

# **GENDER AND POWER: INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN'S STUDIES**

## **WST 200 -- SECTION 1**

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Teaching Assistant: Liz McNeill  
Fall 2011, M,W,F: 1.10-2.00  
CUE 319  
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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Women's Studies 200 will serve as an introduction to some of the major concepts and political issues surrounding the field of gender and sexuality studies. We will explore the manner in which 'gender' as a focus of analysis interacts with various vectors of social analysis and identity—class, race, sexuality, nation, and family just to name a few. The class will provide you with tools for critiquing the various institutions through which gender oppression is mediated. We will also grapple with the ways in which feminist, queer, and critical race thinkers have presented alternatives to gendered discrimination and violence. The readings and the course in general will attempt to engage with the following questions –

- 1) In what way do experiences that are often considered (and dismissed) as private, personal, or domestic have important political and public dimensions?
- 2) What are the major institutions (e.g. schools, families, legal systems, religion) through which gender oppression is mediated?
- 3) What are the politics of feminist thinking? How does the very notion of "feminism" change in different historical, social, and national contexts?
- 4) How does a "gender" analysis framework extend to areas as diverse as immigration, anti-war critique, globalization, and transgender violence?

The scope of this class will be inter-disciplinary. We will understand the connections between gender relations and power structures through a range of intersecting disciplines and mediums—critical theory, sociology, anthropology, political science, history, textual analysis, and film.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- Students will learn to re-think what is assumed as "common sense" and "natural" from a social constructionist and intersectional perspective.
- Students will acquire a theoretical and cultural language to critique dominant ways of thinking.

- Students will understand the importance of diversity beyond a liberal “melting pot” model; instead students will grasp how the operations of social privilege, and its effects are mediated through institutional apparatuses.

## **REQUIRED TEXT**

1. Course Reader (Available only at Cougar Copies)

\* You must purchase your Course Reader by the end of the first week of class.

\* You **MUST** bring your course packet to class every day. Your class participation points will be subtracted if your course packet is not in front of you.

## **CLASS POLICIES**

### **1. Attendance:**

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.

### **2. 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.

### **3. Academic Integrity Policy:**

Plagiarism or cheating of any kind on any assignment will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the assignment **as well as the entire course** and a report to Student Affairs. See the WSU handbook on academic dishonesty (WAS 504-25-025) for further details and if you are at any time unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, or cheating, please see me. For specifics regarding academic dishonesty and student conduct in general, please see --  
<http://conduct.wsu.edu/default.asp?PageID=338>

### **4. Disability Accommodation:**

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have documented disability. Please notify me during the first week of class if any accommodations are needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. All accommodations must be approved through the Disability

Resource Center (DRG) in Administration Annex 205, 335-1566.

**5. Safety Information:** <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu> & Emergency Site: <http://oem.wsu.edu/emergencies>

## **6. Technology**

**\* Students must turn off cellular phones/blackberries/I phones/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.

\* 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.

## **7. Academic Etiquette:**

\* 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 for your lunch break. You must not be eating **anything** during class hours.

\* If I see you engaged in any activity that does not pertain to classroom pre-occupations, 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)

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

**1. Class Participation (100 Points):** You are required to take part in class discussions. I expect you not only to respond to my questions and comments, but also to the comments of your peers in class. 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. 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.

**2. Quizzes** (150 points): 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. If you fail 3 quizzes (or more), you will receive zero class participation points, **so it is very important that you keep up with the readings.**

**5. Exam** (200 points): You will receive the questions for the exam a week in advance. You will write the answers to the questions during class hours without any notes or books. All questions will be based on course readings and class lectures/discussions.

**6. Mid-term Application Paper** (200 points): Your mid term paper requires you to apply and explicate any theoretical concept we have studied in class. A detailed hand out documenting assignment requirements will be given to you in advance.

**7. Presentation of Final Paper Abstract** (50 points): At the end of the semester, you will write a 500 word abstract and a Bibliography for your final paper. You will present this abstract to the class (no longer than 5 minutes).

**8. Final Research Paper** (300 points): You will receive a detailed hand out informing you about the requirements of this paper. The paper must have an original argument, must incorporate one of the readings we have discussed during the semester, and must show evidence of external research (with all appropriate citations).

**9. Extra Credit** (30 points)

Extra credit will be given if you attend any class-related activity on or off campus and write a two-page summary of the event and your understanding of its significance. Working for women’s transit for the semester can also qualify you for extra credit points. You can receive no more than 30 points through extra credit.

**Extra credit cannot adequately compensate for absences in class or poor performances in assignments.**

## **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

(Note: You are expected to have read the essays by the date indicated on the schedule. All the essays are in your course packet. Come to class prepared with commentary and notes for the day's reading. I reserve the right to make changes in the schedule, which I will announce in advance.)

### **Week 1: Introductions**

M Aug 22 – Introductions and discussion of Syllabus

W Aug 24 – In class diagnostic

F Aug 26 – Key Concepts Lecture

### **Week 2: Key Concepts and Terms**

M Aug 29 – Terry Eagleton, Selections from *Ideology: an Introduction*

W Aug 31 – Discussion Contd.

F Sept 2 – Labor Day -- HOLIDAY

### **Week 3: Ideology, Social Construction, Language, and Power**

M Sept 5 – Judith Lorber, “The Social Construction of Gender”

W Sept 7 – Contd.

F Sept 9 – Sandra Lee Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity, Modernization of Patriarchal Power”

### **Week 4: Intersectionality**

M Sept 12 – Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”

W Sept 14 – Cherrie Moraga, Selections from “A Divided Nation: A Chicana Lesbian Critique”

F Sept 16 – Discussion Contd.

### **Week 5: The Personal and the Political (or, Moving from Micro to Macro)**

M Sept 19 – Judith Halberstam, “The Bathroom Problem,” Vandana Shiva, “Building Water Democracy,” and Sarah Goodyear “When Design Kills: The Criminalization of Walking”

W Sept 21 – Discussion Contd.

F Sept 23 – Lecture on Mid-term Assignment

### **Week 6: “Colonial Feminism” and its Discontents**

M Sept 26 – Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?”

W Sept 27 – Suad Joseph, “Media Representations and the Criminalization of Arab Americans and Muslim Americans”

F Sept 29 – Discussion Contd.

### **Week 7: Critical Media Analysis**

M Oct 3 – Patricia Hill Collins, “Sex, Babies, and Images of Black Femininity”

W Oct 5 – Melissa Harris Perry, “Bad Black Mothers”

F Oct 7 – Discussion Contd.

### **Week 8: Gender, Immigration, and Globalization**

M Oct 10 – Saskia Sassen, “America’s Immigration “Problem”

W Oct 12 – Saskia Sassen, “Towards a Feminist Analytics of the Global Economy”

F Oct 14 – Discussion Contd.

### **Week 9: Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interrogating Heterosexism**

M Oct 17 – C.J. Pascoe, “Compulsive Heterosexuality: Masculinity and Dominance”

W Oct 19 – Judith Halberstam, Selections from *Female Masculinity*

F Oct 21 – Discussion Contd.

### **Week 10: Transgender Issues and the Politics of Masculinity**

M Oct 24 – Screening of selected scenes from *Boys Don’t Cry* (Dir: Kimberly Pierce),  
Mid-term paper due.

W Oct 26 – Discussion

F 28 – Discussion

### **Week 11: Gender and Sports**

M Oct 31—Susan Cahn, “From the ‘Muscle Moll’ to the ‘Butch’ Ballplayer”  
Mannishness, Lesbianism, and Homophobia in U.S. Women’s Sport”

W Nov 2 – Judith Halberstam, “Match Points,” Tavia Nyong’o, “The Unforgivable  
Transgression of Being Caster Semyana”

F Nov 4 – Discussion Contd.

### **Week 12: Masculinity and the Politics of War**

M Nov 7 – Screening of selected scenes from *Hearts and Minds* (Dir: Peter Davis)

W Nov 9 – Discussion of film

F Nov 11 – Veteran’s Day – Holiday

### **Week 13**

M Nov 14 – Exam

W Nov 16 – Exam

F Nov 18 – Exam

### **Week 14 – Thanksgiving Week**

### **Week 15: Sexual Violence in a Global Framework**

M Nov 28 –Andy Smith, “Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide”

W Nov 30 – Suzuyo Takazato, “Report from Okinawa: Long-Term U.S. Military  
Presence and Violence Against Women,” Helen Benedict, “Why Soldiers Rape”

F Dec 2 – Riverbend, “Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog from Iraq”

### **Week 16**

M Dec 5 – Presentations

W Dec 7 – Presentations

F Dec 9 – Presentations, Final Papers due