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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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); 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 / GLBL 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 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, short reaction papers, and a final paper are required.

WGSS 570b / SOCY 605b, LGBTQ Population Health John Pachankis
Sexual and gender minority individuals (e.g., those who identify as LGBTQ) represent a key health disparity population in the United States and worldwide, but high-quality evidence of this problem has historically been slow to accumulate. This course engages students in critically examining today’s rapidly expanding empirical knowledge regarding sexual and gender minority health by considering challenges to, and opportunities for, conducting this research with methodological rigor. Students consider social and ecological influences on sexual and gender minority health, including migration, community, and neighborhood influences. Social institutions, including religion, school, family, and close relationships, are examined as sources of both stress and support. Given the relevance of individual and collective identity and stress as mechanisms through which stigma impacts sexual and gender minority health, the empirical platform of the course is complemented by intersectionality theory, critical postmodern work on identity fluidity and multiplicity across the life course, and minority stress conceptualizations of health. Students apply lessons learned in the course to evaluating and developing policy and health care interventions for this increasingly visible segment of the global population. Also SBS 570.
WGSS 600a, Introduction to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies  Roderick Ferguson

Introduction to women's, gender, and sexuality studies as a field of knowledge and to the interdisciplinary'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 613b / 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 651b / ANTH 651b, Intersectionality and Women's Health  Marcia Inhorn

This interdisciplinary seminar explores how the intersections of race, class, gender, and other axes of “difference” (age, sexual orientation, disability status, nation, religion) affect women’s health, primarily in the contemporary United States. Recent feminist approaches to intersectionality and multiplicities of oppressions theory are introduced. In addition, the course demonstrates how anthropologists studying women’s health issues have contributed to social and feminist theory at the intersections of race, class, and gender.

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 677b / PHIL 677b, Feminist Philosophy: Theories of Sex, Gender, and Sexual Orientation  Robin Dembroff

This course surveys several feminist frameworks for thinking about sex, gender, and sexual orientation. We consider questions such as: Is there a tenable distinction between sex and gender? Between gender and sexual orientation? What does it mean to say that gender is a social construction, or that sexual orientation is innate? What is the place of politics in gender and sexual identities? How do these identities—and especially resistant or transgressive identities—impact the creation and revision of social categories?

WGSS 693b / AFAM 724b / AMST 732b / FILM 693b / HSAR 759b, Imaging War, Imagining Peace: Memory, Justice, and Repair  Laura Wexler

This course explores the ways in which both war and peace have been imagined and represented, and how those visual practices might be unlearned and reimagined. What do images and imaginings of war and peace leave out of view, and how can we bring both underlying social vulnerability and extant networks of protest and resistance into greater visibility? How might we avoid automatized reiterations of well-worn locations and scenarios of violence, for example in constructions of “the enemy,” and develop new approaches to the nationalist, racialized, and gendered stakes of conflict? What alternative acts of intervention, witnessing, and repair might we create so as to see emergencies more freshly—at a time of conflict, as well as in anticipation and in retrospect? Can the visual archives of violence be reframed and recirculated to shape more firmly the potential of justice, cohabitation, and peace? How can visualizations of antiracism movements and peace actions be mobilized more effectively? This team-taught course is inspired by the documentary work of Susan Meiselas. Her distinctive photographic practice with communities in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chile, Kurdistan, and elsewhere, her repeated return to sites of conflict over time, and her collaboration with the subjects of her images, as well as her extensive and innovative archival work, serve as one model for the kinds of approaches we want to explore and foster. In addition, our work is guided by close study of authors such as Leni Riefenstahl, Virginia Woolf, Alain Resnais, Susan Sontag, Sigmund Freud, Errol Morris, Judith Butler, Ariella Azoulay, Diane Taylor, Tho Phu, David Shneer, Amitav Ghosh, Anne McClintock, Grace Paley, Maaza Mengiste, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Karla Cornejo Villavicencio, Jenny Holzer, Walid Raad, Harun Farocki, Sam Durant, Sim Chi Yin, and more.

WGSS 697b / AMST 687b / HIST 733b, Colonial Domesticity and Reproductive Relations  Lisa Lowe

In this interdisciplinary seminar, we study the central importance of kinship, family, and domestic labor to the social reproduction of racial colonial processes. Settler colonialism, colonial slavery, overseas empire, and their aftermaths depend not only on the brute force of war, captivity, and occupation; they are also sustained and contested through culture, language, forms of family and household, and the social reproduction of race, gender, intimacy, and filiation. We trace a genealogy of “colonial domesticity” that considers histories of the sexual violation and separation of slave women from their children, compulsory boarding schools for Native Americans, racialized gendered divisions of care labor, transnational Asian adoption, and contemporary migrant detention and family separation; this genealogy also includes alternative forms of kinship, domesticity, generation, and relation. Readings include historical and anthropological studies of colonialism, feminist debates on social reproduction, and literary and visual culture materials by Maria Mies, Ann Laura Stoler, Silvia Federici, Tithi Bhattacharya, Ruha Benjamin, Kalindi Vora, Thavolia Glymph, Saidiya Hartman, Dorothy Roberts, Audra Simpson, Jodi Byrd, Amy Kaplan, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Laura Briggs, Elizabeth Freeman, Chandan Reddy, Alys Weinbaum, Louise Erdrich, Mary Prince, Toni Morrison, Patricia Powell, Chang-rae Lee, Octavia Butler, and others. Permission of the instructor required.

WGSS 700b, Feminist and Queer Theories  Greta LaFleur

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
The “Gender Lab” meets weekly to consider research being done in the Psychology department that bears on some gender-related issue.

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 724a / AMST 724a / PLSC 868a, 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 729b / ENGL 982b, Disability and Sexuality  Joseph Fischel and Jill Richards
The course examines how intimacies, pleasures, bodies, genders, and sexualities take shape across the spectrum of ability. The course draws from an array of scholarly approaches to dis/ability to theorize normative parameters around sex and sociality, and to imagine alternatives. Scholarly theoretic texts are integrated with cultural artifacts, including poetry, visual art, cinema, podcasts, and other media. Topics include embodiment and gender pluralism, the social model and its discontents, pregnancy and reproductive justice, HIV/AIDS, pornography and representation, toxicity and contagion, care work and dependency, and vulnerability.

WGSS 730b / HIST 943b / HSHM 736b, Health Politics, Body Politics  Naomi Rogers
A reading seminar on struggles to control, pathologize, and normalize human bodies, with a particular focus on science, medicine, and the state, both in North America and in a broader global health context. Topics include disease, race, and politics; repression and regulation of birth control; the politics of adoption; domestic and global population control; feminist health movements; and the pathologizing and identity politics of disabled people.

WGSS 746a / AMST 729a / FILM 810a, Visual Kinship: Families and Photographs  Laura Wexler
Exploration of the history and practice of family photography from an interdisciplinary perspective. Study of family photographs from the analog to the digital era, from snapshots to portraits, and from instrumental images to art exhibitions. Particular attention to the ways in which family photographs have helped establish gendered and racial hierarchies and examination of recent ways of reconceiving these images.

WGSS 750a, Neoliberalisms, Queer Feminisms, and Social Responsibility  Eda Pepi
This seminar focuses on the intersections and divergences of neoliberal and feminist approaches to the governance of work, welfare, and corporate and personal philanthropy at a time of newly intensifying anthropocenic and epidemiological crises. Historically, some strands of feminist thought—like socialist and Marxist feminisms or, more recently, queer feminist scholars of racial capitalism—have certainly critiqued the structural inequalities produced by a neoliberal economic system. Yet more mainstreamed liberal feminisms have too easily allied with racist state projects of neoliberal individual empowerment. While neoliberal policies have been seen to the shrinking of the welfare states that tempered the racializing and gendered alienation of market economics in the global North, queer feminist liberalisms have sometimes turned to and facilitated militarizing globalizing security state formations in the global South. The course engages critically both classical sociological and neoliberal economic preoccupations with capitalist rationality as well as the components of queer feminist ideology that have been committed to economizing notions of agency. We do so 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. In this current moment, we undertake the difficult task of suggesting ways in which we might reconfigure labor, family values, wealth, health care, and other state and nonstate forms necessary for sustenance and daily renewal as well as birthing and rearing the next generation. The readings selected are concerned with how issues of capitalism, value, politics, governance, and social transformation intersect with gender, race, sexuality, and kinship. Students are encouraged, but not required, to enroll in the three courses of a multiyear series of seminars that takes up queer feminist approaches to how conceptions and practices of welfare— or the very category of the “social”—are negotiated through various political economic ideologies of the modern state. This is the second in the series. It was preceded in 2020 by WGSS 718 and will be followed in 2022 by Liberalisms, Queer Feminisms, and the Social Contract.

WGSS 777a or b / PSYC 777a or b, Research Topics in Gender and Psychology  Marianne LaFrance
The “Gender Lab” meets weekly to consider research being done in the Psychology department that bears on some gender-related issue.
WGSS 783a / FREN 958a, Social Mobility Today  Morgane Cadieu
The seminar examines the representation of upward mobility, social demotion, and interclass encounters in contemporary literature and cinema. Topics include emancipation and determinism; inequality, precarity, and class struggle; social mobility and migration; the interaction between social class and literary style; intersectionality; mixed couples; labor and the workplace; homecomings. We also discuss ways of approaching a contemporary corpus. Works by Angot, Eribon, Ernaux, Houellebecq, Linhart, Louis, NDiaye, Taïa. Films by Cantet, Diop, Kechiche, Klotz. Theoretical readings by Berlant, Bourdieu, Foucault, Nancy, Rancière. Members of the seminar have the opportunity to compare French mobilities to other literary traditions. Conducted in English. No knowledge of French required.

WGSS 800b, Methods in Gender and Sexuality Studies  Eda Pepi
Will be offered in 2021–2022.

WGSS 857b / AMST 857b, Frailties  Terrell Herring
An overview of the methodologies and interdisciplinary potentials of critical age studies. After beginning with a recent issue of Radical History Review on “Old/Age,” we spend our weeks discussing topics such as ageism and age discrimination; immigrant caregiving and servitude; black debility; creative iterations of queer and trans aging; age standardizations in the early twentieth-century United States; “deaths of despair” amidst “the new longevity”; feminist critiques of optimal aging; and junctures of disability and aging. The course brings together a range of thinkers including historians such as Corinne T. Field and Nicholas L. Syrett; theorists such as Kathleen Woodward and Margaret Morganroth Gullette; disability justice activists such as Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha; and sociologists such as Mignon R. Moore. Two governing concerns that we answer as a class: How do considerations of age, aging, and gerontophobia featured in our readings amplify the contemporary investments of American studies? How can we chart political and aesthetic formations of the frail that offset their persistent nonrecognition?

WGSS 900a or b, Colloquium and Working Group  Joseph Fischel
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).