WOMEN’S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

315 William L. Harkness Hall, 203.432.0845
http://wgss.yale.edu
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Chair
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Lecturers Melanie Boyd, Graeme Reid, Craig Canfield

Affiliated faculty Julia Adams (Sociology), Rene Almeling (Sociology), Carol Armstrong (History of Art), Daniel Botsman (History), Claire Bowern (Linguistics), Marijeta Bozovic (Slavic Languages & Literatures), Daphne Brooks (African American Studies; American Studies; Theater & Performance Studies), Jill Campbell (English), Becky Conekin (History), Aimee Cox (African American Studies; Anthropology), Rohit De (History), Crystal Feimster (African American Studies; American Studies), Marta Figlerowicz (English; Comparative Literature), Moira Fradinger (Comparative Literature), Jacqueline Goldsby (English; African American Studies; American Studies), Gregg Gonsalves (School of Medicine; Law School), Jennifer Klein (History), Greta LaFleur (American Studies), Kathryn Lofton (American Studies; Religious Studies), Lisa Lowe (American Studies; Ethnicity, Race, & Migration), Mary Lui (American Studies; History), Alka Menon (Sociology), Joanne Meyerowitz (American Studies; History), Alice Miller (Law School; Public Health), Laura Nasrallah (Religious Studies), Tavia Nyong’o (African American Studies; American Studies; Theater & Performance Studies), Sally Promey (American Studies; Religious Studies), Ana Ramos-Zayas (Ethnicity, Race, & Migration; American Studies), Jill Richards (English), Naomi Rogers (History of Science & Medicine), Alicia Schmidt Camacho (Ethnicity, Race, & Migration; American Studies), George Syrimis (Hellenic Studies), Linn Tonstad (Divinity School), Michael Warner (English)

FIELDS OF STUDY

The Program in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) offers a combined Ph.D. in conjunction with five departments and programs: African American Studies, American Studies, Anthropology, English, and Sociology. Students pursuing the combined Ph.D. in WGSS will determine their research and doctoral foci in coordination with the directors of graduate studies in WGSS and the partnering department or program.
Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies critically interrogates gender and sexuality as categories of inequality, difference, and identification. Gender (the social and historical meanings of distinctions across sexes) and sexuality (the domain of sexual practices, identities, discourses, and institutions) are studied as they intersect with class, race, nationality, religion, ability, and other zones of human and nonhuman experience.

There are no specified areas of study within the combined Ph.D. program, but students whose research interests overlap with WGSS faculty’s are encouraged to apply. Current WGSS faculty concentrate on gender and sexuality as they articulate across transnational politics and security regimes; citizenship and statelessness; public law and sexual violence; public policy and political representation; kinship, reproduction, and reproductive technologies; policing, surveillance, and incarceration; social movements and protest; indigeneity, racialization, and racism; literature, language, and translation; Islam and neoliberalism; colonialism and postcolonialism.

Students may only apply for the Ph.D. in WGSS in conjunction with their application to one of the five partnering departments or programs (African American Studies, American Studies, Anthropology, English, and Sociology). The doctoral program in WGSS will begin reviewing external applications in fall 2021 for matriculation in fall 2022.

REQUIREMENTS FOR TRANSFER INTO THE COMBINED PH.D. PROGRAM

Students already pursuing a Ph.D. in one of the five partnering departments and programs listed above may apply for transfer into the combined Ph.D. in WGSS, starting in fall 2021.

Students must have already taken WGSS 600 and WGSS 900 or be enrolled in them during the term of application and submit a statement of interest describing why they wish to pursue the combined Ph.D. The statement of interest should outline a plan of completion for outstanding WGSS course requirements.

Only students in the first or second year of their degree study are eligible to apply, and preference will be given to second-year students. Students must submit their statement of interest by January 4. The WGSS graduate admissions committee will inform applicants of its decision by March 5.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE

The WGSS combined Ph.D. student’s course of study and research will be coordinated with the student’s adviser, the director of graduate studies (DGS) of WGSS, and the DGS of the partnering department or program. Ideally, students should complete course work for WGSS and the partnering department or program by the end of their second year. Students are required to complete the following core courses: WGSS 600, Introduction to Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; WGSS 700, Feminist and Queer Theories; WGSS 900, Colloquium and Working Group (half credit per semester; students should enroll for two sequential semesters); and one WGSS-numbered elective. Students are strongly encouraged to take WGSS 800, Methods in Gender and Sexuality Studies.

In their third year, students will enroll in a term-long dissertation proposal workshop.
WGSS combined Ph.D. students will teach or serve as a teaching fellow in their third and fourth years in the program, unless their dissertation research plans require other arrangements. The courses will typically have undergraduate WGSS numbers.

Students will be admitted to candidacy when they have fulfilled all requirements of the relevant participating department or program and WGSS. The scheduling and structure of qualifying examinations will follow the protocols of the partnering department.

At least one member of the WGSS faculty or affiliated faculty will be a member of the dissertation proposal review committee; at least one faculty member of the student’s dissertation committee will hold a primary, tenure, or tenure-track appointment in WGSS.

Students pursuing the combined Ph.D. with African American Studies In addition to fulfilling the course work—twelve courses over two years, including core WGSS and AFAM courses—and the teaching requirements for each program, students must also: (1) demonstrate proficiency in a language other than English by conducting substantial research in the chosen language as part of a course requirement; passing a translation test, offered each term by various language departments; or receiving a grade of B or higher in a Yale College intermediate- or advanced-level language course or in a Yale language-for-reading course; and (2) pass an oral examination at the end of their third year, jointly administered by four faculty selected by the student (with at least one faculty member in African American Studies and another in WGSS). The oral exam will test on four content areas selected by the student in the student’s second year of study.

Students pursuing the combined Ph.D. with Anthropology In the beginning of their second year, students should consult with directors of graduate studies in WGSS and Anthropology to coordinate the written and oral components of the qualifying exams.

MASTER’S DEGREES

M.Phil. See Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations.

M.A. (en route to the combined Ph.D.) Students will be awarded a combined M.A. degree in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and the partnering department or program upon successful completion of all course work with the exception of the WGSS dissertation proposal workshop. See also Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations.

COURSES

WGSS 529a, Sexuality, Gender, Health, and Human Rights  Ali Miller
This course explores the application of human rights perspectives and practices to issues in regard to sexuality, gender, and health. Through reading, interactive discussion, paper presentation, and occasional outside speakers, students learn the tools and implications of applying rights and law to a range of sexuality- and health-related topics. The overall goal is twofold: to engage students in the world of global sexual health and rights policy making as a field of social justice and public health action, and to introduce them to conceptual tools that can inform advocacy and policy formation and evaluation. Class participation, a book review, an OpEd, and a final paper required.
This course follows the Law School calendar. Enrollment limited. Permission of the instructor required. Also SBS 585; GLBL 529; WGSS 529.

**WGSS 590a, Critical University Studies**  Roderick Ferguson
This course surveys and examines the emerging field known as “critical university studies.” It does so by looking at the field’s origins in addressing the university as a political and economic formation implicated in the exploitation of labor, the extraction of natural and social resources, and the production of power/knowledge. The course also considers the university’s position in histories and practices of racial capitalism as well as in systems of racial, gender, and sexual regulation. The course examines how this contextualization is particularly meaningful for the histories of interdisciplinary fields. It also analyzes the university as a site of social struggle for actors within the global north and the global south, an analysis that will demonstrate the potentially broad geopolitical interests of critical university studies.

**WGSS 592b / SOCY 592b, Qualitative Research Methods**  Rene Almeling
The goal of this course is to introduce graduate students in the social sciences to qualitative research methods. The course is designed to walk students through the process of conducting qualitative research, from the initial steps of deciding on a topic and developing research questions to collecting and analyzing data. To learn how qualitative researchers write books and articles, we examine the relationship between theory, method, and data in four award-winning books based on dissertations and journal articles published in top journals. Throughout the term, students also gain practical experience with typical qualitative methods, learning how to do observations, content analysis, and open-ended interviews. All students do the same observation exercise (going to a grocery store), whereas content analysis and interviews are shaped by each student’s research interests. The course culminates in a final paper, which can either be an analysis of the student’s qualitative data or a proposal for a qualitative research project. Permission of the instructor is required for all students. This course involves intensive reading and writing throughout the term. A few undergraduate juniors majoring in Sociology and intending to use qualitative methods in a yearlong senior thesis may be admitted. No auditors are allowed.

**WGSS 600a, Introduction to Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies**  Joseph Fischel
Introduction to women’s, gender, and sexuality studies as a field of knowledge and to the interdiscipline’s structuring questions and tensions. The course genealogizes feminist and queer knowledge production, and the institutionalization of WGSS, by examining several of our key terms.

**WGSS 613a / AMST 775a / ANTH 612a, Latinx Ethnography**  Ana Ramos-Zayas
Consideration of ethnography within the genealogy and intellectual traditions of Latinx studies. Topics include questions of knowledge production and epistemological traditions in Latin America and U.S. Latino communities; conceptions of migration, transnationalism, and space; perspectives on “(il)legality” and criminalization; labor, wealth, and class identities; contextual understandings of gender and sexuality; theorizations of affect and intimate lives; and the politics of race and inequality under white liberalism and conservatism in the United States.

**WGSS 629a / AMST 690a / SOCY 629a, Politics of Reproduction**  Rene Almeling
Reproduction as a process that is simultaneously biological and social, involving male and female bodies, family formation, and powerful social institutions such as
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medicine, law, and the marketplace. Sociological research on reproductive topics such as pregnancy, birth, abortion, contraception, infertility, reproductive technology, and aging. Core sociological concepts used to examine how the politics of reproduction are shaped by the intersecting inequalities of gender, race, class, and sexuality.

**WGSS 644a / PHIL 644a, Social Ontology** Robin Dembroff

Study of conceptual and methodological foundations of social ontology, as well as particular topics within social ontology, such as the nature of gender and race.

**WGSS 659b / ANTH 655b, Masculinity and Men's Health** Marcia Inhorn

This interdisciplinary seminar—designed for students in Anthropology; Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; and Global Health—explores in an in-depth fashion ethnographic approaches to masculinity and men’s health around the globe. The course begins with two theoretical texts on masculinity, followed by eleven anthropological ethnographies on various dimensions of men's health and well-being. Students gain broad exposure to a number of exigent global men’s health issues, issues of ethnographic research design and methodology, and the interdisciplinary theorizing of masculinity scholars in anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies. In particular, the course demonstrates how anthropologists studying men's health issues in a variety of Western and non-Western sites, including the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Asia, have contributed to both social theory and ethnographic scholarship of importance to health policy.

**WGSS 666b / AMST 778b / ANTH 666b, Privilege in the Americas** Ana Ramos-Zayas

Examination of inequality, not only through experiences of the poor and marginal, but also through institutions, beliefs, social norms, and everyday practices of the privileged. Topics include critical examination of key concepts like “studying up,” “elite,” and “privilege,” as well as variations in forms of capital; institutional sites of privilege (elite prep schools, Wall Street); living spaces and social networks (gated communities, private clubs); privilege in intersectional contexts (privilege and race, class, and gender); and everyday practices of intimacy and affect that characterize, solidify, and promote privilege.

**WGSS 667a / FREN 900a / HIST 667a, History of Gender and Sexuality in Modern Europe** Carolyn Dean

An introduction to the various lines of inquiry informing the history of sexuality. The course asks how historians and others constitute sexuality as an object of inquiry and addresses different arguments about the evolution of sexuality in Europe, including the relationship between sexuality and the state and sexuality and gender.

**WGSS 690a / AMST 694a / HSHM 759a, Theories of Care and Cure: Illness Narratives and Medical Justice** Kalindi Vora

Bringing together scholarship in medical anthropology; disability studies; queer-, trans- and crip-of-color studies; critical race and ethnic studies; and feminist science and technology studies with patient narratives and art practice, this course centers patient narratives as a site for new understandings of health/disease and ability/debility. To theorize care and cure, we draw upon analysis and refiguration of medicine, diagnosis, and treatment by theorists and patients in the works of Jennifer Terry, Lochlann Jain, Eli Clare, Dean Spade, June Jordan, Audre Lorde, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Mia Mingus, Abigail Dumas, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, and Emily
Martin. Art practitioners we study include the collective "What would an HIV Doula Do," Simone Leigh, Alok Menon, and Joanna Hedva.

**WGSS 700b, Feminist and Queer Theories**  Evren Savci  
This course is designed as a graduate introduction to feminist and queer thought. It is organized by a number of key terms and institutions around which feminist and queer thinking has clustered, such as the state, the law, religion, family and kinship, capitalism and labor, the body and language, knowledge and affect, globalization and imperialism, militarism and security. The “conversations” that happen around each term speak to the richness of feminist and queer theories, the multidimensionality of feminist and queer intellectual and political concerns, and the “need to think our way out of these crises,” to cite Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty. The aim is to leave students appreciating the hard labor of feminist and queer thought, and understanding the urgencies out of which such thinking emerges.

**WGSS 712b / AMST 866b / HIST 775b, Readings in the History of Sexuality**  Joanne Meyerowitz and Regina Kunzel  
Selected topics in the history of sexuality. Emphasis on key theoretical works and recent historical literature.

**WGSS 720a / AFAM 701a, Race, Gender, and AI**  Fatima El-Tayeb  
This course explores the idea of artificial life in art and science. We address the tension between visions of minds without body and bodies without mind, their relation to the quest to identify what makes us human, and the role gender and race have played in this. We look at dominant (scientific, political, economic) models and at their critiques, in particular those from marginalized perspectives, and we explore alternative forms of engaging with new technologies. The course's main texts are Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019).

**WGSS 724b / AMST 724b / PLSC 868b, Gender and Sexuality in American Politics and Policy**  Dara Strolovitch  
This seminar familiarizes students with foundational work on and approaches to the study of gender and sexuality in American politics and public policy. It explores empirical work that addresses these topics, a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches to them, and the social scientific methods that have been used to examine them. It explores the history, findings, and controversies in research about gender and sexuality in American politics and political science, examining work within several subfields of American politics (e.g., political development; public law; political behavior; legislative studies; public policy; interest groups and social movements), important work from other disciplines, and research that does not fit neatly into traditional disciplinary categories, paying particular attention to the implications of this “messiness” for the study of gender, sexuality, and politics. We are attentive to the complicated histories of science and social science when it comes to the study of gender and sexuality and to the ways in which gender and sexuality intersect with other politically relevant categories, identities, and forms of marginalization, such as race, ethnicity, class, and ideological and partisan identification.
WGSS 745a, Queer of Color Transits and the Imaginaries of Racial Capitalism  Evren Savci

This course follows some of the journeys of “queer” and “trans” as identifiers and as knowledge-systems, particularly “queer / trans of color critique,” as they traverse many empires and colonial regimes. It asks: What configurations of racial capitalism are required for such travel and what forms of racial capitalism are authorized by that travel?

WGSS 756a, Liberalisms, Queer Feminisms, and the Social Contract  Eda Pepi

This seminar reviews modern ideas of personhood and liberal technologies of the self through anti-racist, feminist, and queer lenses. We trace intersections and divergences of liberal and feminist thought at a time of newly intensifying anthropocenic and epidemiological crises. Radical feminist thought—like socialist and Marxist feminisms or, more recently, queer feminist scholars of racial capitalism—has historically been at odds with liberal feminisms that too lightly embrace the anti-politics of human freedom, rational progress, and social equality. Because liberal philosophy, culture, and political economy have been deeply implicated in colonialism, slavery, capitalism, and empire, the course engages critically with the universalizing project of liberal modernity as well as with the components of queer feminist doctrine that remain committed to the modern human subject as a locus of unmarked, universal reason and purposeful action. We investigate the social contractarianism that is founded on such a subject by taking seriously practical theories of "lower" or minor selves—the subject people of the colonies, slaves, and others—who were integral to the very development of ideas of the modern, autonomous, and acting self in the Western world. A key premise is that liberal affirmations of individualism, civility, mobility, consent, and free enterprise innovate new forms of subjection, administration, and governance. We take this up at a time when the global Covid-19 pandemic has demanded the resurgence of the state, halted production, transformed labor, and isolated most of the world's population within domestic domains. Therefore, an analytical aim is to explore the liberal underpinnings of the domaining of economic, juro-political, and domestic spheres.

WGSS 779a / AMST 805a / HSAR 720a / RLST 699a, Sensational Materialities: Sensory Cultures in History, Theory, and Method  Sally Promey

This interdisciplinary seminar explores the sensory and material histories of (often religious) images, objects, buildings, and performances as well as the potential for the senses to spark contention in material practice. With a focus on American things and religions, the course also considers broader geographical and categorical parameters so as to invite intellectual engagement with the most challenging and decisive developments in relevant fields, including recent literatures on material agencies. The goal is to investigate possibilities for scholarly examination of a robust human sensorium of sound, taste, touch, scent, and sight—and even “sixth senses”—the points where the senses meet material things (and vice versa) in life and practice. Topics include the cultural construction of the senses and sensory hierarchies; investigation of the sensory capacities of things; and specific episodes of sensory contention in and among various religious traditions. In addition, the course invites thinking beyond the “Western” five senses to other locations and historical possibilities for identifying the dynamics of sensing human bodies in religious practices, experience, and ideas. The Sensory Cultures of Religion Research Group meets approximately once per month.
at 7 p.m. on Tuesdays; class participants are strongly encouraged, but not required, to attend. Enrollment is by permission of the instructor; qualified undergraduates are not only welcome but encouraged to join us. There are no set prerequisites, but, assuming available seats, permission will be granted on the basis of response to three questions: Why do you wish to take this course? What relevant educational or professional background/experience do you bring to the course? How does the course help you to meet your own intellectual, artistic, or career aspirations?

WGSS 782a / HIST 940a / HSHM 770a, Disability Histories: Research Seminar
Naomi Rogers
This course introduces students to the major issues in current disability history as well as theoretical debates in disability studies. We discuss cultural, social, and political meanings of citizenship; efforts to define and classify disabled bodies; contested notions of bodily difference; and the ways disability has and continues to be used as a metaphor for socially defined inferiority like gender, race, or sexuality. By the fourth week students have identified the topic for their research papers and discussed them in class. The next month is devoted to research and writing. We then start meeting again to read and discuss a draft of each paper.

WGSS 800b / AMST 798b, Methods in Gender and Sexuality Studies
Eda Pepi
This seminar is designed for graduate students developing research projects that center feminist, queer, decolonial/postcolonial, and critical race methodologies. Taking an epistemological approach that centers “encounter” in its multiple scales and fronts, the course is designed to bridge the disciplinary divides across the humanities and social sciences. As such, it begins with the interdisciplinary insight that any research method can be used in a feminist, queer, decolonial/postcolonial, and critical race manner—and maybe can even be used to counter-disciplinary ends. While the course engages a wide variety of methods—from ethnographic, historiographic/archival, and geographic, to literary, media, textual analysis, and cultural studies, and to political theory—this does not unfold as part of a practicum. Students do not experiment with a ready-made “toolkit.” For the most part, we critically engage book-length projects that exemplify counter-disciplinary methodologies. Ultimately, students reflect hermeneutically on how method and theory relate in these texts. Foucault has theorized these kinds of reflections as a practice of “the archaeology of knowledge,” and the seminar channels it for its potential to lay bare the discursive formations that have rendered only certain Eurocentric, supremacist, and patriarchal preoccupations as legitimate objects of inquiry as well as for its potential to explore the relationship of power to knowledge, the ethics of representation, questions of accountability, and the relationship between disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity. Although the course is open to all graduate students at Yale, it is designed to train graduate students in the WGSS combined Ph.D. and certificate programs in particular.

WGSS 825b / E&RS 540b, Decolonizing Europe
Fatima El-Tayeb
Decolonial theory imagines a world different from the one created by the dominance of Western modernity. However, it is not necessarily obvious what Europe can contribute to this process, as the decentering of Europe and its intellectual traditions are tenets of decolonial theory; the continent is arguably the only one in which Europeans do not appear as colonizers. In this class, following authors such as Aimé Césaire, Stuart Hall, and Houria Bouteldja, we approach Europe as a space that is key to the global process of decolonization. A return of land in the former colonies that includes actual
sovereignty instead of exploitative postcolonial relationships would fundamentally change the European economy, which is built on a model of prosperity at the expense of non-Europeans, justified through a model of meritocracy that makes invisible the violence of the colonial project. But beyond that, Europe as a concept collapses without a colonial framework—what Europe stands for today (and has since early modernity) would be meaningless without the Western knowledge model that decoloniality aims to dismantle. So, what would a different, decolonized Europe look like? For potential answers, we turn to the practices of European activists and artists of color such as the French Indigènes de la République, the German Romani Phen, Spain’s Diásporas Críticas, and others. Among our themes are Europe’s investment in whiteness, museums and the question of repatriation of artifacts and human remains, queer Roma artists in Eastern Europe and the postsocialist legacy, and the so-called refugee crisis and reparations.

WGSS 900a or b, Colloquium and Working Group Staff

The course is made up of two components: the WGSS Graduate Colloquium, in which graduate students present ongoing research (meets every two to three weeks); and the WGSS Working Group, in which faculty present pre-circulated works-in-progress for critical feedback from the WGSS community (meets every two to three weeks).