

WMST 200-1: Introduction to Women and Gender Studies
George Mason University
Fall 2017
T/Th 10:30am – 11:45am
B224 Robinson Hall

Instructor:

Ray LeBlanc

rleblan@masonlive.gmu.edu

[@raysieb](#)

Office Appointment Hours:

Women & Gender Studies

239G Johnson Center

T/Th 11:45am-12:45pm

Course Description and Objectives:

Introduction to Women and Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary course that examines the role of gender in social institutions. The aim of this course is to introduce you to key concepts in the field of Women and Gender Studies, such as gender/sex systems, body, labor, motherhood and family, equality, socialization, and sexuality. Throughout the course, we will consider gender as an analytical tool as we discover new approaches to feminist histories and socio-political struggles. We will discuss and analyze issues facing all gender minorities, how these cultural forces are reproduced, and finally how they are creatively protested and challenged. As we discuss the role of gendered socialization in creating social divisions and interrogate powerful effects of these divisions in everyday life experiences, we will also evaluate visions for equality, justice and liberation.

Throughout this course students will:

- Be introduced to the ways in which gender and sexuality shape, inform, enable or disable people's relationships in a variety of spaces;
- To recognize the situation of women in national and global contexts;
- Gain an understanding of intersectional and interdisciplinary frameworks;
- Learn how to read, interpret and synthesize canonical literature in gender and sexuality studies and engage with feminist theory as a framework for critical analysis of gender, sexuality and institutions;
- Gain fluency in critical thinking and effective communication through different mediums (writing, digital, creative and public).

This course fulfills the University's general education (Mason Core) requirement for "Social and Behavioral Science," which entails the following learning outcomes:

1. Explain how individuals, groups or institutions are influenced by contextual factors;
2. Demonstrate awareness of changes in social and cultural constructs;
3. 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.

For more information on Mason Core, please browse the following website: <http://masoncore.gmu.edu/general-education-at-mason-2>

Course Materials:

Most readings are pdf files or links on Blackboard. You must purchase or rent two books, print or digital:

- Mock, Janet. *Redefining Realness*. 2014.
- Moraga, Cherrie and Gloria Anzaldúa. *This Bridge Called My Back*, 4th ed. 2015.

Class Rules:

- **Respect privacy** – What happens in class stays in class. Unless you directly ask for and receive permission, do not share information you learn about your peers with anyone else. The classroom is a

secure space where we will discuss personal experiences and attitudes. In addition, please refrain from sharing personal details about acquaintances and friends. Experiences shared in class must remain relevant to the course and have direct connections to the material.

- ***Speak only for yourself*** – No one in this class has the authority to speak for *all* straight people, gay people, people of color, women, men, GMU students, or even for *one* other person. Tell us what you believe and feel when talking about personal experience and viewpoint. If you are making an assertion that goes beyond that, find research-based evidence to support your assertions and cite the studies you are talking about. Always be clear about which of the two you are doing (talking about personal views or discussing research findings). Be careful to separate fact and opinion, using “I think” and “I feel” to introduce your own thoughts in discussion.
- ***Use humanizing language*** – If you take issue with something someone says, respond to the idea rather than attacking the person. Marginalized people have the latitude to use the terms they find empowering to talk about themselves and the groups they belong to, but all students will refrain from using racial, sexual or gender slurs, identities ending with “-ed” (eg. transgendered, colored, etc.), or any other similarly derogatory term in discussion or in written work. Repeatedly using inappropriate and incorrect terms throughout the semester will result in losing points on assignments.
- ***Listen to what people say*** – If someone shares a relevant experience or viewpoint, we can and will analyze it, think about its connection to broader social patterns, explore its ramifications, and link it to our course materials. We will not, however, openly disbelieve, discount, or discredit what others say about their own experiences. Sharing personal stories can be scary in a classroom full of strangers—so let’s give each other the benefit of the doubt and believe what people say about their own lives, even when subjecting our experiences to critical analysis. Students are encouraged to join the discussion at will, but only one person may speak at once. Refrain from interjecting, holding side conversations or giving live commentary.
- ***Open technology*** – Kindles, Nooks and other eReader or tablet devices are welcomed and encouraged. Laptops and smartphones are allowed if used responsibly for reading and note-taking. Use of headphones in class is strictly prohibited, in addition to any audio over speakers, phone calls, messaging or social media.

Grading:

Essays	25%	A+	97-99%	B-	80-82%	D	60-62%
Pop Quizzes	25%	A	93-96%	C+	77-79%	D-	60-62%
Projects	25%	A-	90-92%	C	73-76%	F	0-60%
Reading Responses	25%	B+	87-89%	C-	70-72%		
		B	83-86%	D+	67-69%		

I do not discuss grades over e-mail or in class. If you would like to speak with me about an exam, assignment, final grade, or any other graded material you must come to my office and speak with me face-to-face. If you cannot come to my office hours, I will gladly schedule an appointment that works with your schedule. If you wish to appeal a grade on an assignment, you must submit a grade appeal **within 4 days** of receiving the grade, and you must follow these procedures:

- Wait at least 24 hours before setting up an appointment and submitting your written grade appeal to ensure you have carefully read and considered the feedback.
- After reading my feedback, submit a typed, written appeal that identifies the specific issue in question (e.g. quiz item, etc.) and explains the specific and well-supported reasons you believe the grade should be changed. Please refer to any class materials that support your rationale for a change.

Focus less on explaining that you deserve a certain grade, and more on proving that you accomplished specific objectives that you were not given the appropriate credit for. Make sure to cite specific instances from your assignment to provide support for these claims.

- The written appeal should be submitted at least 24 hours prior to the appointment.
- When you arrive for the scheduled appointment, bring in your graded copy of the item in question (e.g., quiz, exam, etc.) and any additional evidence to support your claims and be ready to present them.
- After meeting with you, I will decide within two school days whether to change or uphold the grade.
- I will provide you with a written justification of my decision.
- If we cannot come to an agreement, you are welcome to contact the Women and Gender Studies program for a departmental appeal.

Reading Responses:

There are ten at-home Blackboard reading responses, of which you will choose eight to complete. It is the student's responsibility to ensure these are completed in a timely manner throughout the semester. Only certain days are eligible for these reflections, which are designated in the course schedule using asterisks on the day of the week. Late submissions will receive 10% off, with an additional 5% off for each additional day late. These responses have a 350-word minimum and should be posted on Blackboard by noon before class, following four main objectives:

- Summarize the key arguments of the day's assigned readings
- Explain their importance to broader sociocultural systems and Women and Gender Studies
- Make connections to other course readings or real-world contexts
- Personal reactions, interests and questions

Pop Quizzes:

On randomly selected days, you will complete short quizzes assessing your comprehension of and ability to apply course materials. Quizzes will come in a number of different formats: essays, multiple choice, and short answer, for example. Quizzes will not be announced in advance and make-ups will not be given for any reason. Because they replace the exams we would otherwise have, you will be expected to engage insightfully with assigned readings, lectures, videos, and/or concepts from the course in your answers. The two lowest quiz scores will be dropped at the end of the semester. If an emergency situation arises, you must document the emergency and notify me immediately. I will determine how to handle emergency cases on an individual basis. All quizzes will require your own paper.

Essays:

There will be two 3-5 page essays. Essays submitted past midnight will receive 10% off, with an additional 5% off for every hour late - no exceptions. These are expected to be complete and thought-out arguments with a clear thesis. For all written assignments, please use Times New Roman, 12pt, double-spaced with 1 inch margins, normal 8.5/11 sized paper and as a Microsoft Word file (not Pages or a PDF!). Both essays require at least three sources assigned in this course and two outside, scholarly sources.

You must use a citation method, whether APA, MLA or Chicago – as long as it is consistent and legitimate with a works cited page. Using quotes to support your argument is one of the most critical components of an essay, along with organized paragraphs, topic sentences and conclusions. For more information, visit the Writing Center to speak with tutors at no charge. Review the guides on their website, specifically:

- How to Write a Thesis Statement, <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/thesis-statements>
- Introduction and Conclusions for Humanities, <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/introductions-and-conclusions-for-humanities-papers>
- 23 Ways to Improve Your Draft, <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/23-ways-to-improve-your-draft>

- Quotation, Paraphrase, Summary, and Analysis, <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/quotation-paraphrase-summary-and-analysis>

Additionally, you may review this short guide to writing on Women and Gender Studies:

https://writingcenter.appstate.edu/sites/writingcenter.appstate.edu/files/Women's_Studies_WAG.pdf

And there are extensive research tutorials provided by University Libraries: <http://library.gmu.edu/tutorials>

Your first essay, due on 10/12 at midnight, will investigate a topic or issue relevant to Women and Gender Studies. Each student will select a topic from an approved list, or may propose their own topic to me in an email, with no repeats. Your essay will essentially be a research report, reviewing the topic and explaining its importance. Your findings will be presented to the class on 10/12 to broaden our understanding of Women and Gender Studies. The presentations should be short and concise, using some sort of visual aide, whether handouts or a PowerPoint.

Your second essay, due on 12/14 by midnight, will investigate privilege, power and intersectionality. Drawing primarily from our two required texts and course materials, your essay should expand on the complexities of race, gender and sexuality to conclude an argument which illustrates a greater understanding of systems of inequality. A more detailed prompt will be provided later in the semester.

Projects:

The first project, due on 9/28 by the start of class, will highlight influential figures to Women and Gender Studies, explaining their full significance and context. Each student will select an author, theorist, activist, politician, artist or fictional character of their choosing. No repeats are allowed, so we will share our proposals in class. You will produce a page on our class blog dedicated to your figure. It must include a biography, picture, an extensive summary and analysis of their contributions and influence, selected works/appearances, relevant tags and any other supporting information. You may format your blog page however you choose, as long as it reflects your figure's importance to the field. You must use at least six sources. Invitations to join the WordPress blog will be sent to your Mason emails.

During our scheduled final exam time, 12/19 from 10:30am-1:15pm, you will present in groups on a particular pop culture event or object. Select an object from popular culture and analyze representations of women, gender and sexuality. What does your object suggest about gender, women or sexuality? Do you recognize any social meanings and ideas? What is the broader context of your object? How is the object suggesting ideas about gender? Could it be regarded as feminist, anti-feminist, both or neither? Your object may be a video, song lyrics, television show, news article, advertisement, movie, a character, book, meme, t-shirt design, etc. You must make clear and direct connections to at least three class sources in addition to one outside source.

Missing Class/Assignments:

If you miss a class, you should first contact one of your classmates (Blackboard) to see what material you missed. Contacting me about your absence is not required. Minor engagement grades issued in-class cannot be made up since they require participation in discussion and are often worth a small amount of points. Credit will be given at discretion for only documented absences. Appointments scheduled during class time are not excused.

If you will be unable to do an assignment because of a circumstance outside your control, please email me ahead of time so we can discuss your options. Any consecutive absences will impact your grade and will need to be addressed. I understand life circumstances and personal duties may affect your student responsibilities, but you must speak with me *beforehand*. No excuses will be given for incomplete, late or missing work past the assignment's due date and time.

Technological mishaps and misfortunes will *not* be excused for any missing or late assignments. Any file that is corrupt or unreadable will not receive credit and cannot be made up. Ensure all your documents and data are safely backed-up in some fashion. Fenwick Library and the Johnson Center are expansive and accessible resources for printing and Internet access.

Warnings/Resources:

We will discuss a variety of sensitive topics in this course, including but not limited to violence, rape, abuse, abortion, religion, prejudice, sexuality and anatomy. Some of the terms we use in class may be striking. We will also be critical of society and institutions, challenging ideas that many people hold as firm beliefs and truths. The classroom is a safe space, so if you feel uncomfortable or need assistance please let me know as soon as possible or visit my office hours.

Counseling and Psychological Services offers a range of mental health and other support services for Mason students. I encourage you to contact them at (703) 993-2380 or go to <http://caps.gmu.edu/> for online crisis chat and other supportive services. The Student Support and Advocacy Center's Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence Crisis Line is open 24/7 for support, information and referrals for sexual trauma at (703) 380-1434. Visit their website at <http://ssac.gmu.edu/> for more. Queer, trans and questioning students may find assistance through Mason's LGBTQ Resources, <http://lgbtq.gmu.edu/>.

Please send me an email, visit me after class or at office hours to discuss any problematic behaviors, actions or content in the classroom.

Women and Gender Studies at George Mason:

The Women and Gender Studies Program offers an interdisciplinary minor to undergraduate students. This is a 21-credit minor that works well with most majors and can be structured to fit your interests. Feminist scholarship has influenced many disciplines and the minor provides students with the tools necessary to engage with issues of gender, race, sexuality and class in various texts and contexts.

The Women and Gender Studies Center is located in the Johnson Center, Room 240K. The Women and Gender Studies Center organizes a variety of lectures, workshops, and activities relevant to campus life throughout the academic year. They also have a collection of over 1000 books relevant to Gender Studies, which students may check out with their George Mason ID card. All students are welcome to hang out, seek resources and study at the center.

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.

Academic Integrity:

George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving that person credit: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm#plagiarism> To avoid plagiarism, ensure usage of in-text citation and quotations.

Please familiarize yourself with the Honor System and Code, as stated in the George Mason University *Undergraduate Catalog*. When you are given an assignment as an individual, the work must be your own. Some of your work may be collaborative; source material for group projects and work of individual group members

must be carefully documented for individual contributions: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>

Disability Services:

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. The need for accommodations should be identified at the beginning of the semester and the specific accommodation has to be arranged through the Office of Disability Resources. Faculty cannot provide accommodations to students on their own (e.g. allowing a student extra time to complete an exam because the student reports having a disability).

Course Schedule:

Assignments, readings, and due dates are subject to change. The schedule lists what we will be doing in class that day, readings must be done prior to the listed class session. Films will be screened in class. Blackboard takes precedence over this schedule.

T	8/29	Syllabus Day
Th*	8/31	<i>Feminism is for Everybody</i> , Intro through Chap 3, hooks "You're a Hardcore Feminist, I Swear," Valenti "Why Men Should Support Gender Equality," Kimmel
T	9/5	"Four Waves of Feminism," Martha Rampton "Feminist Movements and ideologies," Wikipedia TBCMB: "Wonder Woman," Genny Lim "I Walk in the History of my People," Chrystos
Th	9/7	"Ain't I a Woman?," Truth "Up Against the Wall Miss America, Welch TBCMB: "I Don't Understand Those Who Have Turned Away From Me," Cyrstos
T*	9/12	"Night to His Day," Lorber "#YesAllWomen, But Not Really," Heideman "Being a Woman: Who Gets to Decide," King
Th*	9/14	"White Privilege," Peggy McIntosh "Oppression," Marilyn Frye TBCMB: "The Bridge Poem," Kate Rushin
T	9/19	"On White Pride and Other Delusions," Tim Wise TBCMB: "A Black Feminist Statement," Combahee River Collective "The Pathology of Racism," davis davenport
Th	9/21	"Toward a New Vision," Hill Collins TBCMB: "Asian Pacific American Women and Feminism," Mitsuye Yamada
T	9/26	"Why Intersectionality can't wait," Crenshaw TBCMB: "-But I Know You, American Woman," Judit Moschkovich "And When You Leave, Take Your Pictures With You," Jo Carrillo
Th	9/28	"Becoming 100% Straight," Michael Messner "Sexual Fluidity Before Sex," Rupp Blog Project Due by start of class
T*	10/3	"Heterosexual Questionnaire," Martin Rochlin "Masculinity as Homophobia," Kimmel TBCMB: "Lesbianism: an Act of Resistance," Cheryl Clarke

Th	10/5	“The Five Sexes, Revisited,” Fausto-Sterling “Gender as Told by Science,” Vitolo-Haddad
T	10/10	No class. Monday classes meet.
Th	10/12	First essay due at midnight, in-class presentations Fall for the Book: Janet Mock, 2-3pm
T*	10/17	“Trans Woman Manifesto,” Serano “Trans Identities and Contingent Masculinities,” Blackwood
Th*	10/19	<i>Redefining Realness</i> , Author’s Note through Chapter 4 Film: <i>Kumu Hina</i> (2014)
T	10/24	<i>Redefining Realness</i> , Chapter 5 through Chapter 8
Th	10/26	Only Group A Meets <i>Redefining Realness</i> , Chapter 9 through Chapter 12
T	10/31	Only Group B Meets <i>Redefining Realness</i> , Chapter 9 through Chapter 12
Th	11/2	Film: <i>Miss Representation</i> (2011)
T	11/7	“Objectification,” Nussbaum “Body Projects,” Brumberg TBCMB: “Dreams of Violence,” Naomi Littlebear
Th*	11/9	“Porn Has Basically Become Today’s Unofficial Substitute for Sex Ed,” Helpern “Feminist Pornography?” Johnson “Breasted Experience,” Young
T*	11/14	“Female Genital Operations,” Heroy “The Labiaplasty Boom,” Holloway “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm” by Anne Koedt
Th	11/16	“The Relationship between Rape Myths and Sexual Scripts,” Ryan “List of Rape Myths,” Hamlin Film: <i>The Hunting Ground</i> (2015)
T*	11/21	“Son, Men Don’t Get Raped,” Penn “Fraternities and Rape on Campus,” Martin and Hummer Film: <i>The Hunting Ground</i> (2015)
Th	11/23	Thanksgiving Break
T*	11/28	“The Politics of Housework,” Mainardi “Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire and their Homegirls,” West “Too Poor to Parent?” Burroughs
Th	11/30	“The Lost Generation,” Myla Carpio PBS’ History of Puerto Rican Birth Control Trials TBCMB: “Gee, You Don’t Seem Like An Indian...”, Barbara Cameron
T	12/5	TBCMB: “Revolution,” Pat Parker “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” Audre Lorde
Th	12/7	“Mapping the Margins,” Crenshaw
Th	12/14	Second essay due by midnight
T	12/19	10:30am-1:15pm. Final Exam Time - Presentations