**WMST 330:**

**Feminist Theories of Gender, Sexuality, and Race**

**Room:** Thompson Hall 2021

**Time:** MW 3:00-4:15

**Instructor:** Dr. Tianna Cobb

**Office:** Horizon Hall 5163

**Office hours:** Please email me for an appointment

**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 examination of gender, sexuality, and race critiques and transformations of the theories, methods, and methodologies of the sciences and humanities. We will do as much as we can while we are together in class, but this course is meant to begin a conversation that you continue to have in other venues moving forward. If we do not discuss something in class that you want to always feel free to bring it up.

The course will have a strong focus on the following areas:

1. canonical texts in the first, second, and third waves of feminisms
2. The intersection of race, sexuality, and class in conversations about gender
3. How institutions reinforce patriarchy, racism, heterosexism, and classism
4. How to write about theory in academia as well as the applicability of theory into practice.

**Required Texts & Materials:**

Davis, Angela *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (Open Media Book Series)

**Paper Policy:**

All papers must be written in APA format and submitted a doc. or docx. Papers will be assessed on cohesion of the argument, proof of original thought, ability to critically analyze theoretical frameworks and issues, syntax and sentence structure, grammar construction, and use of scholarly sources to support your argument. A page range for a good solid paper will be provided per assignment. If your paper is under the required minimum length, it must be an exceptionally great paper to receive full credit. Points will be deducted per page exceeding the maximum number of pages.

See the last page of the syllabus for the University’s policy on academic integrity. 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 one format correctly, I as an instructor am obligated to refer you to the Honor Board.

**Paper rubric:**

**A level:** The paper demonstrates careful attention to critical analysis and expresses original, clearly put together points about the texts and addresses topics that were not solely what was discussed in class. Class discussions are reflected significantly, but not the central base on the paper. The paper demonstrates concise organization with specific topic sentences and transitions between points. The paper is virtually free of grammatical and sentence errors and is free from word repetition and awkwardness. When the paper is an argumentative, thesis-driven essay, the paper has an original succinct thesis with evidence to support the thesis and deep analysis of the points being made and the writer's evidence. When sources are asked for, the paper demonstrates careful attention to the citation format used and cites all of their sources correctly and effectively. When the paper is driven by a prompt or has specific directions as to format and content, the directions are followed seamlessly and there is clear evidence that follows the criteria explicitly. The paper meets the page requirement.

**B level**: The paper demonstrates careful attention to critical analysis and expresses some original insight into the texts, but may rely mostly on discussions from class without integrating original ideas. The paper demonstrates solid organization with some transitions between points, but has some awkwardness. The paper has a few sentence-level errors, but these errors only minimally take away from the writer’s main points. When the paper is an argumentative, thesis-driven essay, the paper has an original succinct thesis with some evidence, but needs more proof from other sources. When sources are asked for, the paper demonstrates careful attention to the citation format used and cites all of their sources correctly and effectively, but may have some minor issues. The paper is less than or two pages more than the page minimum or maximum.

**C level:** The paper does not meet the page length requirements by more than one page. The paper engages in little to no critical analysis of the texts and only summarizes texts and ideas. The paper is poorly organized with ineffective topic sentences. The paper has many sentence level errors and many awkward word choices and sentence structures and loses the reader in this awkwardness. If the assignment involves a prompt, the prompt is not answered and the paper only minimally refers to the prompt. When the paper is an argumentative, thesis-driven essay, the paper has several arguments in one paper with little or no connections. The paper reads as a literature review of facts rather than an argumentative essay. When sources are asked for, the paper uses the correct amount of sources, and but does not follow MLA or APA style correctly.

**D level:** The paper does not meet the page length requirements by several pages. The paper does not minimally answer the prompt or follow directions (source count, page count, which texts to use) or engage in any critical analysis and only summary. The paper has sentence-level errors in virtually every sentence and there is no attention to proofreading. When the paper is an argumentative, thesis-driven essay, the paper has no thesis and only a series of observations with no connections. When sources are asked for, the paper does not have the correct amount of sources or does not cite them in MLA or APA correctly (ie in-text citations are not done correctly, sources are left out in the works cited or added and not used).

**F level:** The paper is not submitted or is an off-topic paper.

**Instructions sent via email or posted on Blackboard hold the same weight as syllabus instructions.**

**Technology:** I understand the importance and prevalence of technology (our phones and laptops). Be sure to always be respectful during our discussions and presentations, especially when your classmates are speaking. Laptops are only to be used if needed.

**Communication:**

I prefer communication via email at [tcobb3@gmu.edu](mailto:tcobb3@gmu.edu). Due to university policy, we are required to communicate with you through your Mason outlook email. Please send me 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, I require in-person communication. I will not discuss grades via email.

I will respond within 48 hours of receiving an email Monday-Thursdays. Emails sent Friday-Sunday will be responded to by Monday evening.

**My expectations for course preparation**:

This course is a discussion-based course. While I may need to briefly lecture on some topics, we are a learning community that depends on everyone’s voices rather than just mine. 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 from the material 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 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.

**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.

**Late Work:**

Late work will not be accepted unless there are serious and unexpected circumstances (family emergencies, extreme sickness, power outages, etc.). In these types of situations, I will consider accepting late work on a case-by-case basis and it is under my full discretion what should and should not be accepted. All due dates will be posted on Blackboard at the start of the semester. If we have to change dates due to weather, class cancellations, or any other reason I will send out an email notification.

**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, and 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
* Non-judgmental of others
* Know and say what you feel
* Value each other
* Be honest with self and others
* Show humility and keep an open mind
* Use appropriate humor
* Be direct
* Attack issues not individuals
* Listen constructively
* Question and participate

**A Note on When Life Happens….**

As someone that strives for social justice, identifies as a feminist, and whose research is on trauma-infused pedagogies, 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.

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. We are all in this together. ☺

**Campus Emergencies, Inclement Weather, Closures, & COVID-19:**

George Mason University is dedicated to preparing staff and students in the event of an emergency. All students in this class are encouraged to register for Mason Alert, a system that allows university officials to contact the community during an emergency by sending a text message. In addition, we all need to take a minute to view the emergency procedures poster in our classroom. This poster explains what to do in the event of a medical emergency, fire, tornado, violence, power outage, or another bad event. Please let your instructor know if you would like to discuss these procedures or any information on emergencies. If you are not currently registered for Mason Alert please text MASON to 411911 or visit the website: https://alert.gmu.edu.

If campus is closed for any reason (power outage, snow, etc.), you should not assume that class activities are canceled. In the event of a snow day or other campus closure that prevents us from meeting in our normal classroom, we will typically hold class online. You should watch your email for a message from your instructor that will provide instructions about how the class will proceed.

We will handle cases of COVID situationally. If you have tested positive (with a doctor’s note) or feel that you have been exposed to COVID, contact me immediately so that we can proceed with the most appropriate response. If I, as your instructor, test positive or am exposed to COVID, we will hold class online while I quarantine as long as my health allows.

**Parents & Primary Caregivers:**

Our institution values diversity and inclusion, and this includes supporting students who also have parenting and family caregiver responsibilities. I understand that parents and primary caregivers often have additional complications that sometimes make it difficult to attend class, such as morning sickness or late openings, childcare emergencies, etc. If one of these situations will make it impossible for you to attend class, please me know about the situation as soon as possible, and these situations will be treated as documented excused absences. If you are nursing or if you have a childcare emergency and you think you and your child can manage it, you may bring your child to class; for in-person classes, please sit near the door so you can easily step outside if your child needs special attention and is disrupting learning for other students and return once your child’s needs have been met. Students who are pregnant or parenting should consult this university resource for guidance: https://masonfamily.gmu.edu/student-parents/

**Advice for the Reading:**

* Even though many weeks may seem like there is not much reading, the reading is complicated and theoretically dense (hence the product of a theory course). Allow enough time to complete these assignments.
* Take notes either in a notebook, a pdf tool, or online.
* It is ok to read a whole article and not understand it. Welcome to theory! ☺ Reread the sections you really struggled with and come to class with questions.
* At the end of the semester, we have more reading (as far as page count). I encourage you to start reading texts like Davis and Ahmed AHEAD of time to avoid getting bogged down with end of semester stress while you are writing your paper.

**Grade Breakdown**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assignments** | **100 Points Possible** |
| In-Class Participation | 5 |
| Discussion Questions | 10 (10 x 1) |
| Group Project Proposal | 10 |
| Midterm | 20 |
| Partner/Group Final Project | 30 |
| Individual Research Paper | 15 |
| Discussion Leader | 10 |

**Participation (5 points)** (Reading, watching films, In-class writing, occasional short-out of class writing, discussion, attendance, evidence of having read the text)

* Due to the substantial amount of reading for the class, 5% of your grade is participation and engagement with the texts.
* 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.
* 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.
* Random in-class reading quizzes will be given throughout the semester. These quizzes will count toward your participation grade. These cannot be made up without a doctor’s excuse.
* You will receive a midterm and final participation grade.

**Discussion Questions (10 points – 1 point for each question)**

You will submit 1 substantial discussion question to Blackboard prior to each designated class based on the readings. See Blackboard for example questions and days questions are due.

**Semester Project – Critical Informative Partner/Group Assignment (40 points total - See assignment instructions on Blackboard)**

* Partner/Group Project Proposal 10-Points
* Partner/Group Final Assignment 30-Points

**Individual Research Paper (15 Points - See assignment sheet on Blackboard)**

* You will each individually write a research paper on the topic chosen by your group for your critical informative semester project. The aim of this paper is to provide you with the opportunity to explore your group’s topic more both theoretically and critically. The detailed requirements of this assignment are available on Blackboard.

**Discussion Leader (10 points - You and a partner will be assigned a day to provide a short presentation and guide discussion on a particular topic. See instructions below.)**

* Create a 1-page handout for your topic.
  + Words should be in 12-pt font, Times New Roman, 1” margins.
  + DO NOT read from your handout. It is strictly supplementary for your discussion.
  + Refrain from including paragraphs. You want your audience to focus on you and only use your handout as guidance.
  + Bullet points are good.
  + Tables can be used if need-be.
  + 3 – 4 Discussion questions should be included on your handout.
  + Please check with me if you are unsure or would like any clarification about your handout.
* Questions to be answered in your 10 – 15-minute presentation:
  + First, introduce the topic of the day.
    - What is being discussed?
    - How do you define that concept?
    - Why is it important?
  + What are the main arguments from the readings this week? (A great time to practice synthesizing readings here!)
  + How are the main arguments being support? Do they cite other people or are these original arguments?
  + Are the arguments convincing, or no? Provide a thorough explanation of your answer with support from the text.
  + Do you agree with the arguments, or no? Provide a thorough explanation of your answer with support from the text.
* Once your presentation is complete, we will then begin discussion for the remainder of the class. The discussion will be guided by your discussion questions. To ensure you have good questions, please refer to the discussion question guide and examples provided for our weekly discussion questions.

**Midterm (20 points)**

* You will take a mid-term during week 7 (for the duration of two class periods). It will be composed of essay responses to your choice of three (3) out of five (5) prompts. I will thoroughly review the exam guidelines, structure, and expectations with you before you receive it.

You may also get up to 3 points of extra credit for attending events that Women and Gender Studies is hosting even though I hope you attend more of them. One point can be earned per event and a 1-page reflection of the event must be submitted. If you complete any extra credit options, these points will be added at the end of the semester after all other assignments have been graded.

**Course Schedule (Subject to Change)**

**Week 1** – **Introductions and Waves of Feminism**

Monday – 8/22

Introductions - Syllabus

**READ:** Jamaica Kincaid “Girl”

Wednesday – 8/24

Determine Feminist Waves

In-Class Research – Think critically for yourself

Discussion Leader Assignments

**Week 2 – Why Theory, Social Constructs, and Storytelling**

Monday – 8/29

**READ:** bellhooks – “Theory as Liberatory Practice”

bell hooks – “Feminism is for Everybody”, Chapters 1, 2, and 4

Wednesday – 8/31

**READ:** Margaret L. Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins – “Why Race, Class, and Gender

Still Matter”

Audre Lorde – “The Master’s Tools”

**WATCH:** Chimamanda Ngozi Adichi – Ted Talk: The Danger of a Single Story

**Week 3 – Before “Feminism”, Early Conversations, and Marxism**

Monday – 9/5

NO CLASS – HAPPY LABOR DAY

Wednesday – 9/7

**READ:** Virginia Woolf – “Professions for Women”

Sojourner Truth – “Ain’t I a Woman”

Anna Julia Cooper – “The Status of Woman in America”

**Week 4 – Before “Feminism”, Early Conversations, and Marxism**

Monday – 9/12

**READ:** Linda Nicholson – “Feminism and Marx”

Heidi l. Hartmann – “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism”

Wednesday – 9/14 - **French Feminism and Transnational Works**

**READ:** Chandra Mohanty “Under Western Eyes”

Grewal and Kaplan – Global Identities: Theorizing Transnational Studies

**Week 5 – Motherhood and Reproductive Rights**

Monday – 9/19

**READ:** Alexandra Kollontai – “Working Woman and Mother”

Laura Briggs – “*Introduction*, How All Politics Became Reproductive Politics”

Wednesday – 9/21

**READ:** Tressie McMillan Cottom – “Thick: And Other Essays, Dying to Be Competent”

**WATCH:** Black Mothers Matter: Racism and Childbirth in America - Youtube

**Week 6 – Sex Positivity, Monogamy, #MeToo**

Monday – 9/26

**READ:** Halberstam - Sex before, after, and against Nature

**WATCH:** Red Table Talk – “Is Polyamory for You”

Wednesday – 9/28

**READ:** Angela Willey – “Introduction, Undoing Monogamy: Politics and Possibilities”

**LISTEN:** The Laverne Cox Show – Reclaiming MeToo w/ Tarana Burke

**Week 7 – Midterm**

Monday – 10/3

Midterm Part 1

Wednesday – 10/5

Midterm Part 2

**Week 8 – Groupwork**

Monday – 10/10

NO CLASS – Fall Break

Wednesday – 10/12

Online Group Workday via Zoom

**Week 9 – Religion, Sexuality, and Gender**

Monday – 10/17

**READ:** Meredith Worthen, Vittorio Lingiardi, & Chiara Caristo – “The roles of politics,

feminism, and religion in attitudes toward LGBT individuals: A cross-cultural study of college students in the USA, Italy, and Spain.”

**WATCH:** Red Table Talk – “Living Your Truth: A Transgender Pastor Speaks Out”

Wednesday – 10/19

**READ:** Judith Butler – “Imitation and Gender Insubordination”

Judith Halberstam – “Transgender Butch”

**Week 10 – Sexuality, Race, and Gender**

Monday – 10/24

**READ:** Adrienne Rich – Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Existence

Eve Sedgwick – How to Bring your Kids Up Gay

Wednesday – 10/26

**READ:** DwightMcBride – Straight Black Studies: On African American Studies, James

Baldwin, and Black Queer Studies

Roderick Ferguson – Race-ing Homonormativity: Citizenship, Sociology, and

Gay Identity”

**Week 11 – Sexuality and Gender cont.**

Monday 10/31

WATCH IN CLASS – The Gender Revolution – Katie Couric

Wednesday – 11/2

**LISTEN:** The Laverne Cox Show – Ending Violence Toward Trans People w/ Dr. Karen

Franklin

**Week 12 – Women of Color Feminism, Womanism, and Intersectionality**

Monday 11/7

**READ:** Kimberle Crensaw – “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionalty, Identity Politics,

and Violence”

Gloria Anzaldua – “La Conseciencia de la Metisza”

Robert McCruer – “Compulsory Able-Bodiedness in Queer/Disable Existence

Wednesday 11/9

**READ:** Angela Davis – *Are Prisons Obsolete?* *Chapters 1-3*

**Week 13 – Women of Color Feminism, Womanism, and Intersectionality**

Monday 11/14

**READ:** Angela Davis – *Are Prisons Obsolete?* *Chapters 4-6*

Wednesday 11/16

**NO CLASS**

**Week 14**

NO CLASS – HAPPY THANKSGIVING

**Week 15 - Activism**

Monday 11/28

Wednesday 11/30

Final Reflections

**We will not meet for the Final Exam Period**

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**

**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](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.

**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 Dr. Jennifer Hammat, Title IX Coordinator, at <http://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix>, at 703-993-8730, or in the Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics office in the Aquia Building, Suite 373.

**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 993-2474.

All academic  accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. [http://ods.gmu.edu](http://ods.gmu.edu/)

**WRITING CENTER** Johnson Center 227E; (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! 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; 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 also support several student organizations and provide internship opportunities. We also offer free printing to all of our enrolled students and minors. Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 9-7; Tuesdays and Thursdays: 9-6; Friday: 9-4 (virtual)

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ+) Resource 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 odime.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