

WS 201-733: Intro to Women's Studies

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Virtual Office Hours: MW 10-12 EST

& by appointment

(Click picture for reading for 1st week →)



Course Description:

WS 201 provides students with an introduction to women's studies using an interdisciplinary perspective that asks them to question what "Women's Studies" is by looking for answers culturally, historically, socially, politically, and economically. Likewise, this course asks students to think about the ways gender intersects with other identities of race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, age, ability, etc. and to think about how women live in their bodies and how those bodies are read because of their identities.

The course is comprised of units that focus on a different aspect of women's studies: Women and History; Power and Politics; Women of Color and Feminism; Queer Theory and Feminism; Women and Embodiment; Women and Sexuality (health, rape, etc.); and Contemporary Feminisms. We will approach these units with an interdisciplinary lens, drawing readings from myriad academic fields and contemporary culture.

Course Goals:

Working through this course, students will:

- Understand the history and significance of women's and gender studies
- Feel empowered to use their personal interests and experiences as legitimate and fruitful starting points for academic and personal writing
- View women's studies through the multiplicity, diversity, and perceived "contradictions" that have always existed within women's studies
- Articulate the continued relevance of women's and gender studies for understanding contemporary forms of inequality

Required Texts & Materials:

All text-based readings will be made available on **D2L in the "Course Readings" folder**, via PDF files or shared links. Featured films and video footage can be accessed through **YouTube (purchase)**, **Amazon Prime (purchase)**, or the streaming service **Netflix (subscription)**.

In other words, you might have to purchase a subscription to Netflix or purchase a video via YouTube or Amazon as a requirement for this class; however, you have no textbooks to purchase as all other readings are provided for you.

Grading Scale & Assignments

Weekly Reading Responses	35%
Weekly Discussion Participation on FlipGrid	20%
Video Project	20%
Final Project	25%

Grading Scale

93-100% 4.0	63-69% 2.0
92-85% 3.5	56-62% 1.5
77-84% 3.0	49-55% 1.0
70-76% 2.5	< 49% 0.0

DISCUSSION PARTICIPATION ON FLIPGRID [1 per unit/ week] (20%)

We will have weekly discussion forum threads to engage the course material on FlipGrid. Once a week, you will post a brief (2-3 minute) original video discussion in our class FlipGrid for the unit's content **and** post a video response (1 minute) to at least one of your classmates' videos. When you are creating your own videos, they should be informal and emotive—there is no need to read something you've written down for these. Think of them as taking the place of in-person class discussion. There will be a broad prompt each week to act as a guide for your video, but simply make sure that your opinions are supported by specific points from the week's text(s). For example, "I didn't like this reading" is not sufficient; tell us specifically what you're critiquing from the text, how it made you feel, and why, or pose a question you're pondering. When you are responding to your classmates' videos, interact with whatever they may have said that interests you. Ask a question, make a comment, or recommend a resource, but don't *just* agree or disagree with what they said. Think critically about how to engage, and remember to be civil. Original discussion videos must be posted on D2L by **Friday at 11:59pm** of the given week/unit, and Responses are due by **Saturday at 12:00pm (noon)** (except the first week, when both of them will be due **Sunday 7/7 at 11:59pm**).

RESPONSE PAPERS [1 per unit/week] (35%)

Throughout our semester together, we will discuss many readings, films, interviews, and audio. This material is divided into seven thematic units. For each unit, you will write **2-3 double-spaced pages** engaging the assigned material. In these responses, you will pose an original question prompted by the week's readings. This question does not have to have an answer, but you do need to consider the week's readings in relation to the question. These response papers will be due on D2L by **Friday night at 11:59pm** of the given unit/week (except the first week, when they will be due **Sunday 7/7 at 11:59pm**).

“WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO STUDY WOMEN?” VIDEO PROJECT (20%)

You should begin thinking about how you're understanding the big idea of “women's studies” and what it means to you in response to what you're reading and discussing each week in this class. To synthesize that understanding, you will be responsible for creating a “What does it mean to study

women?” video presentation. In the video, you will spend at least five minutes discussing what your understanding is of women’s studies as it pertains to a specific topic we’ve discussed so far this semester: for ex: feminism, gender, activism, etc. Your presentation may focus on 1) a contemporary issue or person, 2) a sub-field or topic within feminism and women’s studies, or 3) a person or moment from the field’s past. The video may deal with anything from pop culture to activism to politics (or anything in between).

You should use three-five scholarly sources from this class in your video. Supplement your video presentation with notes, links, music—anything you think will be useful for helping us understand the topic you are synthesizing. **Please note: this video is NOT a FlipGrid video.** Instead, you should attempt to use a video editing software like [iMovie](#) or [QuickTime](#).

Evaluation of this assignment will be based on your level of preparation, ability to engage with the sources, and depth of analysis, not, necessarily your video production skills. Examples of videos will be provided on D2L. **Your video will be due to D2L by 8/4.**

FINAL PROJECT (25%)

At the end of this course, you will be asked to submit a final project that takes one of two forms:

- 1) A research paper [min. 8 pages] on a topic of your choice that relates to one or more topics around gender, feminism, or women. If you choose this form, I would encourage you to examine your topic through your disciplinary focus; however, if you’d like to approach it from a different angle, I am open to this.
- 2) A creative project [short film, website, zine, visual artwork, video blog, performance piece, poem, etc.] that deals with a topic of your choice related to the course. If you choose the latter (Option 2), a creative project, you will also be asked to submit a three-page (double spaced) accompanying Artist’s Statement that explains your rhetorical choices and rationale of your project.

Final Project *proposals* are due to D2L by **7/19 at 11:59pm**. Final Projects themselves (research papers or projects) are due to D2L by **8/15 at 11:59pm**.

Absolutely no Final Projects will be accepted late.

Course Policies

All assignments will be due to D2L by 11:59pm on the due date of the given assignment. Late work will not be accepted, except in the documented case of what is considered an “extraordinary situation” by the university (university-approved athletic competition, hospital stay, or death of a close family member). You must complete all assignments in order to pass this class.

Individual technology-related “problems” are never an acceptable reason for an assignment to be submitted late. Should something arise, please provide documented evidence (i.e. screenshots of an error message) so that I can best understand/evaluate the situation. As always, it is better to contact me about an issue you are having in the class earlier rather than later so that we may figure out how to resolve it together.

Assignment Format

Unless otherwise stated, all written assignments must be typed in 12-point, Times New Roman font, double spaced, with 1-inch margins. Please follow the Modern Language Association (MLA) Formatting and Style Guide style for all other formatting and citation (in-text and Works Cited) concerns:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_style_introduction.html/.

Readings & Materials

This class is a content based, inter-disciplinary online course. Because the course is online, it is even more critical that you complete and critically engage all of the readings, films, and course material. Trust me, you will not be able to “get away with” not reading in this course. All of the readings for each of the units can be found in that week’s folder on D2L, via either a PDF document or a link.

If you are confused about certain concepts or language from the reading, ask questions and think through your confusion in your weekly response papers or on FlipGrid—don’t give up and opt out of reading; struggling with these things is part of growing as a learner. I am also available (during office hours) to think through any questions or concerns you might have.

Civility:

We enter this course with a range of different positions on and opinions about the topics we will be discussing, and we will leave this course with a range of different positions on and opinions about the topics we have discussed. This is positive and necessary. In order for this growth to occur, however, we need to be graceful with one another and that means that there will be **no place** in this class for disrespectful behavior. While we should feel free to express our divergent points of view, it is important that our discussions remain civil, respectful, and mindful of our various ways of being in the world. I will not hesitate to ask students who cannot abide by this standard to leave the class temporarily or permanently, whichever is warranted. If you are struggling with a concept/idea or a way to express something, speak with me and I will help you try to unpack your stance with the concept/idea or help you find others who can help.

Some of the materials in this course may include profanity or descriptions of sexual/physical/emotional violence. If you ever have difficulty with such material, especially if it is triggering to you, feel free to reach out to me with any feelings or concerns you may have, and if I need to offer alternative readings/texts, I can do so. Take care of yourself with these topics.

Email Policy & Etiquette

Emailing is a rhetorical activity; therefore, you should think of it as such. Please do not treat emails to me or any other instructor, faculty, or staff member as a phone text. To ensure you do this, you should:

1. Read the entire syllabus carefully to see if your issue can be resolved therein

2. Examine the entire D2L website for the same
3. Understand that email is not immediate—I will not respond to email *immediately*, but I will respond within 24 hours
4. Think about *how* you're asking a question/relaying a comment and do the following:
 - a. Include your **full name**
 - b. Include our course name and number, along with a brief blurb of what you need, in the subject line (ex: WS 201: Reading Response Q)
 - c. Include the question/issue/subject *politely*
 - d. Include an appropriate greeting (Dear Ms. Robinson...) and closing (Best, X)

Be aware that the syllabus is subject to change periodically, and I may send updates about class content and/or class assignments to students via MSU email. E-mail correspondence is especially critical for us because this is an online section of this course. **You are responsible for checking your MSU email daily**, and failure to do so does not absolve you from knowing about or complying with any such communications.

Disability Accommodations

Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. If you have been issued a VISA form by RCPD please present it to me as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated and will result in at least one of the following: no credit for the assignment in question; a failed grade in the course and a notation made on your academic transcript; and/or a report filed with the dean of your college. Note that academic dishonesty includes turning in someone else's work and passing it off as your own, unauthorized collaboration, buying papers, and failing to document sources appropriately—including those you get from the Web, a course text, another professor, etc.

Therefore, you must be diligent about using proper citation methods and correctly attributing your sources in your work. For more information on "MSU's policies, regulations, and ordinances regarding academic honesty and integrity," see this link from the Ombudsperson office: <https://msu.edu/~ombud/academic-integrity/index.html>.

The Writing Center @ MSU

The Writing Center (WC) is open during the summer, and it offers online appointments. The WC provides help to students at any level of their academic career and at any stage of their writing process. That means that you can make an appointment with someone there to go over an assignment sheet, a work-in-progress, or a final draft, even a multimedia piece. Likewise, they employ interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate consultants, so you have an opportunity to work with someone in your field (or outside it, if you wish). Summer hours are Monday-Thursday

9am-5pm and Friday 9am-2pm. Visit their website and click on “Schedule an Appointment” to access the summer schedule: <https://writing.msu.edu/>

Course Schedule

Make sure you're always checking our class D2L page for links, updates, and possible changes.

Unit 1: Women and History (Dates 7/1/19-7/5/19):

- Dawson, “A Fight for All...” from *Incite* found [here](#) and by clicking the image on pg. 1 of the syllabus
- APA Definitions Related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity: <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/sexuality-definitions.pdf>
- Fausto-Sterling, “The Five Sexes”
- Wittig, “One is Not Born a Woman”
- France, “Why Women’s Studies?”
- Smith, “The Invention of Women’s Studies” from *Women’s Studies: The Basics*

Unit 1 response paper and FlipGrid are due by **Sunday 7/7 at 11:59pm**. Note that this is the only week that your weekly unit response paper will be due on a Sunday night (as opposed to Friday night).

Unit 2: Power and Politics (Dates 7/6/19-7/12/19):

- de Beauvoir “Introduction” to *The Second Sex*
- Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman?”
- Walker, “Becoming the Third Wave”
- Hanna/Bikini Kill, “Riot Grrrl Manifesto”
- Women’s March “Guiding Principles and Definition of Principles” (available [here](#))
- *She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry* film (2014)—available via YouTube or Amazon Prime **OR** *Feminists, What Were They Thinking?* Film (2018)—available via Netflix

Unit 2 Response Paper and FlipGrid due by **Friday 7/12 at 11:59pm**.

Unit 3: Women of Color and Feminism (Dates 7/13/19-7/19-19):

- Hill Collins, “The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought”
- Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review*
- Smith, Frazier, and Smith, “The Combahee River Collective- A Black Feminist Statement”
- Moraga and Anzaldúa’s *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (selections)
- Frye, “Oppression”
- Instagram feeds—ShiShiRose, Angela Rye, Yara Shahidi, Janet Mock, Jessamyn Stanley, Ericka Hart, Yesika Salgado

Unit 3 Response Paper and FlipGrid due by Friday 7/19 at 11:59pm.

By Friday, 7/19 at 11:59pm, submit a brief proposal (1-2 paragraphs) to D2L regarding what you plan to do for your final project

Unit 4: Women and Embodiment (Dates 7/20/19-7/26/19):

- Butler, “Why Bodies Matter” available on YouTube [here](#)
- Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology."
- Anzaldúa, “Chapter 1: The Homeland, Aztlán,” in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*
- Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*
- Sonya Renee Taylor, “BODIES AS RESISTANCE: Claiming the Political Act of Being Oneself” found [here](#)
- Roxane Gay on *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah* found [here](#)

Unit 4 Response Paper and FlipGrid due by Friday 7/26 at 11:59pm.

Unit 5: Queer Theory and Feminism (Dates 7/27/19-8/2/19):

- Marinucci, Chs. 7, 8, and 9 from *Feminism is Queer: The Intimate Connection Between Queer and Feminism Theory*
- Smith, “Women’s Studies and the Question of Gender” from *Women’s Studies: The Basics*

Unit 5 Response Paper, and FlipGrid, due by Friday 8/2 at 11:59pm AND
“What Does it Mean to Study Women?” video project due Sunday 8/4 at 11:59pm.

Unit 6: Women and Sexuality (Dates 8/3/19-8/9/19)

- Consent and Sexual Assault
 - Yancey Martin and Hummer, “Fraternities and Rape on Campus”
 - MacKinnon, “Rape: On Coercion and Consent”
 - *The Hunting Ground* film (2015) - Available to stream on Amazon Video or YouTube Movies
 - Episode 50, “The Vanderbilt Rape Case,” of *Southern Fried True Crime* (podcast)—available via Apple Podcasts and Stitcher
- Sex Positivity
 - Moen, “Oh Joy Sex Toy: What Does It Mean to Be Sex Positive?” (2016)
 - Auteri, “Jessica Valenti on Sex Positivity, Ferrante, and Sex Object” (2016)

Unit 6 Response Paper and FlipGrid due by Friday 8/9 at 11:59pm.

Unit 7: Contemporary Feminisms (Dates 8/10/19-8/15/19):

- Gay, *Bad Feminist* (“Back to Me”)

- Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, (Part 1 and both Conclusions)
- Parizeau, Shillington, Hawkins, Sultana, Mountz, Mullings, and Peake, “Breaking the Silence: A Feminist Call to Action”
- Colebrook, “Toxic Feminism: Hope and Hopelessness after Feminism”

****Unit 7 Response Paper and FlipGrid due Thursday 8/15 at 11:59pm. AND Final Projects (research papers or projects) due Thursday 8/15 at 11:59pm.**

*Remember that your FlipGrid Responses are due on Saturdays of each week by noon.

**Note that during our final week everything is due on Thursday.