

George Mason University Women and Gender Studies Program

**WMST 630—PHIL 658—WMST 890—CULT 860:  
FEMINIST THEORIES**

Spring 2023  
Mondays, 4:30pm—7:10pm  
Aquia Building 219

**Instructor: Rachel A. Lewis**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Women and Gender Studies Program**  
**George Mason University**  
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**Office: Johnson Center Room 240C**  
**Office Hours: Mondays 2:00pm-4:00pm, or by appointment**  
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**Course Description**

This course offers an introduction to the historical and contemporary theoretical debates that have helped to shape both feminist and queer studies. We will devote a significant amount of time to addressing the ways in which feminist and queer theories intersect with other interdisciplinary areas of thought, including Marxist and postcolonial theories, psychoanalysis, critical race theory, poststructuralist theory, and theories of transnationalism and globalization. In doing so, our primary goal is to use feminist and queer theories as a basis for understanding social inequalities, and as a way of developing forms of resistance to those inequalities. Other course goals include the following:

- (1) To get a sense of the potential scope of feminist and queer studies and become familiar with their language, theories, and methods of critical engagement
- (2) To consider what kinds of connections exist (or should exist) between feminist theory and feminist activism
- (3) To gain a better understanding of the ways in which gender and sexuality intersect with race, class, nation, ability, ethnicity, and political economy
- (4) To address new forms of social inequality emerging within the context of globalization

**Required Texts**

- Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990)
- Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004)
- Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (Sage Publications, 2008)
- Linda Nicholson, ed., *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997)

- All additional readings will be available online via Blackboard

### **Course Requirements**

- Class attendance and participation: 30% (including one 20-25 minute in class presentation on the assigned readings)
- One 6-8 page analytical essay: 20%
- Annotated bibliography for final research paper: 10%
- A final research paper (18-20 pages) on any issue relating to the topic of feminist and/or queer theory, due by May 8 (via email): 40% [WMST 890/CULT 860: 28-30 page research paper]

All written work must be submitted in hard copy form.

This course follows a standard seminar format. Students are expected to attend class and contribute to each week's discussion of the readings. More than one absence from class requires makeup work in the form of a four-page essay on the literature for the missed class. This work cannot count toward the student's short essay.

**Class participation** includes general participation in class discussion, leading class sessions, peer feedback on proposals and a presentation of a research proposal. To facilitate widespread discussion, students should come prepared with at least 2-3 questions for each class. Class participation also includes discussing research projects and providing peer feedback for proposals.

**Leading class discussion:** Students should summarize the argument for the readings and then ask questions based on the thesis and supporting evidence. Students should prepare a minimum of 4-5 questions in all.

**Analytical essay:** Students will write one short paper analyzing the readings of one class session. In addition to examining the authors' arguments, students may structure their essay in the following ways: What are the differences and commonalities in the themes and arguments across the literature? How well does the evidence support the argument or thesis? How do the themes and arguments of the literature fit in with other course readings? What are other approaches or questions that arise from the literature? The paper is due a week after the class of choice discussion.

**Proposal and annotated bibliography:** you should use at least 12-15 scholarly sources for the final research paper [WMST 890/CULT 860: final paper should include 20+ sources]

On **April 3** students will provide me with a hard copy of their research proposal and annotated bibliography.

On **April 24** and **May 1** students will discuss their research projects.

For the research proposal and annotated bibliography, students should include the following information as thoroughly as possible given the amount of research conducted.

1. State the thesis or the question(s) you want to explore in your paper. What do you hope to get out of your research? Your thesis statement should be analytical, displaying your intention of making an argument related to a specific topic. Your paper should not just be descriptive but should focus on asking questions of your topic that address issues of efficacy, tactics, strategy, bias, methodology, etc. related to a particular problem or issue.
2. Explain the importance of the theoretical topic. Why is this topic worthy of research? What is the public concern with this issue? What conclusions do you expect to reach?
3. Write an annotated bibliography of at least twelve scholarly sources. Summarize the text and then state how you believe it will help you with your research. Annotations should be brief, written in short paragraph form.

**About Research**

Megan Reichelt, Women’s Studies Liaison Librarian is available to help anyone with research. [mreichel@gmu.edu](mailto:mreichel@gmu.edu)

A244 Fenwick Library 703/993-2211

You may also schedule individual consultations with librarians.

E-mail Reference Service <http://library.gmu.edu/research/email/>

Call Fenwick Library 703/993-2210, Johnson Center Library 703/993-9070

**University-wide Grading System**

Grade	Quality Points	Graduate Courses
A+	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A-	3.67	Satisfactory/Passing
B+	3.33	Satisfactory/Passing
B	3.00	Satisfactory/Passing
B-	2.67	Satisfactory*/Passing
C	2.00	Unsatisfactory/Passing
F	0.00	Unsatisfactory/Failing

\* Although a B- is a satisfactory grade for a course, students must maintain a 3.00 average in their degree program and present a 3.00 GPA on the courses listed on the graduation application.

[http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=5&navoid=104#grad\\_poli](http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=5&navoid=104#grad_poli)

**PLEASE NOTE: COURSE POLICIES**

**George Mason University Honor System and Code**

**Honor Code**

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** (statements from Mason Web Site)

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>

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>

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:**

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 needs 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).

**George Mason University: Diversity Statement**

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty, and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study, and personal growth.

An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices can be voiced, heard, and respected.

The reflection of Mason's commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond policies and procedures to focus on behavior at the individual, group, and organizational level. The implementation of this commitment to diversity and inclusion is found in all settings, including individual work units and groups, student organizations and groups, and classroom settings; it is also found with the delivery of services and activities, including, but not limited to, curriculum, teaching, events, advising, research, service, and community outreach.

Acknowledging that the attainment of diversity and inclusion are dynamic and continuous processes, and that the larger societal setting has an evolving socio-cultural understanding of diversity and inclusion, Mason seeks to continuously improve its environment. To this end, the University promotes continuous monitoring and self-

assessment regarding diversity. The aim is to incorporate diversity and inclusion within the philosophies and actions of the individual, group, and organization, and to make improvements as needed.

### **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.

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### **Syllabus—Subject to Change**

#### **Introduction**

M Jan. 23                      Introductions, course overview

#### **Postcolonial and Transnational Feminisms**

M Jan. 30                      Chandra Mohanty (1986), “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” **(Blackboard)**

Chandra Mohanty (2002), “Under Western Eyes Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anti-capitalist Struggles” **(Blackboard)**

Gayatri Spivak (1986), “Can the Subaltern Speak?” **(Blackboard)**

[WMST 890/CULT 890: Read Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders*]

#### **Second Wave Feminism and the Sex/Gender System**

M Feb. 6                      Linda Nicholson, “Introduction” (Nicholson, 1-5)

Simone de Beauvoir, “‘Introduction’ to *The Second Sex*” (Nicholson, 11-18)

Gayle Rubin (1975), “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex” (Nicholson, 27-62)

Catherine MacKinnon, “Sexuality” (Nicholson, 158-180)

Laura Mulvey (1975), “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” **(Blackboard)**

## **Theories of Intersectionality and Location**

- M Feb. 13                    The Combahee River Collective (1977), “A Black Feminist Statement” (Nicholson, 63-70)
- Audre Lorde (1987), “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” **(Blackboard)**
- Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” **(Blackboard)**
- Patricia Hill Collins (1991), “Defining Black Feminist Thought” (Nicholson, 241-259)
- bell hooks (1992), “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators” **(Blackboard)**

## **Lesbian Feminism and French Feminism**

- M Feb. 20                    Radicalesbians (1970), “The Woman Identified Woman” (Nicholson, 153-157)
- Adrienne Rich (1980), “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” **(Blackboard)**
- Monique Wittig (1985), “One is Not Born a Woman” (Nicholson, 265-271), “The Category of Sex” **(Blackboard)** and “The Straight Mind” **(Blackboard)**
- Luce Irigaray (1985), “This Sex Which Is Not One” (Nicholson, 323-329)

## **Feminism and Deconstruction**

- M Feb. 27                    Linda Alcoff (1988), “Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory” (Nicholson, 330-355)
- Joan W. Scott (1988), “Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference” **(Blackboard)**
- Joan Scott (1991), “The Evidence of Experience” **(Blackboard)**
- Johanna Oksala (2014), “In Defense of Experience” **(Blackboard)**

Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon (1994), “‘A Genealogy of Dependency’: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State” **(Blackboard)**

### **Poststructuralist Feminism and Queer Theory**

M March 6 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), preface, chapters 1, 3 & conclusion [WMST 890/CULT 860: Read all of *Gender Trouble*]

Judith Butler (1991), “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” (Nicholson, 300-315)

### **Transgender Feminisms and Queer Kinship**

M March 20 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), introduction, chapters 1, 3, 4 & 5 [WMST 890/CULT 860: Read all *Undoing Gender*]

### **Feminist and Queer Disability Theory**

M March 27 Rosemary Garland-Thomson (2002), “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory” **(Blackboard)**

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

Ellen Samuels (2003), “My Body, My Closet: Invisible Disability and the Limits of Coming-Out Discourse” **(Blackboard)**

Nirmala Erevelles and Andrea Minear (2013), “Unspeakable Offences: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality” **(Blackboard)**

Jasbir Puar (2017), “Preface: Hands Up, Don’t Shoot.” From *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* **(Blackboard)**

### **Postfeminist Media Culture**

M April 3 Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*—introduction, chapters 1, 2, & 5 [WMST 890/CULT 860: Read all *The Aftermath of Feminism*]

Rosalind Gill (2007), “Postfeminist Media Culture” **(Blackboard)**

Rosalind Gill (2016), “Post-postfeminism? New Feminist Visibilities in Postfeminist Times” **(Blackboard)**

### **Transnational and Global Feminisms**

M April 10

Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal (1994), “Transnational Feminist Cultural Studies: Beyond the Marxist/Feminist/Poststructuralist Divides” **(Blackboard)**

Sara Ahmed (2000), “Close Encounters: Feminism and/in ‘the Globe’” **(Blackboard)**

Wendy Hesford (2014), “The Malala Effect” **(Blackboard)**

Ofra Koffman and Rosalind Gill (2011), “I Matter and so Does She: Girl Power, (Post)feminism and the Girl Effect” **(Blackboard)**

The Nike Foundation:

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

Simidele Dosekun (2015), “For Western Girls Only?” **(Blackboard)**

### **Women’s Studies, COVID-19, and the Neoliberal University**

M April 17

Sandra Soto (2005), “Where in the Transnational World Are U.S. Women of Color?” **(Blackboard)**

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

Elora Chowhury (2020), “The Precarity of Preexisting Conditions” **(Blackboard)**

Juliet Allen, Daniella Jenkins, and Marilyn Howards (2020), “Crises Collide: Capitalism, Care, and COVID-19” **(Blackboard)**

*SIGNS* symposium on COVID-19: <http://signsjournal.org/covid/>

### **CONCLUSION: FINAL PRESENTATIONS**

M April 24

Final Research Paper Presentations

M May 1

Final Research Paper Presentations



**M May 8**

Final Research Paper due via email at 11:59pm EST