WOMEN'S GENDER AND SEXUALITY STUDIES (WGSS)

* WGSS 032b, History of Sexuality  Maria Trumpler
Exploration of scientific and medical writings on sexuality over the past century. Focus on the tension between nature and culture in shaping theories, the construction of heterosexuality and homosexuality, the role of scientific studies in moral discourse, and the rise of sexology as a scientific discipline. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  WR, HU

WGSS 125a / AFAM 115a, “We Interrupt this Program: The Multidimensional Histories of Queer and Trans Politics”  Roderick Ferguson
In 1991, the arts organizations Visual AIDS and The Kitchen collaborated with video artist and filmmaker Charles Atlas to produce the live television broadcast "We Interrupt this Program.” Part educational presentation, part performance piece, the show was aired in millions of homes across the nation. The program, in The Kitchen's words, "sought to feature voices that had often been marginalized within many discussions of AIDS, in particular people of color and women."This course builds upon and is inspired by this aspect of Atlas's visionary presentation, an aspect that used the show to produce a critically multicultural platform that could activate cultural histories and critical traditions from various communities. In effect, the course uses this aspect as a metonym for the racial, gender, sexual, and class heterogeneity of queer art and organizing. It conducts its investigation by looking at a variety of primary materials that illustrate the heterogeneous makeup of queer and trans politics. The course also draws on more recent texts and visual works that arose from the earlier contexts that the primary texts helped to illuminate and shape.  HU RP

WGSS 127a / ER&M 127a / EVST 127a / SOCY 127a, Health and Illness in Social Context  Alka Menon
Present-day medicine and health care provide solutions to an ever-increasing array of human problems. Yet the achievement of health can be elusive. This course provides a broad introduction to the domains of health and illness in the U.S., with some coverage of international trends and topics. Students analyze how our personal health and public health are shaped by social structures, political struggles, expert knowledge, and medical markets. Topics include the cultural and social meanings associated with health and illness; inequalities in health and health care access and provision; controversies surrounding healthcare, medical knowledge production, and medical decision-making; and the social institutions of the health care industry. None  SO

WGSS 194b / ENGL 194b, Queer Modernisms  Jill Richards
Study of modernist literature and the historical formation of homosexual identity from the late nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries. Topics include: sexology as a medical and disciplinary practice; decadence and theories of degeneration; the criminalization of homosexuality in the Wilde and Pemberton-Billing trials; cross-dressing and drag balls in Harlem; transsexuality and sex-reassignment surgery; lesbian periodical cultures; nightlife and cruising; gay Berlin and the rise of fascism; colonial narratives of same-sex desire in Arabia and the South Pacific; Caribbean sexual morality; and the salon cultures of expatriate Paris.  WR, HU

WGSS 202a / AFAM 239a / AMST 461a / EDST 209a / ER&M 292a, Identity, Diversity, and Policy in U.S. Education  Andrew Dowe and Craig Canfield
Introduction to critical theory (feminism, queer theory, critical race theory, disability studies, trans studies, indigenous studies) as a fundamental tool for understanding and critiquing identity, diversity, and policy in U.S. education. Exploration of identity politics and theory, as they figure in education policy. Methods for applying theory and interventions to interrogate issues in education policy. Application of theory and interventions to policy creation and reform.  WR, HU

* WGSS 206a, Transnational Approaches to Gender & Sexuality  Evren Savci
Examination of transnational debates about gender and sexuality as they unfold in specific contexts. Gender as a category that can or cannot travel; feminist critiques of liberal rights paradigms; globalization of particular models of gender/queer advocacy; the role of NGOs in global debates about gender and sexuality.  WR

* WGSS 209a / CLCV 216a / LITR 230a / MGRK 216a, Dionysus in Modernity  George Syrimis
Modernity's fascination with the myth of Dionysus. Questions of agency, identity and community, and psychological integrity and the modern constitution of the self. Manifestations of Dionysus in literature, anthropology, and music; the Apollonian-Dionysiac dichotomy; twentieth-century variations of these themes in psychoanalysis, surrealism, and magical realism.  HU

* WGSS 220a / PLSC 220a / PLSC S220, Women & Politics  Andrea Aldrich
Exploration of theoretical and empirical work in political science to study the relationship between women and politics in the United States and around the world. Topics include women's descriptive and substantive representation in legislative and executive branch politics in democratic regimes; the impact of gender stereotypes on elections and public opinion; conditions that impact the supply and demand of candidates across genders; and the underrepresentation of women in political institutions.  WR, SO

* WGSS 221a, Neoliberalism and Sexuality  Evren Savci
Sexuality is often imagined as a private and intimate affair, experienced individually, marked by personal histories and preferences. This course argues otherwise. Specifically, we consider the intersections between the current dominant political economic mode, referred to as neoliberal capitalism, and sexuality as a field of power. We analyze how subjectivities are formed under this current system, how desires are produced and discourses incited, and how the particular moralization of economic behavior has implications for a range of issues including reproductive justice, definitions of kinship, sexual liberation movements, and contemporary states of war and emergency. Thinking of sexuality as a field of power that is predicated on notions of normality and abnormality enables us to see what
other “undesirable” subjects are produced under conditions of neoliberal capitalist modernity with whom sexual others are always in kinship. Students previously enrolled in WGSS 030 are not eligible to enroll in this course. 

* WGSS 223b / ENGL 225b, Race and Gender in Transatlantic Literature, 1688–1818  Jill Campbell
Construction of race and gender in literatures of Great Britain, North America, and the Caribbean from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. Focus on the role of literature in advancing and contesting concepts of race and gender as features of identity and systems of power, with particular attention to the circulation of goods, people, ideas, and literary works among regions. Some authors include Aphra Behn, Phillis Wheatley, Olaudah Equiano, Leanora Sansay, Maria Edgeworth, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mary Shelley. First of a two-term sequence; each term may be taken independently. WR, HU

* WGSS 230b / ANTH 230b, Evolutionary Biology of Women’s Reproductive Lives  Claudia Valeggia
Evolutionary and biocultural perspectives on female reproductive lives. Physiological, ecological, and social aspects of women’s development from puberty through menopause and aging, with special attention to reproductive processes such as pregnancy, birth, and lactation. Variation in female life histories in a variety of cultural and ecological settings. Examples from both traditional and modern societies. SC

* WGSS 245a / FILM 243a / MGRK 218a, Family in Greek Literature and Film  George Syrimis
The structure and multiple appropriations of the family unit, with a focus on the Greek tradition. The influence of aesthetic forms, including folk literature, short stories, novels, and film, and of political ideologies such as nationalism, Marxism, and totalitarianism. Issues related to gender, sibling rivalry, dowries and other economic factors, political allegories, feminism, and sexual and social violence both within and beyond the family. WR, HU TR

* WGSS 260a, Food, Identity and Desire  Maria Trumpler
Exploration of how food — ingredients, cooking practices, and appetites — can intersect with gender, ethnicity, class, and national origin to produce profound experiences of identity and desire. Sources include memoir, cookbooks, movies, and fiction.

WGSS 266b / ENGL 165b, Gender, Class, and Narrative Form in the Victorian Novel  Ruth Yeazell
A selection of nineteenth-century novels, with particular attention to questions of gender, class, and narrative form. Authors chosen from the Brontës, Gaskell, Dickens, Collins, Eliot, Trollope, and Hardy. WR, HU

* WGSS 279a / RLST 334a, Queer Religion  Wendy Mallette
This interdisciplinary seminar engages a range of methods and theoretical approaches to queer studies and religion. The course explores questions including: what is the relationship between queer life and religious life? Is religion ever queer? Is queerness ever religious? What do scholars mean when they label religion (or other objects of study) as queer or queer-able? What assumptions about race, class, and gender do contemporary usages of queer entail? What are the possibilities and limits of queer methods and practices? Topics include: queer methods and genealogies, HIV/AIDS and affect, lesbian feminism and exoduses, performance and humor, sodomy and orientalism, vocations and orientations. HU

* WGSS 293b / CLCV 319b / HIST 243Jb / MGRK 300b, The Olympic Games, Ancient and Modern  George Syrimis
Introduction to the history of the Olympic Games from antiquity to the present. The mythology of athletic events in ancient Greece and the ritual, political, and social ramifications of the actual competitions. The revival of the modern Olympic movement in 1896, the political investment of the Greek state at the time, and specific games as they illustrate the convergence of athletic cultures and sociopolitical transformations in the twentieth century. HU

* WGSS 298a / AMST 320a / ER&M 310a, Postcolonial Cities of the West  Fadila Habchi
Examination of various texts and films pertaining to the representation of postcolonial cities in the global north and a range of social, political, and cultural issues that concern those who inhabit these spaces. HU

* WGSS 305a / AFAM 315a, Black Feminist Theory  Roderick Ferguson
This course is designed to introduce you to some of the major themes in black feminist theory. The course does so by presenting classic texts with more recent ones to give you a sense of the vibrancy of black feminist theory for addressing past and present concerns. Rather than interpret black feminist theory as a critical formation that simply puts race, gender, sexuality, and class into conversation with one another, the course apprehends that formation as one that produced epistemic shifts in how we understand politics, empire, history, the law, and literature. This is by no means an exhaustive list of the areas into which black feminism intervened. It is merely a sample of some of the most vibrant ideological and discursive contexts in which black feminism caused certain epistemic transformations. SO

* WGSS 306b / AMST 314b / ER&M 314b, Gender and Transgender  Greta LaFleur
Introduction to transgender studies, an emerging field that draws on gender studies, queer theory, sociology, feminist science studies, literary studies, and history. Representations of gender nonconformity in a cultural context dominated by a two-sex model of human gender differentiation. Sources include novels, autobiographies, films, and philosophy and criticism. RP

* WGSS 317b / HUMS 210b / ITAL 317b / LITR 180b, Women in the Middle Ages  Christiana Purdy Moudarres
Medieval understandings of womanhood examined through analysis of writings by and/or about women, from antiquity through the Middle Ages. Introduction to the premodern Western canon and assessment of the role that women played in its construction. HU

* WGSS 325a / ER&M 324a, Asian Diasporas since 1800  Quan Tran
Examination of the diverse historical and contemporary experiences of people from East, South, and Southeast Asian ancestry living in the Americas, Australia, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe. Organized thematically and comparative in scope, topics include
labor migrations, community formations, chain migrations, transnational connections, intergenerational dynamics, interracial and ethnic relations, popular cultures, and return migrations.  

* WGSS 332a / AFAM 348a / AMST 388a / ER&M 339a, James Baldwin 1964-1987: Transnationalism, Exile & Intimacy  Leah Mirakhhor

The course explores Baldwin's oeuvre since 1964 until his death in 1987. As critics have noted, there has been a renaissance regarding the work of James Baldwin since 1999, with scholarly publications devoted to his work, public tributes, films, and publications of previously uncollected or out of print works. Critics had hailed Baldwin's earlier works—Go Tell It on the Mountain, Giovanni's Room, Notes of a Native Son—as his greatest literary accomplishments. After Baldwin's most celebrated work—The Fire Next Time—Baldwin appeared on the cover of Time magazine in 1963, under the heading "Birmingham and Beyond: The Negro's Push for Equality." In this moment, Baldwin became a celebrated public figure in the U.S. and beyond. Our class investigates the period after this height of celebrity, when critics lambasted him for being too political, too angry, too bitter, and losing narrative control and rigor. This two-decade span is significant because Baldwin was witness to the deaths and incarceration of Civil Rights leaders (whom he mourned as friends), the increased surveillance and incarceration of black activists, the Vietnam war, the emergence of Black Power, feminist movements, and gay and queer liberations. During this time, Baldwin lived primarily in Turkey and France, and continued to travel globally. Baldwin's essays, novels, speeches, and poetry wrestled with how to formally capture and witness the violations of imperialism, homophobia, and racism. Since his death, Baldwin's work has continued to influence and inform theoretical insights in American studies, literary studies, Black studies, and queer studies. Our class engages with Baldwin's formal practices, political contexts, and critical interpretations across these fields. Preference given to students with a background in African American Studies, WGGS, ER&M, and American Studies. Previous readings of James Baldwin’s works recommended but not required.  

* WGSS 340a / ENGL 291a, Feminist and Queer Theory  Samuel Huber

A historical survey of feminist and queer theory from the Enlightenment to the present, with readings from key British, French, and American works. Focus on the foundations and development of contemporary theory. Shared intellectual origins and concepts, as well as divergences and conflicts, among different ways of approaching gender and sexuality.  

* WGSS 341b / AFAM 361b / THST 360b, Black Queer Performance Studies  Tav N'Yong'o

How do race, gender, and sexuality intersect in performance? How have gender nonconformity and sexual dissidence been enacted in African American and black diasporic aesthetic forms? 

A seminar on the performance of gender and sexuality in the context of globalization. The course uses a selection of primary texts in English from Shakespeare to the present, from multiple literary genres (fiction, poetry, drama, memoir, creative nonfiction), and from popular culture and non-literary sources as well as canonical texts. Most of the reading, however, will be in literary criticism and theory and in scholarly writing that makes use of literary methods. Topics include the power of narrative and of representation to create norms; the intersectional gender politics of language, including issues of access, code-switching, and appropriation; the uses of narrative as a scholarly tool and of narrative methods across disciplines; historicisms and presentisms; and art as activism. Students learn to do research in literary criticism and theory, and practice thinking broadly about the cultural work that literature does and about the uses of literary methods and practices in other fields. Formerly ENGL 359.  

* WGSS 352b / ENGL 259, Feminist and Queer Literary Methods  Margaret Homans

This course explores feminist and queer literary criticism and theory, the use of feminist and queer literary methods across disciplines, and the uses of literary evidence in gender and sexuality studies. Rather than covering a particular period or genre of literature, the course uses a selection of primary texts in English from Shakespeare to the present, from multiple literary genres (fiction, poetry, drama, memoir, creative nonfiction), and from popular culture and non-literary sources as well as canonical texts. Most of the reading, however, will be in literary criticism and theory and in scholarly writing that makes use of literary methods. Topics include the power of narrative and of representation to create norms; the intersectional gender politics of language, including issues of access, code-switching, and appropriation; the uses of narrative as a scholarly tool and of narrative methods across disciplines; historicisms and presentisms; and art as activism. Students learn to do research in literary criticism and theory, and practice thinking broadly about the cultural work that literature does and about the uses of literary methods and practices in other fields. Formerly ENGL 359.  

* WGSS 372b / AMST 382b, Theory and Politics of Sexual Consent  Joseph Fischel

Political, legal, and feminist theory and critiques of the concept of sexual consent. Topics such as sex work, nonnormative sex, and sex across age differences explored through film, autobiography, literature, queer commentary, and legal theory. U.S. and Connecticut legal cases regarding sexual violence and assault.  

* WGSS 378a / ANTH 381a, Sex and Global Politics  Graeme Reid


* WGSS 390a / ER&M 360a / HLTH 370a / HSHM 432a / SOCY 390a, 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 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. WR, SO

WGSS 394a / ENGL 198a / FILM 394a / LITR 400a / RSEE 350a, Internet Cultures, Histories, Networks, and Practices Marijeta Bozovic
Examination, through the lenses of histories, network studies, and cultural studies, of how human beings have seemingly overnight learned to use and depend on computer networks for various kinds of work, military operations, pursuits of scientific knowledge, religious proselytizing, political organization, searches for mates and social communities, illegal activities, and infinite varieties of play. HU

* WGSS 397b / PLSC 377b / PLSC 772b / SAST 344b, Political Economy of Gender in South Asia Sarah Khan
This course focuses on the political and economic underpinnings and implications of gender inequality in South Asia. We draw on evidence from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India to guide our theoretical and empirical inquiry into the following broad questions: What is gender, and what approaches do social scientists use to study gender inequality? How does gender inequality manifest in different social, economic, and political spheres e.g. the household, the labor market, the electorate, the government? What are the cultural and structural drivers of gender inequality? How effective are different approaches to tackling gender inequality in South Asia? Previous course work in statistical data analysis is helpful, but not required. SO

* WGSS 398b, Junior Research Seminar Eda Pepi
An interdisciplinary approach to studying gender and sexuality. Exploration of a range of relevant theoretical frameworks and methodologies. Prepares students for the senior essay. WR, SO

WGSS 405b / EALL 211b / EAST 241b / LITR 174b, Women and Literature in Traditional China Kang-l Chang
A study of women and literature in traditional China, as well as representations of women by male authors. The power of women’s writing; women and material culture; women in exile; courtesans; Taoist and Buddhist nuns; widow poets; cross-dressing women; the female body and its metaphors; footbinding; notions of love and death; the aesthetics of illness; women and revolution; poetry clubs; the function of memory in women’s literature; problems of gender and genre. All readings in translation; no knowledge of Chinese required. Some Chinese texts provided for students who read Chinese. Formerly CHNS 201. HU TR

* WGSS 412a / THST 441a, Feminist Theater and Performance Deborah Margolin and Elise Morrison
Introduction to a range of works by feminist scholars, activists, playwrights, and performers who have used theatrical performance as a means by which to critique and reimagine cultural representations of gender and sexuality. Mapping out of significant theories, debates, and performance strategies that emerged out of the feminist movement(s) of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Students research, perform, and critically engage with historical and contemporary examples of feminist performance work. HU

* WGSS 430a / ANTH 441a / MMES 399a and MMES 430a / MMES 430a, Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East Eda Pepi
Examination of the gendered and sexual dimensions of war, conflict, and partition, and the codification of modern citizenship in the Middle East—from Syria, to the Middle East conflict, to Western Sahara, among others—this course presents ethnographic, historical, and literary scholarship that theorizes the role of kinship and citizenship in narratives of the nation and sovereignty. SO

* WGSS 431a / ANTH 451a, Intersectionality and Women’s Health Marcia Inhorn
The intersections of race, class, gender, and other axes of “difference” and their effects on women’s health, primarily in the contemporary United States. Recent feminist approaches to intersectionality and multiplicity of oppressions theory. Ways in which anthropologists studying women’s health issues have contributed to social and feminist theory at the intersections of race, class, and gender. SO

* WGSS 432a / PHIL 444a, Social Ontology Robin Dembrow
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. Prerequisites: at least one, but preferably two philosophy courses. HU

* WGSS 442b / AFAM 451b / ANTH 445b / THST 450b, Black Women Moving and the Ethnography of Embodiment Aimee Cox
In this course we explore the theory and methods employed by Black women ethnographers, artists, and activists invested in transforming the traditional norms of the academic disciplines and creative contexts in which they operate. These boundary erasing, rule breaking women challenge us to think expansively and act courageously in our efforts to not only dream a new world but bring that world into fruition. The life and work of anthropologist/dancer/choreographer/activist Katherine Dunham (1909–2006) provides the framework through which we think through the strategies contemporary scholar-artists employ in their social justice practices, while the concept of movement is our theoretical and methodological foundation for engaging with the work of historical and contemporary Black women change agents. We ask how movement functions in the work of Dunham and these contemporary scholar-artists in terms of: the moving and/or dancing body; movement and migration across geographic territories and imagined space; and participation in social movements. Inspired by the techniques these women have developed for re-imagining the possibilities for moving as an act of social change, we experiment with creating our own embodied artistic practices and research methods. Students should anticipate a holistic experience that requires an openness to physical activity and choreography (accessible to all) as one of our primary tools for both analyzing the multi-media course texts, as well as constructing our own boundary crossing projects. SO

* WGSS 457b / HIST 176Jb / HSHM 465b, Reproductive Health, Gender & Power in the U.S. Ziv Eisenberg
This seminar examines women’s and men’s reproductive health in the United States from the 19th century to the present. How have gender norms and social power structures shaped medical knowledge, scientific investigation, political regulation, and private reproductive experiences? What do the lessons of the history of reproductive health tell us about contemporary policy, legal and
economic debates? Topics include abortion, activism, childbirth, contraceptives, eugenics, feminism, fertility, medicalization, pregnancy, reproductive science and technology, sexual health, social justice, and sterilization. WR, HU

* WGSS 471a or b, Independent Directed Study  Staff
For students who wish to explore an aspect of women’s, gender, and sexuality studies not covered by existing courses. The course may be used for research or directed readings and should include one lengthy or several short essays. Students meet with their adviser regularly. To apply for admission, students present a prospectus to the director of undergraduate studies along with a letter of support from the adviser. The prospectus must include a description of the research area, a core bibliography, and the expected sequence and scope of written assignments.

* WGSS 490a or b, The Senior Colloquium  Andrew Dowe
A research seminar taken during the senior year. Students with diverse research interests and experience discuss common problems and tactics in doing independent research.

* WGSS 491a or b, The Senior Essay  Andrew Dowe
Independent research on, and writing of, the senior essay.