Women and Gender Studies Program

WMST 200: INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES

Fall 2015
MW 3:00—4:15pm
Enterprise Hall 274

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Course Description

Women and Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary program that seeks to address the impact of gender and sexuality on the world around us and on the inequalities that shape it. This course will offer an introduction to some of the current debates taking place within the interdisciplinary field of women’s and gender studies. During the course of the semester, we will grapple with historical as well as contemporary feminist concerns, paying close attention to both local and global issues. We will consider a wide variety of texts—from personal narratives and historical documents to films and cultural criticism—across a range of disciplines, including political science, media studies, anthropology, and sociology, to name but a few. In doing so, some of the goals of the course will be:

1. To get a sense of both historical and contemporary debates taking place within the field of women’s, gender, and sexuality studies, and become familiar with their language, theories, and methods of critical engagement
2. To consider the ways in which race, class, gender, and sexuality are linked and how such intersections have been articulated
3. To look for connections between local and global feminisms, while also keeping in mind that differences matter
4. To begin to grapple with some of the uneven effects of globalization
(5) To think more about our own self-positioning in an increasingly globalized world, and the extent to which identity is never simply a question of “us” and “them”

(6) To explore some of the ways in which feminism both interacts with and helps to bring about social change

This course satisfies the General Education requirement for social and behavioral science.

**Required Texts**

- Additional readings will be available online through Blackboard

The required text is available for purchase through the campus bookstore. Alternatively, you may purchase the course text through any other bookstore or online retailer.

**Course Requirements**

- Class attendance and participation: 25% (includes reading responses and study questions)
- Two 3-4 page analytical papers based on the assigned readings: 15% each (30% total)
- One in class group presentation on the assigned readings: 15%
- Event attendance and 1-2 page written response: 5%
- A final research paper (7-10 pages) on any issue relating to women’s, gender, and/or sexuality studies, due on December 14th (via email): 25%

**NOTE:** Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. Any papers submitted after the due date will be subject to a late penalty.

Incompletes will not be awarded, except in cases of severe illness.

**Attendance and Participation**

*Attendance:* your daily presence is critical to the success of the class. We take attendance daily, using a sign-in sheet (if you are late for class, make sure that you sign the sheet after class). An excused absence requires proper documentation (i.e. a doctor’s note or written proof of participation in a University or work-related event). If you are more than 20 minutes late for class, your lateness will be considered ½ an absence. You are responsible for making up missed work and obtaining any materials that are handed out during the missed class. Be aware that repeated unexcused absences will impact your participation grade.
Participation: participation means coming to class ready and prepared to make an active contribution to our discussions. In-class participation consists of all in-class work (i.e. participation, class discussions, informal presentations, group work, writing, and quizzes). Please print off a copy of all the assigned readings for each day and bring them with you to class. It is absolutely vital for your participation in this course that you bring hard copies of the readings with you to class each day; repeated failure to bring the appropriate materials with you to class will affect your participation grade.

Presentation
You will do the in-class presentation in groups of three or four on a topic to be assigned early in the semester. Each presentation should be 15-20 minutes in length. The project will require strong collaboration on the parts of all group members in order to achieve a good grade. In addition to participating in the in-class presentation, each member of the group should submit a one-page description of their contribution to the project on the day of the presentation.

Papers
You will write two 3-4 page papers and one final research-based paper. Essay prompts for the 3-4 page papers will be distributed two weeks before the due date for each of the papers. These prompts will include more detailed instructions and grading criteria. The final paper must utilize at least two of the course readings and five outside sources, using MLA citation style. An assignment sheet for the final paper will be distributed later in the semester.

The Writing Center on campus can also help you with your written assignments. For more information see: http://writingcenter.gmu.edu

Late or Missing Work
Assignments are due as indicated above and/or as announced in class. You must complete all the assignments listed above to pass this class. Late assignments will be penalized by 20% for each day that they are late.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity
All the work you submit in this course must have been written for this course and must originate with you in form and in content and with all sources fully and specifically acknowledged. In this course, the normal penalty for a violation of the code is an “F” for the term. Violations may also subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment; receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript; or being suspended from the University. You have the right to appeal any charges. For further information about the University’s policy regarding academic integrity see: http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm

Collaborative work of the following kinds is authorized in this course: peer review and critique of students’ essays by one another and, when approved by the instructor in particular cases, collaborative projects by pairs of students.
University Policies
I respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to my attention.

Students With Disabilities
Disabilities will be accommodated in conjunction with the Office of Disability Resources. If you think you have a qualified disability and need special accommodations, you should notify me and request verification of eligibility for accommodations from the Office of Disability Resources as soon as possible. You will need to contact the office at 703-993-2472.

Instructor-Student Interaction
Please take advantage of our office hours or schedule alternative times to see us if those hours don’t work for you, especially when you are writing papers. We are happy to speak with students about any aspect of the course. You may also e-mail us with any questions and comments about the course. Don’t, however, use e-mail as a substitute for coming to office hours. If you have substantive questions or comments, please come and see us.

Women and Gender Studies Commitment to Diversity Statement
The Women and Gender Studies program 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.

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.

You can learn about the Women and Gender Studies Minor and the Women’s Center at: http://www.gmu.edu/acadexcel/findex.html
Syllabus—Subject to Change

INTRODUCTION: WHY FEMINISM MATTERS TODAY

Week 1: Introduction

M Aug. 31st  Introductions, course overview
W Sept. 2nd  Alix Olson, “Womyn Before” (Blackboard)
             Lisa Jervis, “Goodbye to Feminism’s Generational Divide” (Blackboard)
             Melody Berger, “Introduction” (Blackboard)
             Jessica Valenti, “You’re a Feminist, Deal” (Blackboard)
             Kat Marie Yoas, “I Went to College and All I Got Was This Trailer-Trash T-Shirt” (Blackboard)

Week 2: Feminism(s) Defined


UNIT I: KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS IN WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES

Week 3: The Social Construction of Gender and the Sex/Gender System

M Sept. 14th  Judith Lorber, “‘Night to His Day’: The Social Construction of Gender” (FF, 33-48)
              Suzanne Kessler, “The Medical Construction of Gender” (FF, 49-62)


Week 4: Women, Gender, and the Media

M Sept. 21st  Laura Mulvey (1975), “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (Blackboard)
              In class discussion: Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954)

W Sept. 23rd  Rosalind Gill (2007), “Postfeminist Media Culture?” (Blackboard)
Week 5: Women of Color Feminism and Intersectionality

M Sept. 28th

Selections from Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (1981), eds., This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color (Blackboard):

- Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, “Introduction”
- Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”
- Mitsuye Yamada, “Asian Pacific American Women and Feminism”
- Barbara Cameron, “Gee, You Don’t Seem Like an Indian from the Reservation”
- Consuelo Nieto, “The Chicana and the Women’s Rights Movement”

W Sept. 30th

Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill (1996), “Theorizing Difference from Multiracial Feminism” (FF, 70-74)

Week 6: Lesbian Feminism

M Oct. 5th
Radicalesbians (1970), “The Woman Identified Woman” (Blackboard)


W Oct. 7th
Monique Wittig (1985), “One is Not Born a Woman”, “The Category of Sex” and “The Straight Mind” (Blackboard)

Week 7: Pornography and Erotica

T Oct. 13th
Catherine Mackinnon (1989), “Sexuality” (Blackboard)


Susie Bright (1992), introductions to Herotica 2 and 3: A Collection of Women’s Erotic Fiction (Blackboard)

PAPER ONE DUE

UNIT II: QUEER FEMINISMS

Week 8: Poststructuralist Feminism and Queer Theory

M Oct. 19th  Judith Butler (1990), excerpt from “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire,” in Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (Blackboard)

W Oct. 21st  Judith Butler (1991), “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” (Blackboard)

Week 9: Drag Queens and Transgender Feminisms

M Oct. 26th  Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp, “Learning from Drag Queens” (Blackboard)

Susan Stryker, “Transgender Feminism: Queering the Woman Question” (FF, 63-69)


Week 10: Gender, Sexuality and Disability

M Nov. 2nd  Rosemary Garland-Thomson (2002), “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory” (Blackboard)

Alison Kafer (2003), “Compulsory Bodies: Reflections on Heterosexuality and Able-Bodiedness” (Blackboard)

Debra Moddelmog and Brenda J. Brueggemann (2002), “Coming-Out Pedagogy: Risking Identity in Language and Literature Classrooms” (Blackboard)

**Week 11a: Intimacy, Asexuality and Queer Theory**

M Nov. 9th  Eunjung Kim (2011), “Asexuality in Disability Narratives” (Blackboard)

In class discussion: *(A)Sexual* (Angela Tucker, 2011)

**UNIT III: TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISMS**

**Week 11b: Thinking Feminism Transnationally**


- Women Living Under Muslim Laws, “Statement on Attacks in the USA”
- Delhi Women’s Petition, “Women Oppose War”
- Kalpana Sharma and Ayesha Khan, “Peace is the Only Option”
- Cynthia Enloe, “Masculinity as a Foreign Policy Issue”


**PAPER TWO DUE**

**Week 12: Global and Transnational Feminisms**


In class discussion: *Search for the Afghan Girl* (National Geographic, 2002)

**W Nov. 18th**  

http://www.feminist.com/resources/artspeech/inter/hill.htm

**Week 13: The Global Girl**

**M Nov. 23rd**  

Malala’s speech at the United Nations, July 12, 2013:  
https://secure.aworldatschool.org/page/content/the-text-of-malala-yousafzais-speech-at-the-united-nations/

The Nike Foundation:  
- “The Girl Effect” video  
- “I Dare You” video  
http://www.girleffect.org/

**THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**Week 14a: Reproductive Rights and Sexual Health**

**M Nov. 30th**  

Angela Davis (1990), “Racism, Birth Control, and Reproductive Rights” *(Blackboard)*


Cynthia Rothschild (2007), “Abstinence Goes Global: The United States, the Right Wing, and Human Rights” *(Blackboard)*

**Week 14b: Gender and Migration**

**W Dec. 2nd**  
Denise A. Segura and Patricia Zavella, “Gender in the Borderlands” *(FF, 75-86)*

**Week 15: The Imperial University**

**M Dec. 7th**

Monisha Das Gupta (2006), “Bewildered? Women’s Studies and the War on Terror” *(Blackboard)*


**W Dec. 9th**

Final Presentations

Conclusions, course evaluations

**M Dec. 14th**

Paper due by 5:00pm (via email)