**Course Information**   
Instructor: Kylie Musolf, kmusolf@gmu.edu  
Office Hours: TBD, schedule appointments via [www.calendly.com](http://www.calendly.com)

**General Overview**

Expect to get up close and personal with the earliest (and fieriest) arguments for women’s rights (aka feminism) in western history. We’ll do some conceptual heavy lifting to get through the foundations of intersectional feminist theory before turning to contemporary problems. Along the way, we’ll read some poetry, watch a few documentaries, analyze articles, and do a little collective marveling at the incredible depth of creativity in feminist scholarship and activism. One of the strengths of this course is its focus on feminisms of color, one weakness is a lack of engagement with sexuality studies. This course will provide a solid foundation for you to pursue studies in feminist philosophy and critical race studies.

**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.”

**Student Learning Objectives**

• Learn the basic vocabulary of intersectional feminist, gender, and queer theories in order to start nuancing some difficult conversations around contemporary issues.  
• Practice listening and observation skills (i.e. critical analysis) using feminist lenses through dialogue, research, and reflection.

• Reflect deeply on our own social positions and the ways that political, biological, and cultural concepts and structures make sense of our lives.  
• Make an original contribution to our feminist intellectual community.

**Warning**

Since my background is in philosophy, you can expect that this class will focus on the really difficult questions in this field. Overall, I want us to practice raising smart questions about gender and sexuality as we encounter them in our lives. This is not an ‘easy elective,’ we’re going to get messy and curious. This course is not particularly reading heavy (between 15-30 pages of very dense reading per week) but *thinking heavy* and will require semi-synchronous meetings variously throughout the semester. Therefore, you will be meeting via Zoom with me and a group of your peers more weeks than you will not in this course. You will need to decide if this is the kind/style of course you will learn well in.

**Course Materials**

All course materials will be provided to you via Blackboard Learn.

**Grading**

Small and Large Group Meetings: 20 points  
Discord Participation: 15 points  
Short Writing Assignments: 10 points

Individual Meetings: 10 points

Flipgrid/Written Collaborative Assignments: 15 points  
Final Project: 30 points

Total: 100 points

**Assignments**

Small and Large Group Meetings- Six times throughout the semester I will require students to join a Zoom call for a small or large group discussion of the reading materials. We will collectively determine the date and time for each call so that all students are able to attend and I will host multiple meeting times each week to accommodate student scheduling needs. The readings I assign are short but quite difficult, I do not expect or anticipate you will be able to understand to the best of your ability them without a dialogue between yourself, your classmates, and me. Importantly, participation will not look the same for everyone. Some folks will need to learn to listen as a form of participation; some folks will need to practice speaking up. Take some time to think about what kind of participation goals you have for yourself in this course. Absences can be made up by watching a recording of the meeting and recording your own response video on Flipgrid.

Discord Participation- Each week I encourage you to reflect and engage on the assigned readings via a discord chat server. The server exists as an informal chat space where you can share your thoughts and connect with peers. Most weeks there will be no prompts; the idea here is to help you to begin to grapple with the ideas you encounter in the texts and your lived experience and to build a feminist community of peers among learners in the course. For the three weeks on the syllabus where I have assigned discussion, substantive engagement is required and graded for participation.

Short Assignments- There are two individual short writing assignments (1000 words) in this course, worth five points each. The point of these written assignments is to help you develop the ability to articulate your questions and positions in contemporary feminist debates and to think through the (admittedly very difficult) material. Each short assignment will respond to a prompt and are to be submitted as a word document via email. You can earn up to 5 points of extra-credit for revising and resubmitting one of these essays, based on my feedback.

Flipgrid/Written Collaborative Assignments- There are three exercises, each worth five points for completion. Students will be trio-ed up with a classmate to create a round robin-style Flipgrid video or essay analyzing the course materials for a given week. Groups can choose either format (but are required to do at least one written essay). I want you to get to know one another and practice articulating your feminist perspectives and analyses both through writing and speech. Written assignments are to be emailed to me as word documents.

Individual Meetings- For weeks where there are individual meetings, you will be required to schedule a time to meet with me one on one via Zoom meeting (at a time that is as convenient for you as I can manage). You are required to show up having prepared for our discussion. Absence and unprepared attendance are the only ways to lose points here.

Final Project- Through our individual meetings we will determine final projects on an individual basis (unless there is significant interest in group projects). We will also develop a grading contract so that we both know how to evaluate this final work. The goal is for you to find a personally meaningfully way to contribute to the field of women’s studies. You may find inspiration in terms of form from the course materials we’ll examine, such as: poetry, scholarly research, documentary, visual art, letter-writing, museum curation, educational campaigns, children’s literature, and more.

**Policies and Requirements**

Reasonable Accommodations- Please be in contact with me directly, as well as Disability Services, should you require any accommodations for the course. For more info:

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit http://dsgmu.wpengine.com/ for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

Trigger/Content Warnings- I have chosen not to place trigger warnings on specific pieces in the syllabus because triggers are unique and highly personal. It’s not possible for me to discern in advance what content has the potential to be upsetting and/or triggering to every one of my students, and I do not want to inadvertently create a hierarchy of what material is “intense” or “real” enough to warrant a warning.

Academic Integrity- If you aren’t familiar with GMU’s Academic Integrity policy, read up here:

“To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal and/or lie in matters related to academic work.” More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at <http://oai.gmu.edu>

Late Work- Late work submission is not a right but a privilege. You may submit one assignment up to three days late, no questions asked. \* After that, there will be questions. For your one late assignment, just indicate somehow that this assignment is “FASHIONABLY LATE.”

\*This does not apply to your final project because final grades must be submitted on time.

\*\*\* All assignments are due at 11:59pm on Saturday of the week assigned. \*\*\*

\*\*\* Any week there is a Zoom meeting, all readings should be completed prior to the meeting \*\*\*

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| Class Meeting | Text(s) | Due |
| Week 1  (1/25-1/31) | Syllabus Week | Questionnaire + Introduction:   * In your own words (and briefly), what is feminism? * Who are the feminists you know? (personal, historical, professional or in pop culture) * Any questions you have about the course/me/the syllabus * In discord, share a link to a tiktok about feminism/social justice that you like! |
| Week 2  (2/1- 2/7) | Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, “Reply to Sor Philothea”  “The waves of feminism, and why people keep fighting over them, explained” by Constance Grady (Vox, 2018) | Video Lecture  Discord Discussion |
| Week 3  (2/8- 2/14) | Mary Wollstonecraft, “A Vindication of the Rights of Women” (selection)  John Stuart Mill, “The Subjection of Women” (selection) | Large Group Zooms |
| Week 4  (2/15- 2/21) | Simone de Beauvoir, “The Second Sex”  “What is a Woman?” on PhilosophyBites Podcast | Small Group Zooms |
| Week 5  (2/22- 2/28) | Iris Marion Young, “Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality” | Large Group Zooms  Take a hike! |
| Week 6  (3/1- 3/7) | Cherrie Moraga, “From a Long Line of Vendidas: Chicanas and Feminism” (selection)  Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I Woman?” | Individual Meetings  SWA #1 Due |
| Week 7  (3/8- 3/14) | Judith Butler, “Critically Queer”  Watch Butler interviews (YouTube clips) | Small Group Zooms  SWA #2 Due |
| Week 8  (3/15- 3/21) | Disclosure (documentary)  Nicholas Teich, “Lesser Known Types of Transgenderism: Understanding Cross-Dressers, Genderqueer People, Drag Queens, and More” | Flipgrid/Written Collaborative Assignment Due |
| Week 9  (3/21- 3/28) | Intersexion: Gender Ambiguity Unveiled (documentary)  Georgiann Davis, “Medical Jurisdiction and the Intersex Body | Discord Discussion |
| Week 10  (3/29- 4/4) | Dorothy Roberts, “Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty”  ‘Unwanted Sterilization and Eugenics Programs in the United States’ by Lisa Ko (PBS, 2016) | Discord Discussion |
| Week 11  (4/5- 4/11) | Linda Martin Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others”  ‘Everybody was telling me there was nothing wrong’ by Maya Dusenbery (BBC, 2018) | Small Group Zooms  Flipgrid/Written Collaborative Assignment Due |
| Week 12  (4/12-4/18) | Sara Ahmed, “Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects)” | Individual Meetings  Extra Credit: Make your own feminist tiktok; stitch my “Tell me you’re a feminist without telling me you’re a feminist prompt” or come up with your own! |
| Week 13  (4/19- 4/25) | Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” | Flipgrid/Written Collaborative Assignment Due |
| Week 14  (4/26- 5/2) | Audre Lorde, “Poetry is not a Luxury”  “Power” by Audre Lorde  “Power” by Adrienne Rich  “Say it with your whole black mouth” by Danez Smith | Small Group Zooms |
| Finals (5/3- 5/10) | Final Project Due |  |