

## WST201: CRITICAL FRAMEWORKS IN GENDER STUDIES

Instructor: Prof. Nishant Shahani

Spring 2015

T,TH 10:35-11:50, Thompson Hall 201

3 Credits

Office Hours: T/TH 12:15-1:15 & by appt.

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### **Course Description**

Women's Studies 201 is designed to familiarize students with key political, theoretical, and scholarly frameworks that inform the field of gender studies. We will explore the manner in which gender as a focus of critical and political inquiry interacts with various vectors of social analysis and identity—class, race, sexuality, nation, and family, just to name a few. The class proposes to understand how the field of gender studies informs practice, but also how activist practice informs (and complicates) theory. With a focus on the U.S. and global contexts, we will read and research feminist, queer, and anti-racist critical frameworks that interrogate gender discrimination from an intersectional and interdisciplinary perspective. The readings and the course units will attempt to engage with the following ideas/topics (that are not mutually exclusive):

1. Histories of Feminism: we will examine the gendered histories of social justice movements (including but not limited to: racial, and economic justice, labor rights, reproductive health rights, environmental justice, sexual citizenship, anti-imperialism, and human rights) and the diverse agents/activists working on many fronts and using multiple strategies.
2. Gender Politics and Activism: We will analyze how past histories impact present modes of activism. We will look at how marginalized and subjugated groups and individuals across the globe resist structural inequities and act to change oppressive systems.
3. Critical Race Feminism: we will learn the basic tools of Critical Race Feminism, a field emerging out of the field of Critical Race Theory which seeks to analyze, understand, and explain the relationship between law, patriarchy and white supremacy.
4. Citizenship: we will understand how rights, privileges, and modes of enfranchisement are mediated by the politics of gender, race, and sexuality.
5. Sexual Politics and Gender Expression: we will pay attention to how heteronormativity and cissexual privilege dovetail with and are mediated by a wide variety of institutions.

6. Denaturalizing the Everyday: We will interrogate how everyday cultural artifacts, activities, and objects that are assumed to be “natural” or commonsensical are in fact socially and ideologically constructed.

This class does not attempt to provide easy solutions; instead we will try to articulate non-programmatic, tentative and historically contingent responses to the relationship between theory and social change.

### **Course Learning Goals**

1. Understand and employ key concepts in the interdiscipline, including social construction of categories (such as gender, sexuality, and race), intersectionality, heteronormativity, feminization of labor, reproductive justice.
2. Recognize and analyze the history of gender discrimination through institutional analysis.
3. Analyze and critique the operations and consequences of gender difference created and maintained by interconnected social institutions, including science, technology, politics, education, media, religion, and economy, that operate to grant various modes of race and gender privilege; and/or analyze one’s own position within such systems.
4. Identify, analyze and propose alternatives to gendered systems of inequality. Learn about various activist groups that have made sexual and gender politics central to liberation struggles.
5. Understand the intersections of sexual and gender politics with ethnic and racial formations; grasp the complexities of transnational citizenship through comparative methodological frameworks.
6. Analyze and critically interrogate ideological content of cultural texts; formulate rhetorically sound arguments about their content from an anti-sexist, anti-racist, and queer affirmative perspective.
7. Determine information needed, access information efficiently, and use information effectively in course assignments. Demonstrate information literary skills.
8. Informally and formally write and speak to communicate concepts, arguments, and beliefs that are germane to the field of gender studies coherently and concisely.

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Required Texts:**

1. Course Packet [CP for short – See course schedule below for specific reading titles].  
**Your course packet is available at Cougar Copies only.**
2. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* – Audre Lorde [Available at The Bookie]

**Films to be purchased/rented:**

3. *The Watermelon Woman* – Cheryl Dunye
4. *Hearts and Minds* – Peter Davis

**Assignments and Evaluation (Grading):** Your grade will be calculated, using a 1000 point scale, as follows: Reading Responses 10%; Quizzes 10%; Class participation 10%; Exam 10% Mid-term Paper (4-5 pages) 20%; Final Research Paper (7-8 pages) 40%. All work should be completed by the due dates in the syllabus. **No incompletes will be given in this course unless there are extraordinary circumstances and the student must be passing the class at the time the incomplete is requested.** Requests for incompletes must be made in writing (email ok) before the last class.

**Reading Response Folder/Blog (100pts/10%):** You will write brief responses (approx 1 paragraph or 250 words) to readings and films before the reading/discussion due date. I will begin each class by asking some of you to read out your response to the day's readings. For your response, note down the main arguments of the essay, with one question or comment about the essay that engages with its implications or applications

**Pop Quizzes (100 pts/10%):** Surprise quizzes will be given at any point during the semester to ensure you are doing the reading. **You cannot make up quizzes if you are absent or late to class.**

**Class Participation (100pts/10%):** Active participation in class discussions, group activities, and application exercises that are based on class readings and lectures is expected. Specific in-class group activities will be conducted throughout the semester; additionally, readings will be taught through class discussions (and not only lectures) in which you must participate. While I encourage difference of opinion (from the text under consideration, the instructor, or a point of view expressed by a classmate), I expect you to be respectful and civil. Any form of bigotry will not be tolerated. Please note that class participation does not only mean “talking” in class. You must engage with the text under consideration. If you are failing quizzes, you are obviously not reading the required materials. **Failing quizzes will drastically affect class participation points. If you fail 3 quizzes or more, you automatically lose 50 class participation points.** Sleeping, chatting with friends, reading a newspaper, eating, not submitting assignments on time, not preparing for class, will all result in low class participation points. I reserve the right to confront you about your conduct and participation in class. I also reserve the right to call on you to ask you your response to any of the readings that you have done for the day. You must come to class prepared with an insight or a question about the reading. I recognize that not everyone is confident speaking in front of a large number of people – there are various ways you can make up for this – emailing me questions before class, visiting my office hours to discuss materials one on one. Below is a break up of your class participation grade:

100-80 points: Excellent participation; Active and insightful contributions; Significantly enhances the classroom dynamic with questions, comments, and responses. Engages the text under consideration and does all the reading. **To get full points on class participation you should not fail any quizzes.**

79-60: Consistent participation with adequate insight into text. Good but somewhat basic contributions.

59-40: Rarely contributes but attentive and not disruptive in any way.

39-20: Indifferent, consistently failing quizzes, physically present but checked out of class.

19-0: Disruptive to classroom activities; use of cell phone/texting; disrespectful of professor and fellow students.

**Exam (100pts 10%):** The in class exam will be comprised of identification of key terms & concepts and essay type answers. It will cover information from the assigned readings, films excerpts, and material presented in class. You will receive all the questions for the exam two weeks prior to the exam date.

**Mid-term Paper (200pts/20%) & Final Research Paper including In-class**

**Presentation (400 pts/40%):** There will be two major writing assignments for this course: a Mid-term Paper gender analysis of an event, an object, or text (4-5 pages), which will require research, critical analysis and synthesis of reading material; and a Research Project (6-8 pages, with a one page Presentation) which will consist of an analysis and illustration of theoretical framework or topic we have discussed in class. **Even though we will spend two weeks on presentations, the entire class must be prepared to make presentations on April 14.** Hand outs for all the assignment requirements with grading criterion will be given to you prior to the assignment. See course schedule below for due dates.

**Extra Credit Options:**

**WSU Women's Transit Volunteering (50 pts):** You must complete all training and shift hours or no credit will be received.

**Exhibits, Panels, & Speakers (40pts):** Extra credit will be offered for a number of events that are relevant to our class this semester. They will be announced in class or you may inquire whether events of your choice might count for extra credit. Students not taking the Women's Transit option can earn up to 40pts at 20 points per event. You must turn in a written summary and reaction to the event (minimum two pages, typed, double-spaced) in the class immediately following the event.

**Grading Scale:**

930-1000	A	800-820	B-	670-690	D+
900-920	A-	770-790	C+	600-660	D
870-890	B+	740-760	C	Below 600	F
830-860	B	700-730	C-		

**Course Policies**

**Attendance & Absences**

Attendance is compulsory. You are allowed a maximum of 3 personal absences and 1 absence for which you have university sanctioned documentation (given to me BEFORE you miss the class). For your 3 personal absences, I do not distinguish between excused and

unexcused absences, so please use these absences for genuine emergencies. For every additional absence beyond this, your grade will drop. In other words, if your final class grade is B+ and you have 4 personal absences, your final grade will drop to B. You are responsible for any work you might have missed during your absences.

### **Tardies**

If you are more than 5 minutes late to class, you will receive a tardy. Tardies will be calculated in accordance to the class watch, not yours. Three tardies will constitute an absence. I take attendance at the very beginning of class. If you come to class late and miss attendance, it is your responsibility to come up to me after class and inform me that you were present. I will change the absence into a tardy, but you are allowed to do this only two times during the semester. If you miss a quiz because you are late, you will not be able to make up the quiz, and will not receive any points for it. In general, you are requested to be very mindful of time—entering class late is a distraction to the instructor as well as to your peers. Arriving more than 15 minutes will count as an absence. The same rules apply to leaving early. So if for any reason you need to leave early, let me know at the beginning of class, but keep in mind that “tardy” rules still apply. In other words, leaving 10 minutes early will give you two tardies. If you need to leave 20 minutes early, you will not be marked as present on that day.

### **Disability Accommodation**

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please either visit or call the Access Center (Washington Building 217; 509-335-3417) to schedule an appointment with an Access Advisor. All accommodations MUST be approved through the Access Center.

### **Technology and Academic Etiquette**

\* **Students must turn off all phones and electronic gadgets during class.** (Your cell phone is not considered “off” when it is on vibrate). If a student's cellular phone rings during class hours, she/he will be penalized with an absence. Cell phones must not be placed on your desks or in front of you during class. In other words, anything that beeps, vibrates, flashes... (you get the point) must be turned off during class hours.

\* Please do not begin to pack your things at the end of class before I have let the class go. I will never keep you beyond the class time, but I expect this common courtesy.

\* **If I catch you texting or using any electronic device during class hours, (this includes during film screenings), you will be marked absent. I may also ask you to leave the class.**

\* Please do not use your cell phone even to look at the time.

\* Please do not use laptops during class hours. If you wish to use your laptop to take notes, you must take special permission from me and always sit in the front row.

\* If you miss class, I cannot go over the lecture/discussion over with you during my office hours, nor can I provide you with notes. Please ask one of your classmates to share their notes or update you about any important announcements or deadlines you might have missed.

\* While healthy disagreement and difference in opinion is expected and encouraged, I do expect that discussions should be conducted in a respectful and civil manner. If I interpret any of your comments as verbal harassment, I will ask you to leave the class.

\* If you want feedback on your writing or class performance, please visit my office hours or make an appointment to see me. **I do not give feedback on your papers via email. All email correspondence must be limited to questions for which I can give you a quick response.**

\* Unless specified by me, all your assignments must be turned in as hard copies. Electronic submissions or attachments via email are not acceptable. Visit my office hours for feedback on assignments.

\* **Please do not get up and leave the class during class hours unless it's a genuine emergency since this distracts your classmates and the instructor.**

\* Do not use class hours as breakfast/lunch time. You must not be eating during class hours.

\* If I see you engaged in any activity that does not pertain to classroom pre-occupations (reading newspapers, doing homework for another class) I reserve the right to give you an absence for that day even though you are technically present in class.

\* If I interpret any of your behavior to be disruptive, unprofessional, or rude, I reserve the right to ask you to leave the class (which will then be counted towards your absences)

\* **Please maintain appropriate email etiquette** when communicating with me (all emails should have apposite greetings (Dear Prof: Shahani, for example. It is not appropriate to email professors in any of your classes with “Hey” “Hi there,” or with no greeting at all). Similarly, use appropriate communication when signing off. Most professional etiquette guides recommend “Sincerely.” Please do not email for information you will find on the syllabus or in hand outs that I give you in class.

### **Academic Integrity**

Washington State University's Student Handbook on Academic Dishonesty provides specific definitions (WAC 504-26-010) of “dishonesty” and “cheating,”

(<http://conduct.wsu.edu/default.asp?PageID=338>). Cheating includes, “submitting a false excuse for absence or tardiness or a false explanation for failing to complete a class requirement or scheduled examination at the appointed date and time.” Plagiarism, a form of cheating, is “presenting the information, ideas, or phrasing of another person as the student's own work without proper acknowledgement of the source. This includes submitting a commercially prepared paper or research project or submitting for academic credit any work done by someone else.” At the least, students guilty of cheating in this course will receive a zero for the work in question, but the consequence of cheating may include failure of the course. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the University's definitions and policies on Academic Integrity to understand your rights and responsibilities.

(<http://academicintegrity.wsu.edu/>).

### **Campus Safety Information**

WSU has made an **emergency notification system** available for faculty, students and staff. Please register at myWSU with emergency contact information (cell, email, text, etc). You may have been prompted to complete emergency contact information when registering for classes. Please refer to the University emergency management website

<http://oem.wsu.edu/emergencies> as well WSU ALERT <http://alert.wsu.edu> for information on WSU's communication resources WSU will use to provide warning and notification for emergencies. The entire WSU safety plan can be found at <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu>.

## **Course Schedule**

Note: You are expected to have read the assignments *by* the date indicated on the schedule. Come to class prepared with commentary and notes for the day's reading. I reserve the right to make changes, which I will announce in advance. All readings (with the exception of the films and *Zami*) are in the Course Packet.

### **Week 1: Introductions**

Tues Jan 13 -- Intros

Thurs Jan 15 – Syllabus

### **Week 2: Defining Terms**

Tues Jan 20 – Introductory lecture

Thurs Jan 22 – Judith Lorber, “The Social Construction of Gender” taken from *Women's Lives* [CP]

### **Week 3: Critical Race Feminisms**

Tues Jan 27 – Becky Thompson, “Black Power and White Accountability: Women Choosing Sides” taken from *A Promise and a Way of Life* [CP]

Thurs Jan 29 – Becky Thompson, “Multiracial Feminism” taken from *A Promise and a Way of Life* [CP]

### **Week 4: Intersectional Histories**

Tues Feb 3 – Estelle B. Freedman, “The Global Stage and the Politics of Location” taken from *No Turning Back* [CP]

Thurs Feb 5 – Susan Stryker, “Transgender Feminism” taken from *Feminist Frontiers* AND Lillian Faderman, “The Love that Dare not Speak its Name” taken from *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers* [CP]

Home work assignment: Watch *The Watermelon Woman* over the weekend

### **Week 5: Gender, Sexuality, and the Politics of Historiography**

Tues Feb 10 – Intersectionality classroom exercise

Thurs Feb 12 – Discuss *The Watermelon Woman*

### **Week 6: Historiography Contd**

Tuesday Feb 17 – *Zami*

Thurs Feb 19 – *Zami*

### **Week 7: Post-Feminism and Popular Culture**

Tues Feb 24 – Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra. “Feminist Politics and Postfeminist Culture” taken from *Interrogating Post-Feminism* [CP]

Thurs Feb 26 – Angela McRobbie, “Postfeminism and Popular Culture” taken from *Interrogating Post-Feminism* [CP]

### **Week 8: Colonial Feminisms: Co-options and Reappropriations**

Tues March 3 – Julia Serano, “Reclaiming Femininity” taken from *Excluded* [CP]

Thurs March 5 – Lila Abu Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” from *Feminist Frontiers* AND Cheryl Chase, “Hermaphrodites with Attitude” from *The Transgender Studies Reader*

**Week 9: Gender, Violence, and the Border**

Tues March 10 – Saskia Sassen, “America’s Immigration ‘Problem’” taken from *Globalization and its Discontents* AND Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly, “Maquilodoras: the View from Inside” taken from *Women’s Lives* [CP]

**Mid-term Papers Due.**

Thurs March 12 – Andy Smith, “Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide” from *Women’s Lives* AND Eithene Luibheid, “Entry Denied” taken from *Entry Denied* [CP]

**Week 10: Spring Break**

Tues March 17 – No class

Thurs March 19– No class

**Week 11: Female Masculinity and Trans Politics**

March 24 – Film Screening: *Boys Don’t Cry*

March 26 -- Discussion

**Week 12**

March 31 Exam

April 2 Exam

Homework assignment—Watch: *Hearts and Minds*

**Week 14: Feminist Critiques of Militarization**

April 7 Tues – Suzuyo Takazato, “Report from Okinawa: Long-Term U.S. Military Presence and Violence against Women” *Women’s Lives* AND Joane Nagel, “Sex and War: Fighting Men, Comfort Women, and the Military-Sexual Complex;” [CP] Discussion of *Hearts and Minds*

April 9 Thurs – Thesis Topic Workshop

**Week 15**

April 14 Tues – Presentations

April 16 Thurs -- Presentations

**Week 16**

April 21 Tues— Presentations

April 23— Presentations

**Week 17: Dead Week: NO CLASS**

April 28 Tues – Final Papers due