***Women in Poetry***

Tue: Modern Female Poets- Sexton, Plath, Stein, Bishop  
\*Stein bio, clip / Bishop bio, clip  
HW: Read rest of poetry packet- Sexton and Plath

Thur: Modern Female Poets- Sexton, Plath, Stein, Bishop  
\*Sexton bio, interview / Plath bio, interview  
HW: poetry memo

Week 7: Tuesday, October 4<sup>rd</sup>, and Thursday, October 6<sup>th</sup>  
***Gender as Performance***

Tue: Social Constructionism, Butler – watch *Paris is Burning*  
HW: Butler excerpt reading

Thur: *Paris is Burning* cont'd  
HW: memo response

Week 8: Tuesday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, October 13<sup>th</sup>  
***Transnational Feminism***

Tue: **NO CLASS (email memo by start of class)**  
HW: Start considering your transnational women's project topic, read  
[http://www.choike.org/documentos/wsf\\_s106\\_brenner.pdf](http://www.choike.org/documentos/wsf_s106_brenner.pdf)  
AND  
Margot Badran

Additional reading if desired:  
Chandra Talpade Mohanty

Thur: Introduce transnational feminism, intersectionality  
HW: Patricia Hill Collins

Week 9: Tuesday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup>  
***Women in Hip Hop***

Tue: discuss PHC, hip hop feminism. Joan Morgan interview/ Lil Kim (videos)  
HW: *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*

Thur: Joan Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost* in-class exercise  
HW: *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*

Week 10: Tuesday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup>

Tue: [“We Are All Feminists”](#) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (30m)  
HW: bell hooks “Moving Beyond Pain”

Thur: Bey Day- bell hooks’ “Moving Beyond Pain,” excerpts of *LeTueade*  
Reading: memo

Week 11: Tuesday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, and Thursday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>  
***Primetime Women***

Tue: 60s and 70s- Mary Tyler Moore, *All In the Family*  
HW: project proposal

Thur: 80s: *Designing Women*, *Dynasty*, Claire Huxtable  
HW: [Roxanne Gay](#) on *Girls*

Week 12: Tuesday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, November 9<sup>th</sup>

Tue: *Sex and the City*, *Girls*  
HW: *Kill All Normies* excerpt

***Women in the Digital Realm***

Thur: Cyberfeminism. Women’s online activism  
HW: memo

Week 13: Tuesday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>

Tue: Women and net art  
HW: Net art collage

Thur: share collage, #GamerGate, watch the [Tropes vs Women in Video Games](#)  
HW: excerpt from *Citizen*

Week 14: Tuesday, November 21<sup>st</sup>, and Thursday November 23<sup>rd</sup>

Tue: Microaggressions and affect/ #YESALLWOMEN and [www.feministkilljoys.com](http://www.feministkilljoys.com)  
HW: memo on microaggressions

Thur: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving day break) (email memo on microaggressions)

Week 15: Tuesday, November 28<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, November 30<sup>th</sup>

Tue: PRESENTATIONS

Thur: PRESENTATIONS

Week 16: Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup>

Tue: PRESENTATIONS

Thur: PRESENTATIONS

**FINAL PAPER DUE ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13<sup>TH</sup> @ 1:30**

**\*\*Please submit final paper to Blackboard\*\***

## **CAMPUS POLICIES**

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely.

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.

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.



## GMU EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Students must use their Mason email accounts—either the existing “MEMO” system or a new “MASONLIVE” account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

## CAMPUS SOURCES

### 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 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu> The University Writing Center provides free tutorial sessions for all students needing help with any writing project from freshman essays to scholarly publications. It is best to make an appointment; walk-ins are accepted if there are openings at that time. Assistance is also offered online. You are highly encouraged to take advantage of this free service!

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES “Ask a Librarian”  
<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380;  
<http://caps.gmu.edu>

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, as well as a course reserve with all of the books that are used in this and every other WMST course. Course reserves may not be checked out, but students are free to use the materials in the center. We also support several student organizations and provide internship opportunities. We also offer free printing to all of our enrolled students and minors. During the first week of classes you will be emailed instructions for registering for free printing.

