GENDER AND POWER: INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN’S STUDIES
WST 101 -- SECTION 1

Instructor: Prof. Nishant Shahani
Teaching Assistant: Ruby Kim
Fall 2015
M, W, F: 9.10-10.00
CUE 419
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
In the past 6 months, the performance of gender—its cruel (im)mobilizations, fatal consequences, and politicized dimensions—have dominated headlines, simultaneously centralizing and marginalizing the lives of women. A year that has witnessed the visibility of Caitlyn Jenner's emergence as the mainstream spokeswoman for transgender women, has also been marked by an alarming increase in the murder of trans women of color (Lamia Beard, Taja DeJesus, Yazmin Vash Payne, Jennifer Laude, just to name a few). The death (or murder, more accurately?) of Sandra Bland in police custody foregrounds that state violence inflicted by the police is not germane only to men of color. Indian runner Dutee Chand was barred from participating in the Commonwealth games due to "unnatural" levels of testosterone in her body, despite passing all drug tests. In the realm of popular culture, Amy Schumer is heralded as a post-feminist icon, even though Trainwreck ultimately insists on heterosexual romance by domesticating the protagonist’s troubling promiscuity.

In this class, we will understand these individual contexts in relation to broader systemic and institutional structures. WST 101 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, transgender politics, anti-war critique, globalization, and 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.
2. Boys Don’t Cry (Dir: Kimberly Pierce – available on ITunes)

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. Ignorance about what constitutes plagiarism will not count as an excuse for plagiarism. 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.


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, or flashes must be turned off during class hours.
  * If I see you texting or using any electronic device during class hours, (this includes during film screenings), you will be marked absent. I will 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. You need to take notes by hand.

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.
  * 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 pack up your things in the last few minutes of class before class has ended. I will dismiss class at 10 am sharp.
  * Do not use class hours as lunch/breakfast time. 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 (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)

8. Email Etiquette:
* As per WSU policy, please only use your official WSU email address (@wsu.edu) to
communicate with me.
* Please address all email with appropriate salutation and sign off. (Dear Prof. _______, Sincerely/Best, _______). Remember that you are not informally communicating with a friend.

*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.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Class Participation (100 Points): 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 more than 3 quizzes, you will automatically lose 50 points on your class participation grade. 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. 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.
2. Response Journals (100 Points):
You must keep a response journal in which you will write analysis of the primary texts we will read throughout the semester on a weekly basis. On any given day, I will begin class by calling on you to read out your response. The goal of these responses is for you to analyze the implications of the argument, to make connections with different readings or texts, or to offer applications of the ideas. For your responses, answer any one (or more) of the following questions or prompts:
  a. What are some of the central political concerns of the reading?
  b. What political institutions are being challenged and why?
  c. What connections can you make between the essay’s arguments with contemporary politics, or with any other readings this semester?
  d. Why is the essay relevant or important?
  e. What vectors of identity does the text intersect with and how? (sexuality, race, class, disability, national identity etc.)
  f. Offer an illustration of the author’s arguments from the realm of popular culture.

*Please note the specificity of these responses. Avoid simplistic (I liked/disliked, I was bored, I found it interesting, I did not understand etc.)
*You must write responses for all readings and films.
*Responses must be completed for each reading before the reading is discussed in class. Obviously this will not apply to films that are screened in class. In such cases, you may write your response after the screening.
*All responses should be approximately 15 sentences (at least).

3. Mid-term exam (100 points): You will write the exam in class, but all questions will be given to you one week prior to the exam.

4. Quizzes (100 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.

5. Mid-term Paper (250 points) – A hand out detailing this assignment will be provided in class.

6. 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). You may do this individually or form groups (no more than 4 per group). If you present in a group, your presentation must be 10 minutes, and each group member should have a clearly designated aspect of the assignment. Different members of one group might be awarded different points depending on the quality of analysis.

7. Final Research Paper (300 points): A hand out detailing this assignment will be provided in class.

8. 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. 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.**

**GRADING SCALE:**

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**TENTATIVE 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 the below readings are in the Course Packet unless otherwise indicated. You must come to class already having read the readings on the day indicated below.

**Week 1**

**August**

M 24 -- Introduction to Course Objectives and Class Policies

W 26 -- In class assignment

F 28 -- Student and Instructor Introductions

**Week 2**

M 31 -- Lecture Introduction

**September**

W 2 -- Lecture Continued

F 4 -- Judith Lorber, "Social Construction of Gender"

**Week 3**

M 7 -- Labor Day: HOLIDAY

W 9 -- Tasker and Negra, "Feminist Politics and Postfeminist Culture"

F 11 Discussion and Group Exercise
**Week 4**

M 14 -- Siobhan Sommerville, "Scientific Racism and the Invention of Homosexuality"

W 16 – Chris Finley, “Decolonizing the Queer Native Body”

F 18 -- Discussion Contd

**Week 5**

M 21 – Lila Abu Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?”

W 23 – Cheryl Chase, “Hermaphrodites with Attitude”

F 25 -- Saski Sassen, “America’s Immigration ‘Problem’

**Week 6**

M 28 – Selections from Sonia Shah’s Dragon Ladies, Yellowdykecore,” Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege”


**October**

F 2 -- Group Exercise on Intersectionality

**Week 7**

M 5 – Group Exercise Contd.

W 7 -- Exam

F 9 -- Exam

**Week 8**

M 12 -- Exam

W 14 – Angela Davis, Selections from “Are Prisons Obsolete?”

F 16 – Discussions Contd.

**Week 9**

M 19 – Susan Bordo, “Hunger as Ideology”
W 21 – Clips from *Killing us Softly*

F 23 -- Discussion

**Week 10**

M 26 -- Susan Cahn, “From the ‘Muscle Moll’ to the ‘Butch’ Ballplayer” Mannishness, Lesbianism, and Homophobia in U.S. Women’s Sport”

W 28 –Sengupta and Ratnam, “Why Dutee Chand can Change Sports”

F 30 -- Discussion Contd.

**November**

**Week 11**

M 2 -- Julia Serano, “Skirt Chasers: Why the Media Depicts the Trans Revolution in Lipstick and Heels”

W 4 – *The Transformation* (screening)

F 6 -- Discussion

**Week 12**

M 9 -- Andy Smith -- “Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide”

W 11-- Veteran's Day: HOLIDAY


**Week 13**

M 16 -- Discussion of Final Assignment

W 18 -- Discussion of *Boys Don’t Cry*

F 20 -- Discussion of *Boys Don’t Cry*

**Week 14 -- Thanksgiving Week**

M 23 -- HOLIDAY

W 25 -- HOLIDAY

F 27 -- HOLIDAY
Week 15
M 30 – Thesis Discussions

December
W 2 -- Presentations
F 4 -- Presentations

Week 16
M 7 -- Presentations
W 9 -- Presentations
F 11 – Presentations