WOMEN’S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

Director of undergraduate studies: Andrew Dowe, andrew.dowe@yale.edu; wgss.yale.edu

Genders and sexualities are powerful organizing forces: they shape identities and institutions, nations and economies, cultures and political systems. Careful study of gender and sexuality thus explains crucial aspects of our everyday lives on both intimate and global scales. The scholarship in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies is interdisciplinary and wide-ranging, drawing on history, literature, cultural studies, social sciences, and natural science to study genders and sexualities as they intersect with race, ethnicity, class, nationality, transnational processes, disability, and religion.

Students majoring in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies take a series of core courses, develop an individual area of concentration, and write a two-term senior essay. The program encourages work that is interdisciplinary, intersectional, international, and transnational. Individual concentrations evolve along with students’ intellectual growth and academic expertise. Recent examples of concentrations include literature and queer aesthetics; transnational feminist practices; the intellectual history of civil rights activism; AIDS health policies; gender, religion, and international NGOs; women’s health; food, sexuality, and lesbian community; and gender and sexuality in early education.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies requires twelve term courses and may be taken either as a primary major or as one of two majors. Requirements include two intermediate courses: WGSS 205 and WGSS 206. Majors are required to take both, preferably prior to the junior sequence. The major also includes one transnational perspectives course, one methodology course, courses in an area of concentration, the junior sequence, and the senior sequence. The area of concentration consists of at least five courses, the majority of which should be drawn from program offerings. Courses for the area of concentration may also fulfill the requirements in transnational perspectives and methodology. Substitutions to the major requirements may be made only with the written permission of the director of undergraduate studies.

Transnational perspectives course  Ideally, each student’s course work engages a broad diversity of cultural contexts, ethnicities, and global locations. Such study illuminates the links among nations, states, cultures, regions, and global locations. Most students take several classes that focus on genders and sexualities outside the U.S. context; majors are required to take at least one. WGSS 206 may count for the transnational perspectives course.

Methodology course  Given its interdisciplinary nature, Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies necessarily relies on a wide range of methodologies: literary criticism, ethnography, visual analysis, historiography, and quantitative data analysis, among others. Each student is expected to acquire competence in at least one methodology relevant to his or her own concentration and planned senior essay. In preparation for the senior essay, students are advised to complete the methods requirement in the junior year.

Junior sequence  The two-term junior sequence consists of WGSS 340 and WGSS 398. All students in the major must take both courses. (Individualized alternatives are found for students who study abroad during the junior year.)

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

The two-term senior sequence consists of the Senior Colloquium (WGSS 490), in which students begin researching and writing a senior essay, followed by the Senior Essay (WGSS 491), in which students complete the essay. The senior essay is developed and written under the guidance and supervision of a WGSS-affiliated faculty member with expertise in the area of concentration. Students are expected to meet with their essay advisers on a regular basis.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisites  None

Number of courses  12 term courses (incl senior req)

Specific courses required  WGSS 205, 206, 340, 398

Distribution of courses  1 transnational perspectives course; 1 methodology course; electives in area of concentration

Senior requirement  Senior colloq and senior essay (WGSS 490, 491)

FACULTY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROGRAM OF WOMEN’S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

Professors  Julia Adams (Sociology), Carol Armstrong (History of Art), Seyla Benhabib (Political Science, Philosophy), Jill Campbell (English), Hazel Carby (African American Studies, American Studies), Kang-i Sun Chang (East Asian Languages & Literatures), Deborah Davis (Sociology, East Asian Studies), Kathryn Dudley (Anthropology, American Studies), Ron Eyerman (Sociology), Glenda Gilmore (History), Jacqueline Goldsby (African American Studies, American Studies, English), Inderpal Grewal (American Studies, ER&EM, Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies), Dolores Hayden (School of Architecture, American Studies), Margaret Homans (English, Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies), Marcia Inhorn (Anthropology, Global Affairs), Jennifer Klein (History), Marianne LaFrance (Psychology, Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies), Kathryn Lofton (American Studies, History, Religious Studies), Mary Lui (American Studies, History), Kobena Mercer (History of Art, African American Studies), Joanne Meyerowitz (American Studies, History), Priyamvada Natarajan (Astronomy),
Independent research on, and writing of, the senior essay.

* WGSS 491a or b, The Senior Essay

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

Independent research on, and writing of, the senior essay.

**WGSS 490a or b, The Senior Colloquium**

An interdisciplinary approach to studying gender and sexuality. Exploration of a range of relevant theoretical frameworks and divergences and conflicts, among different ways of approaching gender and sexuality.

**WGSS 398b, Junior Seminar: Theory and Method**

An interdisciplinary approach to studying gender and sexuality. Exploration of a range of relevant theoretical frameworks and methodologies. Prepares students for the senior essay.

**WGSS 340a / ENGL 357a / LITR 426a, Feminist and Queer Theory**

Jill Richards

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 398b, Junior Seminar: Theory and Method**

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.

**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**

Independent research on, and writing of, the senior essay.
Electives

* 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 freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program.  WR, HU

* WGSS 033a / HIST 033a, Fashion in London and Paris, 1750 to the Present  Becky Conekin
Introduction to the history of Western fashion from the mid-eighteenth century to the present, with a focus on Paris and London. Approaches, methods, and theories scholars have historically employed to study fashion and dress. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program.  WR, HU

WGSS 110a / ER&M 264a / SOCY 134a, Sex and Gender in Society  Rene Almeling
Introduction to the social processes through which people are categorized in terms of sex and gender, and how these social processes shape individual experiences of the world. Sex and gender in relation to race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, nationality, education, work, family, reproduction, and health.  SO

WGSS 168a / NELC 167a, Women in the Ancient World  Karen Foster
Introduction to the roles of women in ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Aegean society, as reflected in painting, sculpture, decorative arts, and literature, as well as in the earliest women’s writings known.  HU

* WGSS 179b / ENGL 219b / HUMS 149b / ITAL 309b / LITR 179b, Gender and Genre in Renaissance Love Poetry  Ayesha Ramachandran
Introduction to the poetic genres of lyric, epic, and pastoral in the European Renaissance. Focus on questions of desire, love, and gendered subjectivity. The historical contexts and political uses of discourses of eroticism and pleasure in Italy, Spain, France, and England. Written exercises include poetic imitations of Renaissance texts.  HU

* 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 223a / ENGL 225a, 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 224b / ENGL 226b, Race and Gender in Transatlantic Literature, 1819 to the Present  Margaret Homans
Construction of race and gender in literatures of Great Britain, North America, and the Caribbean from the early nineteenth century to the present. 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 Charlotte Bronte, Sojourner Truth, Zora Neale Hurston, Virginia Woolf, Audre Lorde, Chimimanda Adichie, and Kabe Wilson. Second of a two-term sequence; each term may be taken independently.  WR, HU

* WGSS 230a / ANTH 230a, Evolutionary Biology of Women’s Reproductive Lives  Claudia Valeggia
Evolutionary and biosocial 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 245b / FILM 243b / MGRK 218b, 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 293b / CLCV 319b / HIST 242Jb / 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 299a, Sex, Knowledge, and Power  
Joseph Fischel and Inderpal Grewal  
Issues related to sex and gender within and across scholarship on political economy, contract theory, Marxism, socialist feminism, neoliberalism, poststructuralism, development and capability studies, and popular culture. Feminist and critical-theoretical approaches to value, private property, scarcity, accumulation, wealth, and poverty.  

* WGSS 300b, Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Global South  
Andrew Dow  
Comparative exploration of relationships between race, gender, sexuality and nation in contemporary Anglophone Caribbean and South Africa in literature, memoir, film and visual arts. Emphasis on transnational approaches to questions of identity, hybridity, citizenship, rights, migration, and visibility in interdisciplinary scholarship.  

* WGSS 306a / AMST 314a, Gender and Transgender  
Greta LaFleur  
Introduction to transgender studies, an emergent 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.  

* WGSS 310b / AFAM 391b / AMST 309b / ER&M 310b / LITR 334b, Zombies, Pirates, Ghosts, and Witches  
Dixa Ramirez  

* WGSS 314a / E&P&E 267a / SOCY 216a, Social Movements  
Ron Eyerman  
An introduction to sociological perspectives on social movements and collective action, exploring civil rights, student movements, global justice, nationalism, and radical fundamentalism.  

WGSS 315a / PSYC 342a, Psychology of Gender  
Marianne LaFrance  
Exploration of the relationship between gender and psychological processes at individual, interpersonal, institutional, and cross-cultural levels.  

* WGSS 317b / ITAL 317b / LITR 180b / RLST 335b, 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.  

* WGSS 324a / 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 327a / ANTH 325a, Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Russia  
Cassandra Hartblay  
Exploration of sociocultural aspects of gender and sexuality in contemporary Russia from a transnational queer feminist standpoint. Social theory emerging from transdisciplinary conversations in critical gender and sexuality studies are applied to the Russian context, and students engage ethnography and recent history to contextualize and interpret current events. Prerequisite: ANTH 209 or permission of instructor.  

* WGSS 342a / AFAM 279a / AMST 273a / ENGL 298a, Black Women’s Literature  
Jacqueline Goldsby  
Examination of black women’s literary texts, with a focus on the post–civil rights era. Exploration of the ways writers construct and contest the cultural, ideological, and political parameters of black womanhood. Topics include narrative strategy, modes of representation, and textual depictions of the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, color, ethnicity, nationality, class, and generation. Texts placed within the context of black women’s literary legacies.  

WGSS 346a / AFAM 107a / AMST 219a / ER&M 246a / HIST 326a, Race, Empire, and Atlantic Modernities  
Anne Eller and Dixa Ramirez  
Interdisciplinary examination of the colonial modernities of the Atlantic world, with focus on the production of racism and colonial difference, as well as popular responses to those discourses.  

* WGSS 354a / HIST 191Ja, Women, Gender, and Grassroots Politics in the United States after World War II  
Jennifer Klein  
American politics and grassroots social movements from 1945 to the present explored through women’s activism and through gender politics more broadly. Ideas about gender identities, gender roles, and family in the shaping of social movements; strategies used on the local, regional, national, and international levels. Connections between organizing and policy, public and private, state and family, and migration, immigration, and empire.  

* WGSS 372b, 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 377b / AFAM 150b / HSAR 380b, The Body in Art since 1945  Kobena Mercer
The image of the body in art from 1945 to the present. Themes include identity and changing models of personhood; constructions of gender, race, and sexuality; embodied perception as it is mediated by technology and ecology; issues of medium and materials in painting, sculpture, performance, photography, film, and installation; and the corporeal dimensions of aesthetic experience.  HU

* WGSS 378b / ANTH 381b, 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.  so

* WGSS 388b / AFAM 340b / AMST 326b / HIST 115b, Civil Rights and Women’s Liberation  Staff
The dynamic relationship between the civil rights movement and the women’s liberation movement from 1940 to the present. When and how the two movements overlapped, intersected, and diverged. The variety of ways in which African Americans and women campaigned for equal rights. Topics include World War II, freedom summer, black power, the Equal Rights Amendment, feminism, abortion, affirmative action, and gay rights.  HU

* WGSS 403b / SPAN 323b, Women Writers of Spain  Noél Valis
The development of women’s writing in Spain, with a focus on the modern era. Equal attention to the sociohistorical and cultural contexts of women writers and to the narrative and poetic strategies the authors employed. Some readings from critical and theoretical works.  15, HU

* WGSS 404b / HIST 298J / RLST 444b, Persecution and Deviance in the West  Igor De Souza
Investigation into the dark side of medieval and early modern Europe through study of the historical persecution of four specific groups: Jews; sodomites; the disabled such as lepers and the mentally ill; and those accused of witchcraft. Identifying the persecutors and their ideology, as well as the persecuted.  HU

WGSS 405a / EALL 211a / LITR 174a, Women and Literature in Traditional China  Kang-i Sun Chang
A study of major women writers 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 409a / AMST 410a / HIST 166Ja, Asian American Women and Gender, 1830 to the Present  Mary Lui
Asian American women as key historical actors. Gender analysis is used to reexamine themes in Asian American history: immigration, labor, community, cultural representations, political organizing, sexuality, and marriage and family life.  WR, HU

* WGSS 410b / AFAM 410b / AMST 310b, Interdisciplinary Approaches to African American Studies  Anthony Reed
An interdisciplinary, thematic approach to the study of race, nation, and ethnicity in the African diaspora. Topics include class, gender, color, and sexuality; the dynamics of reform, Pan-Africanism, neocolonialism, and contemporary black nationalism. Use of a broad range of methodologies.  WR, HU, SO

* WGSS 413a / THST 441a, Feminist Theater and Performance  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 419a / HIST 419Ja / HSHM 433a, Gender and Science  Deborah Coen
Exploration of the dual potential of the sciences to reinforce received ideas about gender or to challenge existing sexual and racial hierarchies; the rise of the ideas and institutions of the modern sciences as they have reflected and shaped new notions of femininity and masculinity.

* WGSS 426a / ENGL 446a, Virginia Woolf  Margaret Homans
A study of the major novels and other writings by Virginia Woolf, with additional readings in historical contexts and in Woolf biography and criticism. Focus on Woolf’s modernist formal experimentation and on her responses and contributions to political movements of her day, principally feminism and pacifism; attention also to the critical reception of her work, with emphasis on feminist and queer literary criticism and theory.  WR, HU

WGSS 429b / PLSC 427b, Sex, Markets, and Power  Frances Rosenbluth
Consideration of how women’s socioeconomic status and political power have varied across time and place. Three analytical lenses are used: biology, markets, and power.  so

* WGSS 444a / THST 444a, Theories of Embodiment  Gillian Lipton
Examination of theories about the body and its motion. The inscription of identity on and through the body; ways in which the body resists and rewrites identity through movement. The body as a physical, social, and phenomenological entity; institutional, normative, aesthetic, and virtual bodies. Practical workshops and exercises include movement experiences. Open to junior and senior Theater Studies majors, and to nonmajors with permission of the instructor. Students must preregister during the reading period of the preceding term.  HU
* WGSS 461b / AMST 450b / ER&M 430b, Islam in the American Imagination  Zareena Grewal
The representation of Muslims in the United States and abroad throughout the twentieth century. The place of Islam in the American imagination; intersections between concerns of race and citizenship in the United States and foreign policies directed toward the Middle East.  

* WGSS 462b / AMST 484b / HSAR 493b, 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 466b / PSYC 414b, Gender Images: A Psychological Perspective  Marianne LaFrance
The nature and psychological impact of exposure to visual images that portray various dimensions of gender, such as sex differences and sexuality, in various media, including advertising, television, film, and Facebook. How to empirically decode gender images in contemporary media as well as assess their range of influences. The overall aim is to understand how visual representations of gender affect psychological identity and well-being.  

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