**WMST 200: Introduction to Women and Gender Studies**

**Fall 2022**

Instructor: Dr. David Powers Corwin

Day/Time: Thursdays 4:30pm-7:10pm

Location: Horizon Hall 2017

Office: Enterprise Hall 441

Office hours: Tuesdays 5:00-6:30pm; Thursdays 12pm-1pm or by appointment both in person or on Zoom.

**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*.

**Course Description:** This course is an 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.

**Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

* Discuss historical and contemporary issues within the field of women’s, gender, and sexuality studies.
* Articulate core tenets of feminist theory.
* Apply key feminist methodologies.
* Engage in activism and/or experiential learning with diverse communities.
* Articulate their own positionality in ways that are informed by feminist frameworks.
* Advocate for policies and practices that promote social justice using feminist and intersectional principles.

**Course Policies**

1. **Required Texts (All on the Bookstore Website):** 
   1. Robin Ryle: *Questioning Gender: A Sociological Exploration* (3rd edition)
   2. Edith Wharton: *The House of Mirth* (Bedford Critical Edition)
   3. Sylvia Plath: *The Bell Jar* (any edition)
   4. Gloria Naylor *Linden Hills* (any edition)
   5. All other readings will be accessible on Blackboard. A few documentaries/films will need to be accessed through Youtube, HBOMax, or Netflix.
2. **A note on the course text choices for class**: I choose the texts I choose based on my expertise and what I feel are important thinkers in the field in this area. I also feel that it is important to discuss the voices at the margins that may not be seen as “canonical,” which we will unpack what I mean in class. While I am always open to suggestions for things to read on my own time, I have made the choices I have made for this semester for a variety of reasons and do not welcome conversations about making changes to the texts or workload mid semester. The syllabus and all it encompasses stands from Day 1. You don’t have to love every text that we read to learn something from it; I certainly did not love everything I read for the 25 years I was in school. 😊
3. **Communication:** I prefer communication via email at [dcorwin@gmu.edu](mailto:dcorwin@gmu.edu). Due to university policy, I am required to communicate with you through your Mason outlook email. Please send us emails through this account and check your email regularly (at least once a day) for class notifications. I am also happy to meet with you in person during office hours. If those times do not work for you, we can set up a separate appointment. To brainstorm research topics or to discuss grades, we require in-person/Zoom communication. I will not discuss grades via email or without a scheduled appointment. I will respond within 36 hours of receiving an email Monday-Thursdays. Emails sent Friday-Sunday will be responded to by Monday evening as this is the time that I work on my own work/research.
4. **Technology Policy:**  Laptops, Ipad, etc, should only be out in class when we have readings on Blackboard or in small groups. Otherwise, they are not to be out for any reason.
5. **Online Class Policy:** Due to COVID-19, we may have folks who contract the virus. Under those circumstances, you can join class online via Blackboard Collaborate or if you don’t want to out yourself, we can come up with an alternate assignment. **These are the only reasons you are allowed to join the course online; no exceptions.**
6. **Cell phone policy:** Cell phones will not be needed in this course for any reason. If you need to make a call or send a text, I am happy to make accommodations; however, you must discuss this with me AHEAD of time. If I see that you are using your cell phone during class, I will first give you a warning. After that, I will not say any more and will deduct three points off your final grade for every time moving forward that I see you using it.
7. **Instructions via email and Blackboard are the same as instructions in the syllabus.**
8. **Paper Policy:** All papers are to be written in MLA or APA Style. Papers will be assessed on cohesion of the argument, critical analysis of media texts, syntax and sentence structure, grammar construction, and use of scholarly sources. A letter grade will be deducted for each page less than the minimum requirement. If the assignment is four pages, and three are turned in, I will begin the grade at a B+. You MUST turn in an acceptable final research paper in order to pass the course. **All papers should be submitted as a doc. or docx. Pdfs, pages, or other formats will not be accepted.**
   1. I don’t have a late policy for the course, which means I don’t accept late work without prior approval. However, in most circumstances, I am happy to provide an extension on most assignments when consulted BEFORE the deadline.
   2. 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 or APA 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, 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 oai.gmu.edu, the Office of Academic Integrity’s website.
      1. 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.
      2. 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.
9. **Policy on Incompletes:** I rarely give incompletes. The only circumstances that I will give one is a death/illness of a close loved one at the end of the semester or a severe illness or injury where a doctor says that due to these issues you cannot complete the course on time. You have to have at least 75% of the coursework completed as well in order to qualify for an incomplete. No exceptions to this policy.

**How to Be Successful in This Course (in addition to following directions and meeting course requirements)**

1. **My expectations for course preparation**: This course is a discussion-based course with some lectures from time to time. I rarely speak for the entire (or even half of) the class. I expect everyone to have read the texts, watched the films, and come with specific comments and questions for me, but more importantly for your peers. My classes do not operate as a relinquishing of information from me to you. We ALL have to generate class conversation and questions. If you can’t commit to this type of environment, please see me after the first day of class.

* Some specific examples of excellent class preparation:
* You should come to class with specific observations rather than “I found this text interesting.”
* “I don’t understand this particular concept, does anyone have anything they can add” rather than “I don’t understand any of this text” or remaining silent.
* “What can I say in class that would be helpful to me and my peers?” rather than “I don’t have anything to say in class or I usually don’t participate.”
* “How can my instructor and peers help me with the course load and concepts? Rather than “This class is too much work.”
* Note taking is going to be really helpful when watching media texts for your in-class participation, but also your assignments.
* Come to class with connections AMONG texts ACROSS THE SEMESTER. Think outside of the day we are in class. You will be asked to make these connections both through in class and outside of class writing assignments. I will also ask you to make connections between our class conversations and what is going on in the world as we speak.
* ANALYZE don’t summarize. We all know what the text says, but we don’t know what YOU have to say about the text.

1. **Class Climate Rules:**

* Open, frank discussion without referring to groups in a 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. Confront ideas, concepts, theories.  Do NOT confront/attack individuals. Emotion is great, but so is cognition.
* To make this course work we’ll all need to:
* Afford each other mutual respect
* Confidentiality with regard to discussions in class
* Agree to disagree, agreeably!
* Examine self/explore
* Be honest with self and others
* Show humility and keep an open mind
* Use appropriate humor
* Listen constructively
* Question and participate

1. **A Note on When Life Happens….**
   1. As someone that strives for social justice, identifies as a feminist, and whose research is on trauma rhetoric, I understand that life gets out of our control more often than not. Since we are discussing emotionally charged issues, there may be discussions or readings that trigger particular past experiences that you or someone else has had. Please consult with me if you find yourself in this situation and we can figure out how to best support you through a reconfiguration of your engagement with that text and/or on campus resources. Any text in this course has the potential to be triggering to some folks.
   2. Many of you have competing responsibilities in addition to school and I want to be supportive of those. While I hold high standards and all work has to be completed in the course, I am happy on a case-by-case basis to make adjustments to due dates when needed. I just ask for at least 24 hours’ notice and for a meeting to discuss how to best move forward if you regularly find that you can’t meet requirements/due dates in the course. I do not, however, change the workload mid-semester and won’t make adjustments after a due date.
2. **Asking For Help:** Asking for help is really hard and most college students struggle with it. We are told that we need to socially “do it all well” with no guidance, so when we struggle, we often become angry with ourselves and others. Please ask for help when you don’t understand an assignment, or you are struggling to come up with a topic. Also, please reach out if you receive a grade that doesn’t meet your expectations and you want to know how to do better. Most folks who ask for help and integrate feedback achieve so much better in both their academic and professional experiences and most students who get frustrated never asked once for help or even engaged with the instructor outside of class. It’s hard for us to know what to do to help if you don’t communicate to me you are struggling. When you don’t ask for help, you do set yourself up for frustration. Please let’s work on this issue together this semester. I’m here to help. ☺
3. **See the attachment in Blackboard for my teaching values and my “when working with me statement.**”
4. **Tips for Reading Literature/Analyzing Media Texts**
   1. Allow enough time! Some of the films and texts are long and will need a large chunk of time to complete.
   2. Do NOT try to multitask while watching a film. You will not glean what you need to from them.
   3. Reread scenes from literature and re-watch particular scenes from media texts that you feel are important.
   4. For literature, highlight and write in the margins. This practice will help you for class discussion and final research papers.
   5. Put aside your love for a particular work and be able to analyze the text. You can still have strong ties to a text but understand its problematic representation. ☺

**Grade Breakdown**

**Participation** (Reading, watching films, in-class writing, occasional short-out of class writing, discussion, attendance, evidence of having read the texts): **30%**  (Learning Outcomes 1-4)

* Participation is NOT just attending class, but it is difficult to participate without attending class. It is engaging with the text through class discussion and showing evidence of having read the text. Also, showing proof that you are paying attention to your classmates and the instructor contributes to my assessment of participation.
* Frequent tardiness will result in a reduction of your participation grade.
* Occasionally, I may ask a question in class and ask you to go home and write a few paragraphs in response to that. Also, I may ask for the same in class and build the discussion around your responses. I have some of these scheduled at the end of the semester to encourage continued reading; however, I may give these unannounced. These assignments cannot be made up without a doctor’s note.
* If I see that the class as a whole is falling behind in the readings, I will give reading quizzes. These quizzes will count toward your participation grade. These cannot be made up without a doctor’s excuse.
* I will calculate a grade out of 15 points for your participation grade after the midterm and another one at the end of the semester.

**Two Take Home Essays 30% (15% each)** (Learning Outcomes 1-3)

**Today’s Feminist Digital Project 15%** (Learning Outcomes 2-4)

**Why does Gender Matter in the Pursuit of Social Justice Project: 25% (Proposal 5%; Project 20%)** (Learning Outcomes 4 and 5)

(Assignment sheets will be provided on Blackboard)

**What is Women and Gender Studies?/ First Wave Debates**

**Week 1 8/25**

Introductions

What is Women and Gender Studies?

Vocabulary exercise

**Read: “**Three Waves of Feminism: From Suffragettes to Girls”: <https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/6236_Chapter_1_Krolokke_2nd_Rev_Final_Pdf.pdf>

**Ryle**: Chapter 1

**Week 2** **9/1**

**First Wave Debates**

**Watch**: *Feminists: What Were They Thinking?*  (Netflix)

*Iron Jawed Angels* (HBO Max)

**Read: Mary Wollstonecraft** *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

**Sojourner Truth** “Ain’t I a Woman”

**Susan B. Anthony** Speech After Arrest for Illegal Voting

**Ida B. Wells-Barnett** “Lynching and the Excuse For it"

(All on Blackboard)

**Week 3 9/8**

**Read:** *The House of Mirth*

**Virginia Woolf** *A Room of One’s Own* (selections, Blackboard)

**Week 4 9/15**

**Read:** *The House of Mirth*

**Showalter** (selections on Blackboard)

**Week 5 9/22**

**Second Wave Debates**

**Read:**

**Margaret Sanger** “Birth Control—A Parents’ Problem or Woman’s?”

**Simone De Beauvoir** *The Second Sex* (a bit more dense than some of your other readings)

**Betty Friedan** “The Problem That Has No Name”

**Dorothy Roberts Reaction to Margaret Sanger**

(All on Blackboard)

**Take Home Essay 1 Due by Friday at 11:59pm**

**Week 6 9/29**

**Read:** *The Bell Jar* Chapters 1-10

**Week 7 10/6**

**Read:** *The Bell Jar*-Finish

**Week 8 10/13**

**Intersectional Reactions to the Second Wave/ Women of Color Feminisms**

**Alice Walker** “Womanist”

**Audre Lorde** “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”

**Mitsuye Yamada**, “Asian Pacific American Women and Feminism”

**The Combahee River Collective** (All on Blackboard)

**Week 9 10/20**

**Patricia Hill Collins** *Black Feminist Thought*

**Angela Davis** "Outcast Mothers"

**Gloria Anzaldua** “La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness”

(All on Blackboard)

**Watch: *Precious*** (Peacock or Youtube for a Fee)

**Week 10 10/27**

**Intimacies Among Genders/ Gender as a social construct/Third Wave Debates**

**Read:**

**Ryle** Chapters 4 and 5.

**Adrienne Rich** “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence”(Blackboard)

**Jack Halberstam** “An Introduction to Female Masculinity”

**Take Home Essay 2 Due by Friday at 11:59pm**

**Week 11 11/3**

**Read:** Ryle:Chapters 6, 9, and 11

*Women Behind Bars* Chapters 1, 3, and 7 (Blackboard)

**Week 12 11/10**

**Read:** *Linden Hills*

**Gender and Social Justice Assignment Proposal due by 11:59pm**

**Week 13 11/17**

**Read**: *Linden Hills*

**Today’s Feminist Project due by 11/22 at 11:59pm**

**Week 14 12/1:**

**Transnational Feminisms**

**Read:** **Chandra Talpade Mohanty** “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”

**Nadine Gordimer “**Once Upon A Time” (Both on Blackboard)

**Edwidge Danticat** “Night Women” and **“**The Port-au-Prince Marriage Special”

**Jarrar-** “X Cuntry A Muslim American Woman’s Journey” (Both on Blackboard)

Week 15

Final Exam Period

12/8

**4:30pm-7:10pm**

Final Presentations:

Gender and Social Project due at Class Time

Gender and Disability

**Read:**

**Garland-Thomson-**“Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory” (Blackboard)

Grading Scale

A+: 97-100%

A: 93-96%

A-: 90-92%

B+: 87-89%

B: 83-86%

B-: 80-82%

C+: 77-79%

C: 73-76%

C-: 70-72%

D: 60-69%

F: 59% or below

**Campus Policies**

**Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence**

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination, and we are committed to 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](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/?_ga=2.94227165.1364438867.1499346356-1286492189.1460059294)(<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/>) speaks to the specifics of our process, our resources, and the options available to you.

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/>).

All other members of the University community (including faculty, except those noted above) are **not** considered confidential resources and are **required** to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator.  For a full list of resources, support opportunities, and reporting options, contact the Title IX Coordinator, at <http://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix>, at 703-993-8730, or in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion office in the Aquia Building, Suite 373.

**Student and Faculty Names and Pronouns**

Having a *name and pronouns statement* helps foster a community of learners of all genders and gender expressions. It promotes gender inclusivity and supports an understanding of a student’s name and pronouns that originates with the learner. In addition, it discourages incorrect assumptions and harmful misgendering, encourages dialogue as befits the learner’s comfort, demonstrates respect, and fosters an LGBTQIA+ inclusive environment at Mason. This statement also benefits folks who have experienced traumatic pasts or in general go by a name that is different than the one that is listed in Patriot Web. This name and pronouns statement was co-authored in 2014 by students in TQ Mason (Mason’s trans-inclusive student support / action group) and Film and Video Studies faculty (and edited by faculty teams since then). We will take time to introduce our pronouns and names in the course, but if you’re more comfortable discussing this with me 1:1, please see the language below and/or set up a time to meet with me.

*Name and pronoun use: If you wish, please share your name and gender pronouns with me and indicate how best to address you in class and via email. I use they/them for myself and you may address me as “David; “Dr. David” or “Dr. Powers Corwin” in email and verbally. I do prefer to be addressed by my first name, but I know that is hard for some folks until they get to know me a bit more.*

**Campus Resources**

**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](http://ods.gmu.edu/)

**WRITING CENTER**: Johnson Center Room 227E; [(703) 993-1200](tel:%28703%29%20993-1200); [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu](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! After the first writing assignment, I may recommend that you visit the writing center.

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

**COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS**): [(703) 993-2380](tel:%28703%29%20993-2380); [http://caps.gmu.edu](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.  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 9-2.

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ+) Resources Center**:

SUB I, Room 2200 703-993-2702    lgbtq.gmu.edu

**Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment (CCEE)**

SUB I, Room 2400 703-993-2700 ccee.gmu.edu

**Student Support and Advocacy Center**

SUB I, Room 3200 703-993-3686 ssac.gmu.edu

24 hr Sexual and Interpersonal Violence Crisis Line: 703-380-1434