

# WS 202: Introduction to Contemporary Feminisms & Gender Theories

Jess Travers | Summer Session II | CRN: 732

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## OFFICE HOURS & LOCATIONS

Office Hours: By appointment  
Note: In-person and Skype office hours available  
Office Location: Wells Hall, room C707  
Skype Address: [jessica.travers](https://www.skype.com/jessica.travers).

## COURSE MATERIALS

- Required Readings & Viewings to Purchase:
  - bell hooks. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*
  - Annamarie Jagose. *Queer Theory: An Introduction*
  - *Paris is Burning*. Dir. Jenny Livingston, documentary film. Available to stream via Netflix or YouTube
  - *Tangerine*. Dir. Sean Baker, film. Available via MSU library (free) or Amazon Video
- Required Readings & Viewings Provided on D2L:
  - Audre Lorde. "Uses of the Erotic"
  - Gayle Rubin. "Thinking Sex"
  - Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie. "We Should All Be Feminists" YouTube video
  - Autostraddle.com. "Rebel Girls: Your Handy-Dandy Map to the Feminist Movement"
  - Chandra Mohanty. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse"
  - Kimberlé Crenshaw. "The Urgency of Intersectionality" YouTube video
  - Lisa Duggan. "Sex Wars Excepts"
  - CriticalTheory.com. "What the Fuck is Queer Theory?"
  - Angela Davis. "Feminism and Abolition: Theories and Practices for the Twenty-First Century"
  - Marilyn Frye. *The Politics of Reality* excerpts
  - Marilyn Frye. *Willful Virgin* excerpts
  - Pricilla Alexander. "Feminism, Sexworkers, and Human Rights"
  - Juno Mac. "The Laws that Sex Workers Really Want" YouTube video
  - Judith Butler. "Your Behavior Creates Your Gender" YouTube video
  - Adrienne Rich. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"
  - Monique Wittig. *The Straight Mind* excerpts
  - Julia Serano. "Transmisogyny Primer"
  - David Valentine. "Imagining Transgender"
  - Helen G. "What is Transfeminism?"
  - Feminist Manifestos
    - Choose **two** of these (though you may certainly read all!):
      - Mina Loy. "Feminist Manifesto"
      - Radicalesbians. "The Woman Identified Woman"
      - Redstockings. "Redstockings Manifesto"
      - Anonymous. "Gender Nihilism: An Anti-Manifesto"
- Reliable access to a computer or tablet with Internet capabilities
- A functioning email account & D2L account

## PREREQUISITES

- WS 201
- Not open to freshmen

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

WS 202 approaches theories of feminism and gender from a variety of intellectual, political, cultural, religious, sexual, racial, ethnic, national, and global perspectives. This course is not set up linearly or chronologically; it is set up conversationally. This structure serves to mirror how genders and sexualities are not hierarchical in nature, but rather exist as back and forth, messy, muddy, imbricated experiences.

## COURSE GOALS & EXPECTATIONS

Once successfully completing WS 202 students will have a deeper understanding of foundational feminist, gender, and queer theories. Because this online section is compressed, the course focuses primarily on Western feminism—this, of course, does not mean to discount or delegitimize feminist thought from other global contexts, but does mean to recognize that feminisms are many and plural. Students will first study introductory Western feminist concepts and history in order to ensure everyone has a common and shared working vocabulary and core knowledge base. From there, each week students will read and/or view texts that introduce a specific feminist perspective, theory, and/or lived experience, these include: intersectionality, raced bodies, queerness, drag, transgender perspectives, and gender non-conformity. In order to tease-out and work through the texts and theories, students are expected to use inquiry as a means toward discovery. This inquiry/ discovery process is guided by course assignments. Students are assigned analytical vlog responses, a midterm paper, and a final paper. For all assignments, students should aim to put their own questions, discoveries, and claims in conversation with the theories and authors presented by course texts. Students should consider how class materials both confirm and complicate how gender, race, sexuality, ability, social class, citizenship, and other lived experiences overlap and inform each other.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Vlogs:** Every week students will record and submit 2 vlogs (video blog) to the appropriate D2L discussion post; there you will include a link your Youtube vlog (on public view). To be clear then: upload your recorded vlog to YouTube and cut and paste the link into the appropriate discussion post—that way I will have access to the vlogs and you all can view each other's as well.

### *Vlog General Guidelines:*

- For the first vlog of the week: critically engage with the week's assigned readings/ viewing (requirements below). This first vlog of the week may cover only part of the assigned material for the week and the second vlog should cover the remaining material.
- For the second vlog of the week: critically engage with the week's assigned readings/ viewings AND respond to one or more of your peers. This means you should be watching each other's vlogs and thinking about what your peers are saying and thinking. When responding to each other, do so thoughtfully and respectfully. In other words, "I like your idea about X" is not sufficient and dismissing the ideas of others is also not acceptable.

### *Vlog Specifics:*

- Each vlog should be **3-4 minutes** long.
- Feel free to write your vlog out and then read from it or speak without notes; in either case, students are expected to prepare before recording and use editing in order to illustrate clear ideas and **critical analysis**.
- For each vlog students are expected to analyze texts (written and/ or visual) **NOT summarize**.
- Think of these vlogs like mini-papers.
- Between the 2 vlogs for each week, students are required to engage with all of the assigned readings and viewings for that week.
- Vlogs should demonstrate that the reading and viewing has been completed—show me you have done the work AND that you have thought about it in insightful, meaningful ways.
- To prepare for vlogs, ask yourself questions like: What is the text saying, how, and why is it saying it? How does a text/ passage/ chapter complicate another? How do texts overlap and why? What stands out to you and why? How might passages speak to broader ideas from the course? Does theory help

shed light on the literature or vice versa? What are the texts' claims? Who is the audience? What is the central purpose of each text? Do you agree with what is being said, disagree, or both? Why?

- Make sure you are not simply reporting observations. Move beyond observation by explaining your interpretations to allow you to make meaning from those initial observations. In other words, don't just tell us what strikes you, but also explain why it does and make claims from there.
- **Specs:** vlogs should include edits, fades, intertexts, intertitles, pics, good sound, and if filming using your phone hold it horizontally. There are several free software apps and programs out there for recording, editing, etc.
- Be sure vlogs are open for **public view on YouTube** (double and triple check this), and make sure your link is **live**. If I cannot access your vlog by the due date/ time, it will not be accepted.
- These vlogs will prepare students to write the analytical midterm and final papers.

**Midterm Paper:** In this paper students will put themselves in conversation with course texts (written and visual) and the ideas created and explored in those texts. Topics for assignment may be chosen by the student, though it is required that papers center around a clear, argumentative claim and support that claim by way of textual analysis.

*Midterm Paper Guidelines:*

- 3-4 pages, double spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins
- Papers must be submitted as Word file (.doc or .docx)
- For this paper students are asked to be in conversation with at least 3 sources from the course thus far via a clear argumentative insight. This insight should be the student's and not a re-statement of a source's claims. In other words, the paper should have a clear, original thesis that drives the paper forward and uses sources from the course to help support, contextualize, complicate, nuance, or historicize that claim.
- This paper **MUST HAVE A CLEAR AND ORIGINAL ARGUMENT** that is central to the paper.
- I will **NOT** be looking for summaries of all the course material. I **WILL** be looking for interpretation and critical analysis. Show me you understand all the material from the class not by regurgitating it but instead by interpreting and analyzing it—this should be done by way of introducing and proving a debatable thesis statement. Earning a 4.0 on this essay will not be possible if an arguable/debatable claim is not included. Remember historians give us educated and supported interpretations and opinions, and this is what I will look for from you.
- A minimum of 3 sources from the course is required (and correct works cited and in-text citations. MLA or APA formatting are both expectable, just be consistent).
- If you have not yet taken advantage of MSU's writing center (or even if you have) – this is a good time to do so. The writing center provides distance learning help too, should you not be in the area.
- Do not wait until the last minute to start thinking or writing this paper. Start thinking about it and drafting early. I'm here to help, so if you want to run a thesis by me or have questions, I'm available via email or skype.
- Review all materials from the term thus far before drafting.

**Final Paper:** Like with the midterm, in this paper students will put themselves in conversation with course texts (written and visual) and the ideas created and explored in those texts. Topics for assignment may be chosen by the student, though it is required that papers center around a clear, argumentative claim and support that claim by way of textual analysis. How this paper differs from the midterm is that students should more thoroughly demonstrate the ways they have made connections across assigned texts from throughout the session. So, for this final paper you should be making connections across texts and be adding to the conversation.

*Final Paper Guidelines:*

- 4-5 pages, double spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins
- Papers must be submitted as Word file (.doc or .docx)
- For the final paper students are asked to be in conversation with at least 5 sources from the course via a clear argumentative insight. This insight should be the student's and not a re-statement of a source's

claims. In other words, the paper should have a clear, original thesis that drives the paper forward and uses sources from the course to help support, contextualize, complicate, nuance, or historicize that claim.

- This paper **MUST HAVE A CLEAR AND ORIGINAL ARGUMENT** that is central to the paper. Do **NOT** summarize. I will **NOT** be looking for summaries of all the course material. I **WILL** be looking for interpretation and critical analysis. Show me you understand the material from the class not by regurgitating it but instead by interpreting and analyzing it—this should be done by way of introducing and proving a debatable thesis statement. Earning a 4.0 on this essay will not be possible if an arguable/debatable claim is not included.
- A minimum of 5 sources from the course is required (and correct works cited and in-text citations. MLA or APA formatting are both expectable, just be consistent).
- If you have not yet taken advantage of MSU's writing center (or even if you have)—this is a good time to do so. The writing center provides distance learning help too, should you not be in the area.
- Do not wait until the last minute to start thinking or writing this paper. Start thinking about it and drafting early. I'm here to help, so if you want to run a thesis by me or have questions, I'm available via email or skype.
- Review all material from the term before drafting. All the materials and sources from the term build on each other – think about each source as one puzzle piece to a larger picture.

## **COURSE GRADING**

Work is evaluated using these criteria:

- Quality and depth of thinking via critical analysis, discovery, and inquiry
- Critical engagement—yes, demonstrate that you have completed the readings and viewings, but do so by engaging with them thoughtfully **NOT** by summarizing.
- Persuasiveness and Originality -- including thesis/claim, "so what?" (aka why your claim matters), and evidence to support and prove your claim.
- Organization, Coherence, & Clarity of Communication
- Style and Technique
- All parts of assignment are complete

Point Value Overview & Breakdown (1,000 possible earned points):

- Vlogs: 12 vlogs total, 50 points each – 600 points or 30% of final grade
- Midterm Paper: 150 points or 15% of final grade
- Final Paper: 250 points or 25% of final grade

## **FINAL GRADING SCALE**

4.0 = 920 - 1000

3.5 = 850 - 919

3.0 = 800 - 849

2.5 = 750 - 799

2.0 = 700 - 749

1.5 = 650 - 699

1.0 = 600 - 649

0.0 = 00 - 599

## **WS 202 -- TIPS AND SUCH...**

- This course demands a great deal of reading, writing, and critical thinking skills that students will use for the rest of their lives. WS 202 counts for 3 credit hours, and students in a regular summer semester spend 8 hours in class weekly and an additional (approximately) 7-8 hours outside the classroom in preparation and finishing required assignments. The online WS 202 will be little different from an on-campus class in this respect. Be prepared to spend about 15-25 hours a week for this class. If your summer schedule will not permit you to do this, then be advised to take this course at another time.
- Plan ahead, especially for readings. **SELF-DISCIPLINE** is crucial for your success in this class. This class requires **\*consistent\*** and conscientious attention; falling behind in readings and/ or assignments can be detrimental to your learning and grade. Most importantly this class depends on student preparation.

- Student preparation includes not only reading and viewing the assignments but also participating in discussion via the vlogs—be sure you have thought about the material, are ready to ask questions, and explore and share your ideas with others. Critical thinking also means having and sharing independent views. Your views will be respected and, NO, you will not be penalized for disagreeing with your classmates or me. However, you will be expected to defend your opinions (using specific evidence from the course material and citing it properly). The idea is to keep an open mind and a willingness to try looking at things from different points of view, and to be respectful and prepared to listen to others' opinions even when you don't agree with them. So please disagree with a view and not the person presenting the view.
- This is not a writing course; however, college level writing/ composition and critical analysis is expected and should be reflected in all assignments.
- Note-taking is a crucial skill. Take notes on ALL videos, audio files, visuals, and readings.
- Cite properly. Cite direct quotes and paraphrases. You may use MLA or APA style formatting—just be consistent. If you are unfamiliar with how to use in-text citations or create a works cited page, use the Purdue OWL website. You are expected to cite properly for ALL assignments.
- Students who are concerned about their grade should set up individual online conferences with me throughout the semester—NOT at the very end of the semester. Talking with me at the end of the semester does not afford you the opportunity to improve your grade.
- Be sure to keep up with D2L announcements.

## **DEADLINE POLICY**

*NO LATE WORK IS EXCEPTED, unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor. All assignments are submitted via D2L and will be timestamped. All assignments are due at 9am EST (Eastern Standard Time) on the individual date—so be careful to pay attention to time zone changes, should you be living or traveling outside of the US Eastern time zone. Because this is an online class, having regular and dependable access to the internet and the videos is necessary. Late work will not be excused due to technical problems.*

## **POLICY ON RESPONDING TO EMAILS**

I check my email Monday-Friday and will make every effort to answer all email within 24 hours. When you email me, remember that it is a professional communication. State your full name, section number and the subject of your email in the subject line.

If I get more than one email regarding the same issue, I will consider it a “common” question/issue and make an announcement about it so that everyone may benefit from knowing the answer. This is an online course, so it is your responsibility to read all announcements under D2L “Announcements.”

*If your email pertains to an issue that can be answered simply by looking at the course syllabus or reading a D2L announcement, replying to your email will be low on my priority list.*

## **PLEASE NOTE**

We will be reading, viewing, and discussing material that some may find intense or graphic. I ask that you keep an open mind and, of course, at the same time practice self care. Should any student want to talk about which texts include such material before reading them, please contact me directly or come into office hours. No questions asked.

## **ACADEMIC FRAUD**

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses. Forms of academic dishonesty, including using portions or copies of another person's work or recycling essays from past courses, will not be tolerated. *Any intellectual property (ideas, quotes, graphics, etc.) “borrowed” from outside sources **must** be properly cited.*

"Plagiarism (from the Latin *plagiarius*, an abductor, and *plagiare*, to steal) is defined by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy on Misconduct in Research as '... the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results or words without giving appropriate credit.' ... At MSU, General Student Regulation 1.00 states in part that 'no student shall claim or submit the academic work of another as one's own.' (For the complete regulation, see Protection of Scholarship and Grades.) ... Plagiarism may be accidental or blatant and there is

even self-plagiarism. However, students are held to the same standards whether or not they knew they were plagiarizing or whether or not they were plagiarizing themselves or someone else" (<https://d2l.msu.edu/d2l/le/content/443874/viewContent/3878807/View> and read MSU's academic fraud/ plagiarism policy)".

Of course, a certain amount of collaboration on writing assignments is allowed and even encouraged. This collaboration can take the form of discussion of ideas, general and specific revision suggestions, and even minor help with editing. However, students who use someone else's work, give someone else work to use, or allow someone else to complete writing or revising work that should be doing themselves are cheating. Students who have questions in this area should see their instructor.

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

- **The Writing Center** is for all students interested in receiving additional feedback on writing assignments for any course. For information about Writing Center location, hours, and appointment scheduling, please visit: <http://writing.msu.edu>.
- Student Affairs & Services: <http://studentaffairs.msu.edu/>
- Neighborhood Services: <http://neighborhoods.msu.edu>
- English Language Center: <http://elc.msu.edu/>
- **Please report technology problems to:**  
MSU Distance Learning Services  
Local: (517) 355 2345  
Toll Free: (800) 500 1554 (North America and Hawaii)  
Web: D2L Contact form on D2L Help Site

## SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Students who wish to request disability-related accommodations should contact the **Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities** by visiting the website ([www.rcpd.msu.edu](http://www.rcpd.msu.edu)), visiting the office (Bessey Hall, room 120), or calling (517-884-7273).

## A NOTE REGARDING MANDATORY REPORTING

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. It is my goal that you feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, in your written work, and in our one-on-one meetings. In most cases, I will keep information you share in essays, journals, and other materials submitted for this class private and confidential. However, it is important that you understand that I have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as an instructor/TA which imposes limits to the confidentiality I can extend to students. If, in my capacity as an instructor or TA, I hear from a student that they experienced any form of sexual misconduct, the endangerment of a child, or harm to oneself or others, either on or off campus, during their tenure here at MSU, irrespective of who was involved in the incident(s), I will have to inform the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) as well as the MSU Police Department. The reason we do this is to ensure that you get all the support and information you need to make an informed decision on whether or not you would like to take further steps. This may prompt contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a completely confidential setting, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center (517-355-2870) or the MSU Sexual Assault Program (517-355-3551), call the 24-hour crisis line (517-372-6666), and for support services/shelter for relationship violence and stalking, MSU Safe Place (517-355-1100). More information can be found at <http://endrape.msu.edu/> and <http://safeplace.msu.edu/>. All of these professionals and advocates can help a student without having to report information pertaining to sexual misconduct or relationship violence that students share to any university or law enforcement units. However, they may still be bound by a duty to report child endangerment or risk of self-harm. Ask your counselor or advocate what their reporting responsibilities are and what the limits to their confidentiality are. On the other hand, if you would like to report any sexual misconduct in a non-confidential manner, you may call the Office for Institutional Equity (OIE) at 517-353-3922 or the MSU law enforcement (Police) at 517-355-2221.

**WS 202 Course Calendar:  
Introduction to Contemporary Feminisms & Gender Theories  
Summer Online Schedule**

**NOTE:** the required readings and viewings are listed by week and should be completed by the week's end. It is up to you to pace yourself accordingly. However, the vlogs, which respond to the readings/ viewings are due earlier in the week, so keep that in mind for completing the work. Lastly, summers courses go by very quickly—I can't emphasize enough the importance of keeping up with the work.

Date	Readings/ Viewings/ Assignment Due Dates
<p><b>Week 1</b>  7/1-7/5</p>	<p>-Readings/ Viewings:            * Read              -bell hooks. <i>Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics</i>.              -autostraddle.com. "Rebel Girls: Your Handy-Dandy Map to the Feminist Movement"            * Watch              -Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie. "We Should All Be Feminists."</p> <p>-Assignments:            * Vlog #1, due Wednesday            * Vlog #2, due Friday</p>
<p><b>Week 2</b>  7/8-7/12</p>	<p>-Readings/ Viewings:            * Read              -Chandra Mohanty. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse"              -Angela Davis. "Feminism and Abolition: Theories and Practices for the Twenty-First Century"              -Marilyn Frye. <i>The Politics of Reality</i> excerpt              -Marilyn Frye. <i>Willful Virgin</i> excerpts            * Watch              -Kimberlé Crenshaw. "The Urgency of Intersectionality" YouTube video</p> <p>-Assignments:            * Vlog #3, due Monday            * Vlog #4, due Friday</p>
<p><b>Week 3</b>  7/15-7/19</p>	<p>-Readings/ Viewings:            * Read:              -Gayle Rubin. "Thinking Sex"              -Lisa Duggan. "Sex Wars Excepts"              -Pricilla Alexander. "Feminism, Sexworkers, and Human Rights"            * Watch              -Juno Mac. "The Laws that Sex Workers Really Want" YouTube video</p> <p>-Assignments:            * Vlog #5, due Monday            * Vlog #6, due Friday            * <b>Midterm Paper, due Friday</b></p>

<p><b>Week 4</b> 7/22-7/26</p>	<p>-Readings/ Viewings: * Read: -Annamarie Jagose. <i>Queer Theory: An Introduction</i>. -CriticalTheory.com. “What the Fuck is Queer Theory?” * Watch -Judith Butler. “Your Behavior Creates Your Gender” YouTube video</p> <p>-Assignments: * Vlog #7, due Monday * Vlog #8, due Friday</p>
<p><b>Week 5</b> 7/29-8/2</p>	<p>-Readings/ Viewings: * Read -Adrienne Rich. “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” -Monique Wittig <i>The Straight Mind</i> excerpts -Audre Lorde. “Uses of the Erotic” * Watch -<i>Paris is Burning</i>. Dir. Jenny Livingston, documentary film. Available via Netflix or YouTube.</p> <p>-Assignments: * Vlog #9, due Monday * Vlog #10, due Friday</p>
<p><b>Week 6</b> 8/5-8/9</p>	<p>-Readings/ Viewings: * Read -Julia Serano. “Transmisogyny Primer” -David Valentine. “Imagining Transgender” -Helen G. “What is Transfeminism?” -Feminist Manifestos: Choose <b>two</b> of these (though you may certainly read all!): —Mina Loy. “Feminist Manifesto” —Radicalesbians. “The Woman Identified Woman” —Redstockings. “Redstockings Manifesto” —Anonymous. “Gender Nihilism: An Anti-Manifesto” * Watch -<i>Tangerine</i>. Dir. Sean Baker, film. Available via MSU library or Amazon Video</p> <p>-Assignments: * Vlog #11, due Monday * Vlog #12, due Friday</p>
<p><b>Week 7</b> 8/12-8/15</p>	<p>-Readings/ Viewings: *No new material this week, in order to allow time to revisit and reflect on all the material from the session and to revise, edit, and polish final papers</p> <p>-Assignments: * <b>Final Paper, due Thursday</b></p>