WOMEN’S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

315 William L. Harkness Hall, 203.432.0845
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Chair
Inderpal Grewal

Director of Graduate Studies
Joseph Fischel

Professors Julia Adams (Sociology), Carol Armstrong (History of Art), Seyla Benhabib (Political Science), Jill Campbell (English), Hazel Carby (African American Studies; American Studies), Kang-i Sun Chang (East Asian Languages & Literatures), Jacqueline Goldsby (English; African American Studies), Inderpal Grewal (Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies; American Studies; Anthropology), Margaret Homans (English; Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies), Jennifer Klein (History), Marianne LaFrance (Psychology; Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies), Kathryn Lofton (American Studies; Religious Studies), Mary Lui (American Studies; History), Joanne Meyerowitz (History), Sally Promey (American Studies; Institute of Sacred Music; Religious Studies), Ana Ramos-Zayas (Ethnicity, Race & Migration; Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies; American Studies), Naomi Rogers (History of Science & Medicine), Alicia Schmidt Camacho (American Studies), Michael Warner (English), Laura Wexler (American Studies; Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies)

Associate Professors Rene Almeling (Sociology), Crystal Feimster (African American Studies; American Studies), Joseph Fischel (Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies), Moira Fradinger (Comparative Literature), Zareena Grewal (American Studies; Religious Studies), Angel David Nieves (Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies)

Assistant Professors Marta Figlerowicz (Comparative Literature), Greta LaFleur (American Studies), Edi Pepi (Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies), Dixa Ramirez (American Studies)

Senior Lecturers Becky Conekin (MacMillan Center; History), Andrew Dowe (Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies), Igor De Sousa (English; Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies), Maria Trumpler (Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies)

Lecturers Melanie Boyd (Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies), Igor De Souza (Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies; English), Karen Foster (Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations), Graeme Reid (Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies), George Syrimis (Hellenic Studies)

FIELDS OF STUDY

The Program in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies considers gender and sexuality as fundamental categories of social and cultural analysis and offers critical perspectives upon them as a basis from which to study the diversity of human experience. Gender (the social and historical meanings of the distinction between the sexes) and sexuality (the domain of sexual practices, identities, discourses, and institutions) are studied as they intersect with class, race, ethnicity, nationality, and other axes of human difference. The introduction of these perspectives into all fields of knowledge necessitates new research, criticism of existing research, and the formulation of new paradigms and organizing concepts.

The Certificate (previously known as the Qualification) in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies is open to students already enrolled in a Ph.D. program at Yale. Interested students are strongly encouraged to register for the certificate by meeting with the director of graduate studies (DGS) during their first year. Students who wish to receive the certificate must (1) complete a graduate course on the theory of gender and sexuality; (2) complete two electives, including one course that must be drawn from the WGSS curriculum; (3) complete one term of WGSS 900, WGSS Certificate Workshop; (4) demonstrate the capacity to pursue independent, interdisciplinary research in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies by presenting a qualifying paper at a meeting of the WGSS Colloquium; and (5) fulfill a teaching requirement. Each of these requirements must be met in consultation with the DGS and the individual WGSS graduate adviser. Students who fulfill these expectations will receive a letter from the DGS, indicating that they have completed the work for the certificate.

Program information and the requirements for the certificate are available on the Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies website, or by contacting 203.432.0845 or wgss@yale.edu.

COURSES

WGSS 625b, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Human Rights  Graeme Reid
Examination of historical, cultural, and political aspects of sexual orientation, gender identity, and human rights in the context of globalization.

WGSS 667b / FREN 900b / HIST 667b, History of 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 717b, Spatial Humanities and Social Justice  Angel Nieves
Spatial humanities relies upon geospatial technologies and methods to explore the relationship of space (physical, imagined, or otherwise) to human behavior. It bridges disciplines and may take into account African American studies, history, archaeology, literary studies, women’s studies, queer studies, ethnic studies, and cultural studies, to name but a few. This seminar introduces students to the theory and methods of the spatial humanities, while examining the tools, theories, and methodologies of social justice. Engaging with spatial theory and applying technical methodologies, students develop an understanding of the research questions and tools available in this new field of scholarly and applied inquiry while grappling with issues of social justice. Students engage throughout the term in project-based learning grounded in spatial, intersectional, and critical race theories.

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 737b, Gendering the Modern Subject  Eda Pepi
This seminar familiarizes students with how the analytical categories of sex and gender interrogate “classic” philosophical texts and restructure key debates on the nature of the human subject as a locus of unmarked, universal reason and purposeful action as well as embodied perception and passion. From Spinoza and Descartes to Hegel and Merleau-Ponty, we engage an overview of the conceptual and historical development of modern, Western ideas of personhood and the emergence of liberalism as the basis of new technologies of the self. We read these texts alongside feminist, critical race, and postcolonial commentaries that highlight the sexual and racial constitution of a seemingly universal subject of modernity. These commentaries trace how practical theories of “lower” or minor selves—the subject people of the colonies, slaves, and others—were integral to the very development of ideas of the modern, autonomous, and acting self in the Western world.

WGSS 740b / CPLT 639b / ITAL 705b, Gender and Genre in Renaissance Love Poetry  Ayesha Ramachandran
This course interrogates a persistent theme in the literature of the European Renaissance: the love for a much-desired, frequently unobtainable beloved. How and why does love—as erotic yearning, sexual passion, unfulfilled desire, religious devotion—become a key subject and metaphor from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century? Focusing on two main poetic genres of the Renaissance—the lyric and the epic-romance—we investigate how questions of desire, love, and gendered subjectivity become a potent means for articulating psychological, social, political, philosophic, and spiritual concerns. Engaging with normative views of gender, erotic discourse, and romantic love from a long historical perspective, this course investigates the development of modern poetry and sexuality in conjunction with each other.

WGSS 746b / AMST 729b / FILM 810b, Visual Kinship, Families, and Photography  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 761b / AMST 761b, Race and Affect in the Americas  Ana Ramos-Zayas
The course explores how Latinx and Latin American/Caribbean populations have been historically imagined and racialized affectively—usually as being “hyper” emotional (but more recently as lacking any affect at all)—and the impact of this characterization on issues of power, inequality, and personhood, particularly under neoliberalism. The course examines the ways in which Latinx and Latin American populations have been produced affectively in medicine/mental health, corporate and media images, U.S. foreign policy, education, and urbanism. We analyze psychological and public health literature and consider a variety of pathological claims about Latinos’ physical and mental states and disorders; in particular, we consider concepts like “ataque de nervios” (Guarnaccia), fatalism; hysteria and the “Puerto Rican Syndrome”; and disordered eating (obesity, body image, diabetes). We explore how concepts from the sociology and anthropology of emotion (Illouz’s emotional capitalism, Berlant’s lateral agency, Stewart’s ordinary affects, Hochschild’s emotional labor/feeling rules) operate in the case of Latinx and Latin American populations, as well as alternative ways of understanding affect in terms of racialization theories. We draw from the works of feminist/queer/critical race theorists, including bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, and others.

WGSS 767a / PSYC 777a, Research Topics in Gender and Psychology  Staff
The “Gender Lab” meets weekly to consider research being done in the Psychology department that bears on some gender-related issue.

WGSS 815b / AMST 810b, American Public Sculpture: History, Context, and Continuing Significance  Laura Wexler
Building on a new partnership between the Smithsonian Institution and Yale University, this course offers a broad-based and multidisciplinary exploration of public sculpture in the United States. Course work includes field trips and digital projects as well as readings in the scholarship of public memory, cultural heritage, conservation, and aesthetics.

WGSS 843a, Collaboration and the Event of Photography  Laura Wexler
This seminar questions the concept of “collaboration” through a variety of moments and projects of collaboration between photographers, photographed persons, and spectators that take place in different geopolitical contexts. Collaboration is a form of relation that may be idyllic or problematic, liberating or coercive, generating knowledge or disseminating ignorance, empowering or intimidating, involving assistance and solidarity as much as abuse; it may take place among friends or between enemies, and it may create friendship
as much as it may complicate it. Reviewing this spectrum of possibilities, we ask how collaboration informs and transforms the event of photography.

WGSS 850b / ENGL 982b, Sex and Citizenship  Jill Richards
This course surveys political theories of gender/sexuality through attention to citizenship, the nation-state, rights discourses, civil society, migration, biopolitics, criminality, security, and social death. The course looks to establish a foundational understanding of the conjunctures between liberal governance and the regulation of reproductive, sexual, and family life. At the same time, our wider conceptual arc takes up more recent critical debates on the entanglements of sexual intimacy, race, and national belonging. Textual selections move across a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, history, literature, critical race theory, queer theory, indigenous studies, environmental studies, and law. Key authors include Hobbes, Locke, Marx, Engels, Habermas, Arendt, Foucault, Orlando Patterson, C.B. Macpherson, Wendy Brown, Ann Laura Stoler, Saidiya Hartman, Joan Wallach Scott, Cheryl Harris, Lauren Berlant, Michael Warner, Jasbir Puar, Elizabeth Povinelli, Paul Gilroy, Pheng Cheah, Inderpal Grewal, Frank Wilderson, Salamishah Tillet, Achille Mbembe, Adriana Petryna, Lisa Marie Cacho, Mark Rifkin, José Muñoz, Dean Spade, Lisa Lowe, Talal Asad.

WGSS 900a, WGSS Certificate Workshop  Joseph Fischel
Built around the WGSS graduate Colloquium and Working Group series, with the addition of several sessions on topics of interdisciplinary methodology, theory, and professionalization. Offered annually in either the fall or spring. Enrollment in one term of WGSS 900 is required of all students for completion of the certificate in WGSS. Graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory.