# Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

WGS 101, Sample Syllabus T&R, time & location TBD

Instructor: Ding (they/she) Email: din@arizona.edu Office: Social Sciences 138

Office Hours: M 2:45-4:15pm & by appointment

# Course Overview

What is the nature of patriarchy, and what would it take to smash it? Is there such a thing as "pleasure under patriarchy" in the meantime? What is it to be gendered, to be sexed, to be constructed? What does being a woman mean to queer and trans women? Who and what is feminism ultimately a movement for?

In surveying these questions, we will trace the development of women's, gender, and sexuality studies as an interdisciplinary field from the early days of the women's liberation movement all the way to the present, foregrounding foundational issues about politics, methods, epistemic standpoints, conceptual frameworks, and analytical tools. While we will encounter a wide range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, the course is designed to be friendly to students without a background in the humanities or the social sciences.

# EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

In WGS 101, students will learn to

- a) Explain major issues, ideas, arguments, and points of contention in contemporary feminist theory and politics, with an understanding of their social, political, and intellectual origins;
- b) Apply feminist theories, standpoints, concepts, and approaches to uncover, analyze, and critique the operation of social power and oppression through gender as it intersects with axes such as sexuality, race, class, and disability;
- c) Charitably interpret and critically assess texts, arguments, and analyses;
- *d*) Construct a well-reasoned, original argument in response to a current or historical issue in or about feminism;
- *e*) Discuss ways in which feminist theory and politics inform, challenge, and reshape each other;
- *f*) Discuss ways in which theoretical tools and reflection may help to give voice to marginalized experiences otherwise obscured by oppressive social structures.

# REQUIRED TEXTS

I will make all required readings available digitally. If there are any barriers (technical, etc.) that make it difficult for you to access any of the texts, please don't be afraid to let me know.

### Assessment

Final course grades will be awarded on the following basis:

Participation: 10% Course lexicon: 10%

Reading discussions, or "shorties": 20%

Midterm and final exams: 40%

Final project: 20%

**Participation** 

In approaching an issue in feminist theory, we will often find ourselves in the middle of a long conversation among many different authors. A hallmark of what we do as feminist theorists is the way we participate in this conversation and position ourselves in relation to these authors: we are not outside observers just here to absorb what each author has said and perhaps to summarize some of the points of agreement and disagreement; rather, we are equal parties to the conversation, just like every other feminist theorist. It's helpful, then, to think of our classroom not as where you come to memorize and recite particular ideas, but as where we gather to *do feminist theory together*, to contribute our own insights to ongoing public and scholarly conversations, and to think through these difficult issues *for* ourselves.

Participation in a class like ours also serves a wide range of pedagogical purposes: class discussions help students make sense of difficult ideas and arguments in the texts; they help students learn to explain and apply concepts, analyze and assess arguments, and formulate and respond to worries and counterarguments; in addition, they contribute to other students' learning experience by helping to build a vibrant, mutually supportive classroom environment that encourages questions, exchange of ideas, and theoretical and personal reflection.

You are expected to regularly contribute to class discussions and participate in class activities. To do that, you are expected to have read the assigned texts carefully and critically *in advance of class* (remember to bring a copy with you as we will often look at difficult passages together!).

For this class, I will use in-class activities (which will be graded on a check-plus/check/fail basis) to establish a baseline participation grade, and then move up or down taking into account preparation, engagement, contribution, and respect for others. Class participation will make up 10% of your final grade.

Course Lexicon

Throughout this semester, please keep a running lexicon of the technical terms that we encounter in both our readings and our class discussions. Feel free to just jot them down in your notes as you go, though the versions that you turn in should be cleaned up (whether typed or handwritten), and it should include not only a list of terms but their definitions/explanations (verbal, visual, or otherwise).

I will ask everybody to turn in a partial version of their lexicon with the midterm exam. This is merely a progress check and will not be graded; however, failure to turn in one on time will be penalized by up to a full letter grade (10%) on the final version. The final version of the lexicon submitted at the end of the course should be comprehensive and will account for 10% of your final grade.

**Shorties** 

For ten classes of your choice, you will be asked to write a short discussion post responding to that day's readings. These "shorties" should ideally be 150–250 words, and definitely no more than 500 words (for reference, this subsection on shorties is 231 words). They are due to the D2L discussion board by noon on the day before the class. You may sign up for any ten classes to write shorties for, as long as you do at least three of them before the midterm exam and at least three thereafter.

The purpose of the shorties is threefold: they invite you to critically engage with and reflect on the readings, offer low-stake opportunities for you to learn to do feminist theory through writing, and will inform and shape our discussions in class. The shorties are not summaries. Instead, try to raise a question (and consider how the author might wish to answer it!), motivate a puzzle or a worry, defend a view against a worry, connect the reading to an idea or argument we discussed previously, or apply it

to a current context, a historical event, or your own lived experience and see how it holds up. If there are two or more readings for a given class, you may choose to either focus on one of them or reflect on a broader theme/common thread.

Your ten shorties will together make up 20% of your final grade. If you decide to complete more than ten, only your best ten will count.

Exams

There will be a midterm and a final exam. A study guide, including possible essay prompts, will be distributed in advance of each exam. The last exam is not comprehensive, and will be of the same format as the midterm exam. If you have a conflicting final exam, please contact me as soon as you can to arrange for a make-up.

The better of your two exams will make up 25% of your final grade, and the other one another 15%.

Final Project

You are required to complete a final project for this course. This can be either a traditional final paper or an equally substantial creative project—for example, you might want to make a zine, create educational materials on an issue, write a play, design a board game, draft a short story or a piece of public writing, script and produce a video essay, record a mini-album, publish a podcast episode, curate an exhibit, build a website or an application, reenact a story or a moment, imagine an alternative history, illustrate an argument or debate, or profile a community member (really, the sky's the limit!). My hope is that the flexibility of the format will allow you to further engage with our course materials in a way that suits and reflects your own interests.

While I will provide prompts for both the paper and open options, you are also more than welcome to work with me to craft your own—if this is something you would like to do, please meet with me by **Tuesday**, **November 25** to discuss your idea. If we can both see a workable final project, I will then ask you to write up a short project proposal to finalize it. You are not required to get my permission or submit a proposal if you decide to pursue one of the pre-circulated prompts. Either way, the final project is due by 11:59pm on **Thursday**, **December 18**.

The final project will make up 20% of your final grade.

EXCUSED Absences Please email me if there is a reason you can't come to class, but you don't need to show me any kind of documentation. This is an honor system, and I trust you not to abuse it—all I ask is you also be flexible and considerate when you are in a position of power to do so.

EXTENSIONS & MAKE-UPS

An extension will ordinarily be granted as long as you (1) have a clear plan for completing the assignment and (2) let me know your plan by email no later than 6 hours before the deadline (unless the delay is justified). Likewise, there is no need to show me any kind of documentation.

As an instructor, I always appreciate students asking for extensions ahead of time when possible. Make-ups for missed assignments after the fact are generally disfavored, and will be granted only to accommodate emergencies and other unexpected circumstances, such as health (incl. mental health), child care, family emergencies, and military duty. We can always work something out, but it's important that you contact me as soon as you can.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to the UA Code of Academic Integrity as described in the UA General Catalog. See http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/academic-integrity/students/academic-integrity.

Plagiarism

I view plagiarism as a *very* serious violation of the university's Code of Academic Integrity, and you should as well. I strongly encourage you to review this helpful guide prepared by the university library: <a href="https://new.library.arizona.edu/research/citing/plagiarism">https://new.library.arizona.edu/research/citing/plagiarism</a>. I understand different instructors may draw the line somewhat differently; if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism for the purposes of our course, please don't hesitate to ask me.

Generative AI Tools I consider it an important component of digital literacy that students appreciate the strengths as well as limitations and real-world impact of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT.

For the humanities in particular, while generative AI tools may be very useful for finding the right phrase, clarifying and polishing prose, coming up with examples, brainstorming counterarguments, and outlining and summarizing texts that the user puts in, they are prone to fabricate facts, misunderstand views, produce word salads, maintain forced neutrality and balance of sides, default to popular rather than critical, considered perspectives, and approach issues in ways uninformed by our course materials and class discussions. To experienced and sophisticated readers, these are not only telltale signs, but serious problems with both the writing and the substance.

In addition, we are only beginning to understand the ethical issues behind the data used to train generative AI tools, <sup>1</sup> as well as the racism, <sup>2</sup> sexism, <sup>3</sup> cisheterosexism, <sup>4</sup> and ableism <sup>5</sup> that these tools then inherit. The environmental costs of the infrastructure on which generative AI tools run are concerning as well—including, for example, their staggering water and energy consumption. <sup>6</sup>

My own policy is to prohibit students from turning in as their own work either (1) passages (beyond a single word or phrase) directly produced by generative AI tools, or (2) ideas, arguments, distinctions, claims, analyses, and the like substantially informed by their use of generative AI tools. **Just for purposes of academia integrity, the most** 

<sup>1.</sup> Sara Morrison, "The Tricky Truth about How Generative AI Uses Your Data," *Vox*, July 27, 2023, https://www.vox.com/technology/2023/7/27/23808499/ai-openai-google-meta-data-privacy-nope.

<sup>2.</sup> Nitasha Tiku, Kevin Schaul and Szu Yu Chen, "This Is How AI Image Generators See the World," *Washington Post*, November 1, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/interactive/2023/ai-generated-images-bias-racism-sexism-stereotypes.

<sup>3. &</sup>quot;Generative AI: UNESCO Study Reveals Alarming Evidence of Regressive Gender Stereotypes," UNESCO, March 7, 2024, https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/generative-ai-unesco-study-reveals-alarming-evidence-regressive-gender-stereotypes.

<sup>4.</sup> Reece Rogers, "Here's How Generative AI Depicts Queer People," *Wired*, April 2, 2024, https://www.wired.com/story/artificial-intelligence-lgbtq-representation-openai-sora.

<sup>5.</sup> Mich Ciurria, "Ableism and ChatGPT: Why People Fear It Versus Why They Should Fear It," *Blog of the American Philosophical Association*, March 30, 2023, https://blog.apaonline.org/2023/03/30/ableism-and-chatgpt-why-people-fear-it-versus-why-they-should-fear-it.

<sup>6.</sup> Reece Rogers, "AI's Energy Demands Are Out of Control. Welcome to the Internet's Hyper-Consumption Era," *Wired*, July 11, 2024, https://www.wired.com/story/ai-energy-demands-water-impact-internet-hyper-consumption-era; Brian Calvert, "Ai Already Uses as Much Energy as a Small Country. It's Only the Beginning," *Vox*, March 28, 2024, https://www.vox.com/climate/2024/3/28/24111721/climate-ai-tech-energy-demand-rising.

salient consideration to me is *misrepresentation*: what I care about is whether a student's failure to acknowledge the origin of a passage or idea is likely to mislead, that is, to falsely imply that the student has written or come up with it themself. Contrast this with searching "synonyms for 'retroactive laws' " on Google and with brainstorming ideas for a paper with a friend. In the Google case, acknowledgment is unnecessary because no one would think the phrase 'ex post facto laws' is therefore implied to have been invented by the student (but if the student uses a specific way of explaining what it means for laws to be ex post facto, which they have found through the Google search, then that would require proper citation). In the friend case, acknowledgment is necessary because the friend is a significant reason that the student could think of the paper idea in the first place (this is even more obvious when the friend helps the student to come up with specific ways of putting the idea into words).

Class Notes & Materials Disseminating class notes or materials beyond the classroom community, such as selling them to other students or to a third party for resale, is strictly prohibited. Violations to this rule are subject to the Code of Academic Integrity and may result in course sanctions. Additionally, students who use D2L or UA email to sell or buy such notes or course materials are subject to Student Code of Conduct violations for misuse of student email addresses. This misconduct may also constitute copyright infringement.

RESPECT, SUPPORT, & CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER Since many of the issues we will cover in this course are not only intellectually but also personally relevant, you might find it difficult to read and discuss certain course materials. I want to acknowledge that. It's perfectly understandable.

It's therefore important that we respect, support, and care for one another throughout the course. Please always feel free to talk to me if you anticipate certain topics will be especially difficult for you, or if you think the way they get discussed in the class is disrespectful or otherwise problematic.

Here are some more concrete examples:

Class Discussions

- Value everyone's contribution to class discussions;
- Disagree in a way that takes other people's ideas seriously and sincerely;
- Challenge remarks, jokes, and examples that are racist, sexist, heterosexist, cissexist, misogynistic, transmisogynistic, xenophobic, ableist, ageist, classist, etc.;
- Keep discussions inclusive by avoiding talking to only a few specific people;

Classroom Behavior

- Try to remain quiet if you have to arrive late or leave early;
- Avoid starting to pack things up until class is completely over;
- Listen attentively and avoid distracting or interrupting behavior, such as chatting with the person next to you or checking your phone;

Gender & Sexual Orientation

- Use the pronouns and name you are asked to when you refer to a person, and avoid assuming a person's pronouns, gender identity, or sexual orientation based on their appearance, voice, or name;
- Be careful not to disclose anyone's gender identity or sexual orientation (i.e., out them) without their permission, even if they are already out in the classroom—it can put lives in danger;
- Never inquire about anyone's genitalia, deadname, "before" photos, medical history, assigned gender at birth, sex life, and so on;
- Use inclusive language (for helpful examples, see https://www.apaonline.org/page/nonsexist and https://transjournalists.org/style-guide).

# ACCESSIBILITY & ACCOMMODA-TIONS

At the University of Arizona, we strive to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please contact the Disability Resource Center (520-621-3268, https://drc.arizona.edu) to establish reasonable accommodations.

#### REVISION

Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

# SCHEDULE

Aug 26 (T): Introduction

- Please watch in advance of class: The Heretics (2009), 95 min

Aug 28 (R): Prelude

- U.S. Const. art. 1, § 2, cl. 3; art. 1, § 9, cl. 1; amends. V, XIII-XV, XIX
- Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857); Plessy v. Ferguson (1896); Bradwell v. Illinois (1873);
  Minor v. Happersett (1875); Lochner v. New York (1905); Muller v. Oregon (1908);
  Goesaert v. Cleary (1948); Brown v. Board of Education (1954); Hoyt v. Florida (1961); Loving v. Virginia (1967)
- Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, Seneca Falls (1848)
- The Equal Rights Amendment (1923)
- Eisenhower address on Little Rock (1957), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= ZzT5v\_ICU6I
- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

# A New Wave of Feminism

Sep 2 (T): Woman as the Other

- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949): pp. xviii-xx, 3-17, 21-26, 44-48, 71-75

Sep 4 (R): Woman as a Social Becoming

Please choose any of the following three chapters to read from *The Second Sex* (be prepared to discuss your chapter with the rest of the class!): "Childhood," "The Girl," and "Sexual Initiation"

Sep 9 (T): "The Problem That Has No Name"

- Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), pp. 11-27, 62-72, 326-64 (skim)

Sep 11 (R): Gender and the New Left

- Casey Hayden and Mary King, "Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo" (1965)
- Pauli Murray and Mary O. Eastwood, "Jane Crow and the Law: Sex Discrimination and Title VII," *George Washington Law Review* (1965), pp. 232–42
- Juliet Mitchell, "Women: The Longest Revolution," New Left Review (1966)

Sep 16 (T): The Emergence of Women's Liberation

- National Organization for Women, "Statement of Purpose" (1966)
- New York Radical Women, "Principles" and "No More Miss America!" (1968)
- Carol Hanisch, "A Critique of the Miss America Protest," in *Notes II* (1970), pp. 86–88
- Carol Hanisch and Elizabeth Sutherland, "Women of the World Unite—We Have Nothing to Lose but Our Men!," in *Notes I* (1968), pp. 12–16

- Kathie Sarachild (née Amatniek), "Funeral Oration for the Burial of Traditional Womanhood," in *Notes I*, pp. 20-22
- Anne Koedt, "Women and the Radical Movement," in Notes I, pp. 26-27
- "Letter to Staughton Lynd," in Notes I, p. 28
- Kate Millet, "Sexual Politics: A Manifesto for Revolution," in Notes II, pp. 111-12
- "Redstockings Manifesto," in Notes II, pp. 112-13

# Sep 18 (R): "The Personal Is Political"

- Barbara Susan, "An Abortion Testimonial," in Notes II, p. 94
- Shulamith Firestone, "Abortion Rally Speech," in Notes I, pp. 24-25
- Joreen (Jo Freeman), "The BITCH Manifesto," in Notes II, pp. 5-9
- Pat Mainardi, "The Politics of Housework," in Notes II, pp. 28-31
- Anne Koedt, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," in Notes II, pp. 37-41
- Carol Hanisch, "The Personal Is Political," in *Notes II*, pp. 76–78
- Judy Syfers, "Why I Want a Wife," in Notes III (1971), pp. 13-14
- André Leo, "ADC: Marriage to the State," in *Notes III*, pp. 66–68

# Sep 23 (T): Consciousness-Raising

- Shulamith Firestone, "When Women Rap about Sex," in *Notes I*, pp. 8–11
- "A Female Junkie Speaks," interview by Lucille Iverson, in Notes II, p. 31
- Kathie Sarachild, "Program for Feminist Consciousness-Raising," in *Notes II*, pp. 78–80
- Irene Peslikis, "Resistance to Consciousness-Raising," in Notes II, p. 81
- Jennifer Gardner, "False Consciousness," in Notes II, pp. 82-83
- Sherry Sonnett Trumbo, "A Woman's Place Is in the Oven," in Notes III, pp. 90-92

# Sep 25 (R): Men vs. Patriarchy

- Susan Brownmiller, Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape (1975), pp. 11-30
- Valerie Solanas, S.C.U.M. Manifesto (1967)
- Sharon Olds, "Outside the Operating Room of the Sex Change Doctor," in *Pleasure and Danger* (1984), p. 428
- torrin a. greathouse, "In an Operating Room Outside of the Cis Woman's Imagination" (2019)

# Sep 30 (T): Between Race and Gender Politics

- Angela Y. Davis, "Rape, Racism and the Capitalist Setting," The Black Scholar (1978)
- Pauli Murray, "The Liberation of Black Women" (1970)
- Frances M. Beal, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female" (1969)
- Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement" (1977)

# Oct 2 (R): "The Lavender Menace"

- National Organization for Women, "Bill of Rights" (1968)
- Martha Shelley, "Gay Is Good" (1969)
- Susan Brownmiller, "'Sisterhood Is Powerful': A Member of the Women's Liberation Movement Explains What It's All About" (1970), p. 140

- "Women's Lib: A Second Look," Time, December 14, 1970, p. 50.
- Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman" (1970)
- Sidney Abbott and Barbara Love, "Is Women's Liberation a Lesbian Plot?" (1971)

# Oct 7 (T): "The Transsexual Empire"

- Sylvia Rivera, "Y'all Better Quiet Down" (1973), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb-JIOWUwlo
- Allen Young, "Rapping with a Street Transvestite Revolutionary: An Interview with Marcia Johnson" (1972)
- "A Collective Editorial," The Lesbian Tide (December 1972), pp. 21, 29
- Barbara McLean, "Dairy of a Mad Organizer," *The Lesbian Tide* (May–June 1973), pp. 36–38 ("Friday, 9:00," and the first six paragraphs of "Saturday, the 14th")
- Robin Morgan, "Lesbianism and Feminism: Synonyms or Contradictions?," The Lesbian Tide (May-June 1973), pp. 30–34
- Beth Elliot, "Of Infidels and Inquisitions," The Lesbian Tide (May–June 1973), pp. 15, 26
- Lou Sullivan, "A Transvestite Answers a Feminist" (1973), pp. 9-11, 14

# Oct 9 (R): Midterm Exam (our usual time & classroom)

# From the Streets to the Academy

# Oct 14 (T): Political Foundations I

- Catharine A. MacKinnon, Sexual Harassment of Working Women (1979), chap. 5

# Oct 16 (R): Political Foundations II

- Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality* (1983), chap. 1

# Oct 21 (T): Standpoint Epistemology I

- Nancy Tuana, "Coming to Understand: Orgasm and the Epistemology of Ignorance," *Hypatia* (2004)

# Oct 23 (R): Standpoint Epistemology II

 Catharine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence," Signs (1983)

# Oct 28 (T): The Politics of Sex I

- Monique Wittig, "The Category of Sex" (1976), "The Straight Mind" (1980), and "One Is Not Born a Woman" (1981)
- Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One" (1981)
- Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" (1988)

# Oct 30 (R): The Politics of Sex II

- Carole S. Vance, "Pleasure and Danger: Toward a Politics of Sexuality," in *Pleasure and Danger*, pp. 1–10
- Brett Harvey, "No More Nice Girls," in Pleasure and Danger, pp. 204-9
- Joan Nestle, "The Fem Question," in Pleasure and Danger, pp. 232-41
- Pat Califia, "Feminism and Sadomasochism" (1980), "Genderbending" (1983), and "Gay Men, Lesbians, and Sex" (1983), collected in *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex*

Nov 4 (T): The Politics of Sex III

- Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (1989), pp. 118–19, 122–54

Nov 6 (R): The Metaphor of Intersection I

Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1979), "Age, Race, Class, and Race" (1980), and "The Use of Anger" (1981), collected in Sister Outsider

Nov 11 (T): The Metaphor of Intersection II

 Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," University of Chicago Legal Forum (1989)

Nov 13 (R): The Sociology of Biology I

- Anne Fausto-Sterling, Sexing the Body (2000), chaps. 3, 7
- In-class screening: Every Body (2023), 93 min

Nov 18 (T): The Sociology of Biology II

- Nora Berenstain, "Structural Gaslighting" (2025)

Nov 20 (R): Trans I

- Sandy Stone, "The *Empire Strikes Back*: A Posttranssexual Manifesto" (1991)

Nov 25 (T): Trans II

 Joss Greene, "The Insurgent Agency of Incarcerated Trans Women of Color," Signs (2024)

Nov 27 (R): University Recess (no class)

- Suggested: Framing Agnes (2022), 75 min

Dec 2 (T): Trans III

- Liz Mount, "'I Am Not a Hijra': Class, Respectability, and the Emergence of the 'New' Transgender Woman in India," *Gender & Society* (2020)
- Nora Berenstain, "Cis Feminist Moves to Innocence," *Hypatia* (2023)

Dec 4 (R): Borders I

- Lina-Maria Murillo, "Espanta Cigüeñas: Race and Abortion in the US-Mexico Borderlands," *Signs* (2023), pp. 795–96, 799–809, 813–20
- Amy Reed-Sandoval, "Pregnant and Socially Undocumented," in *Socially Undocumented: Identity and Immigration Justice* (2020)

Dec 9 (T): Borders II

 Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Indigenous Queer Normativity," in As We Have Always Done (2017)

**TBD: Final Exam** 

Dec 18 (R): Final project due by 11:59pm