

WGS 105: INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES FALL 2018

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Office Hours: M 2:30-3:30,
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COURSE PURPOSE: This class is designed to introduce you to the academic field of women's and gender studies by exploring a wide range of issues that relate to gender in the contemporary world. It is an interdisciplinary course that includes readings, media, and ideas from the social sciences, from history and literature, from politics and from the arts. We'll be looking at these cultural elements and examining institutions and theoretical ideas in order to investigate the role of gender in the ways we define and express ourselves—in all our myriad gendered identities—as humans in our world. Further, we will explore how these systems create inequities of power and privilege; we'll also study ways in which individuals and groups respond to and resist such oppression, as well as ways we, as individuals, can effect change for social justice.

The course is organized around the threshold concepts that are essential to understanding women's and gender studies. Threshold concepts can be envisioned as ideas that take you through a doorway into new learning and perception. Departing from old ways of knowing and moving toward new understanding is also sometimes called “troublesome knowledge” because such shifts in perception can be upsetting, but ultimately rewarding. I hope that you will take away many interesting ideas that will be challenging and useful, in both your academic and personal life.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To introduce you to the academic field of women's and gender studies and help you gain understanding of its interdisciplinary methodology, evolution as a discipline, and changing position within the academy.
2. To relate the concepts and ideas of course materials to your own experiences.
3. To discuss, reflect upon, and analyze the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality.
4. To reflect critically, in discussion and in writing, on the materials and ideas of the course.
5. To explore the variety and diversity of gender perspectives and feminist thought.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:

- **Rental Texts:** *Threshold Concepts in Women's and Gender Studies*, 2nd Edition. Christie Launius and Holly Hassel. NY: Routledge, 2018.
- **Purchase:** *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood, Doubleday and Knopf, 1986.
- **D2L Readings and other materials**—posted to the D2L Content area as indicated on schedule.

COURSE WORK:**Reading Responses and Application Activities (20%):**

For most class meetings, you will write a short response to the assigned readings, either in-class or in preparation for class. In either case, the goal is to stimulate class discussion and prompt careful reading of the class assignments so that you get the most out of the assignments. These responses will be graded Credit/No-Credit.

- **In-class writings (5%)** will occur on days that reading is assigned, but no formal writing is indicated on the syllabus. These will be informal writings designed to help you gather your thoughts for or from discussion and to encourage careful reading of the materials. I will collect these or check them off after they're written.
- **D2L writing assignments (15%)** will be more in-depth pieces that ask you to apply the assigned reading material in a specific way. The details of these writing assignments will be posted in the D2L Content area for each day they are assigned (as indicated on the syllabus) and will often be questions or prompts selected from your text or those I develop. Whatever the assignment specifics, these writing should total about 250-300 words. These must be typed (double-spaced, 1" margins, 12-point font) and should be brought to class when they are assigned, since we will use them in class and then I will collect them. If you must miss class, you may post your D2L writing assignments to the D2L Dropbox, but they will be marked late (5 points/ each day late) if posted after class.

Weekly D2L Reflection Posts (15%)

Each week, you will need to complete a reflective writing that helps tie together everything that we did for the week. These reflections will be posted to the D2L Discussion folder for each week by Fridays at 11:59 p.m. and they should be approximately 200 words long. They will be graded according to a rubric that we will review in class in Week 2. Below are some questions to help you generate your reflections:

1. What were the key points from class discussion for the week?
2. In what new ways did the class activities and discussion help you expand your understanding of the week's readings?
3. What are you taking away from applying these ideas to your life or our culture?
4. Were there other connections or comments that you thought of after class or didn't say in class?
5. What questions do you still have about the material or topics for this week?

Class Facilitation (15%)

Working in groups of about four, you will sign up for a class day to facilitate discussion of the readings for that day through an example that your group selects. Your group will need to:

1. Present the main concepts from the reading
2. Select and present an example to accompany the reading that helps the class actively apply one or more of the day's concepts, and
3. Prepare 2-3 discussion questions for the class regarding the topic or the reading.

Further details of this assignment will be provided in a separate handout distributed at the second class meeting.

Historical Perspectives Analysis (10%)

For this project, we will be visiting the UWSP Archives to see primary materials that will help us explore how one norm, expectation, belief or practice related to gender has changed over time and to explore historical perspectives on gender. I will provide you with a handout and guidelines with more details about the expectations and process for this assignment.

Novel Response Paper (15%)

As a class, we will be reading and discussing Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. After we read and discuss the novel, you will write a literary analysis and reflection on the book. I will give you a handout with more specific details and requirements later in the semester.

Final Poster Project (15%)

For the final exam for the class you will research a topic based on your individual interest. This allows you to investigate a topic or issue that you feel passionate about and to apply the threshold concepts from the course to that topic. Our final exam meeting for the class will be a poster session displaying everyone's research. Again, I will give you a handout with more specific details.

Participation (10%)

Participation means actively engaging in class activities and discussion, especially in collaborative situations. Since understanding the material will rely heavily on class discussion and activities, attendance at each class meeting is essential and after two missed class meetings, your participation grade will be reduced by one half grade for each additional class missed. Missing more than 6 class meetings will be grounds for failing the course.

COURSE POLICIES:**Classroom Etiquette**

The subject material of this class can be sensitive and controversial, so it is crucial that we create a climate conducive to safe and open discussion. It is expected that you will engage with the material with an open mind and a critical lens. It is equally important that you respect your classmates and their opinions. Listen to what others have to say and if you disagree with something, discuss it respectfully and openly—do not attack—and try to understand and empathize with others' experiences.

This course also approaches gender and other dimensions of identity, discrimination and power from a systemic basis, so it is important to recognize that we cannot generalize about systems from individual personal anecdotes—while I hope that you will find the material relevant to your lives, be careful when speaking to avoid generalizations and sweeping assumptions.

If you have any concerns about the class or the material, please come and talk to me so we can try to work out a solution as quickly as possible.

Electronic Devices/Video

Electronic devices are distracting and their use while others are speaking is impolite; unless you are asked to use them for a class activity, turn off cell phones and put them out of sight. Laptops are not allowed unless you have an Accommodations Request requiring use for a disability; if you use a tablet for notetaking, please sit in the front row. Violating the device policy will result in an absence for the day.

To respect the privacy of those in the class, video recording is prohibited without the written permission of the instructor. Anyone violating this policy will be asked to leave the class.

Email

I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours (or within 48 hours on weekends), except in the following situations: you are asking for information that can be found on the syllabus, you are asking me to cover an entire class period via email because you have missed a class (please visit my office hours or make an appointment to discuss what you've missed), or the tone of your email is rude or disrespectful.

COURSE CALENDAR

The reading and writing assignments must be completed by the day they appear on the syllabus. This schedule is tentative and may be changed at the discretion of the instructor.

Date	Tuesday	Date	Thursday
1 9/4	Course Introductions	9/6	<i>Ways of Thinking, Seeing and Knowing</i> Reading: <i>Threshold</i> , Ch. 1 Introduction Writing: Writing Prompts #1 and 2, pg. 23 Facilitation Signup
2 9/11	<i>Ways of Thinking, Seeing and Knowing</i> D2L Readings & Writing Assignment	9/13	<i>Social Construction of Gender</i> *Group Facilitation 1 Reading: <i>Threshold</i> , pp. 29-52
3 9/18	<i>Social Construction of Gender</i> *Group Facilitation 2 <i>Threshold</i> , pp. 52-82	9/20	Archives Visit
4 9/25	<i>Social Construction of Gender</i> D2L Readings & Writing Assignment	9/27	<i>Social Construction of Gender</i> D2L Readings & Writing Assignment
5 10/2	Historical Perspectives Analysis Peer Review —Rough draft of paper due	10/4	NO CLASS Writing Day
6 10/9	Historical Perspectives Paper DUE <i>Privilege and Oppression</i>	10/11	<i>Privilege and Oppression</i> *Group Facilitation 3 <i>Threshold</i> , pp. 89-104
7 10/16	<i>Privilege and Oppression</i> *Group Facilitation 4 <i>Threshold</i> , pp. 104-131	10/18	<i>Privilege and Oppression</i> D2L Readings & Writing Assignment
8 10/23	<i>Intersectionality</i> *Group Facilitation 5 <i>Threshold</i> , pp. 141-155	10/25	<i>Intersectionality</i> <i>Threshold</i> , pp. 155-179
9 10/30	<i>Feminist Praxis</i> *Group Facilitation 6 <i>Threshold</i> , pp. 191-225	11/1	<i>Feminist Praxis</i> D2L Readings & Writing Assignment
10 11/6	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	11/8	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
11 11/13	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	11/15	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
12 11/20	Novel Response Peer Review-- Rough draft of papers due	11/22	THANKSGIVING
13 11/27	Novel Response Paper DUE WGS Library Research for Poster Projects	11/29	Research Day—No class
14 12/4	Poster Project conferences	12/6	Poster Project conferences
15 12/11	Poster Project Preparation/Planning	12/13	Poster Project Preparation/Planning
	Poster Projects Due at scheduled exam time: 12/17/2018, Monday 10:15AM - 12:15PM		