WOMEN'S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

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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), Crystal Feimster (African American Studies), Glenda Gilmore (History), Jacqueline Goldsby (African American Studies, American Studies, English), Ingerpal Grewal (American Studies, Ethnicity, Race, and Migration, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies), Dolores Hayden (School of Architecture, American Studies), Margaret Homans (Chair) (English, Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies), Marcia Inhorn (Anthropology, Global Affairs), Jennifer Klein (History), Marianne LaFrance (Psychology, Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies), Kathryn Lofton (American Studies, History, Religious Studies), Mary Lai (American Studies, History), Deb Margolin (Adjunct) (Theater Studies), Kobena Mercer (History of Art, African American Studies), Joanne Meyerowitz (American Studies, History), Priyamvada Natarajan (Astronomy), Sally Promey (American Studies, Institute of Sacred Music), Frances Rosenbluth (Political Science), Alicia Schmidt Camacho (American Studies),
Thinking of sexuality as a field of power that is predicated on notions of normality and abnormality enables us to see what other issues including reproductive justice, definitions of kinship, sexual liberation movements, and contemporary states of war and emergency. desires are produced and discourses incited, and how the particular to as neoliberal capitalism, and sexuality as a field of power. We analyze how subjectivities are formed under this current system, how course argues otherwise. Specifically, we consider the intersections between the current dominant political economic mode, referred

* WGSS 030a, Neoliberalism and Sexuality

Electives

* WGSS 491a or b, The Senior Essay

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

Senior Courses

* WGSS 490a or b, The Senior Colloquium

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 030a, Neoliberalism and Sexuality

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. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  

* 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 sexuality as a scientific discipline. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year 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 first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  WR, HU

* WGSS 146b / HUMS 142b / LITR 184b, Women and the Supernatural in Medieval Literature  
Johanna Fridriksdottir  
Study of medieval texts from a wide geographic and chronological range, all of which prominently feature female characters that exhibit supernatural features or practice magic. Narratives about fairies, witches, hags, and monstrous women analyzed in order to explore intersections of gender and sexuality, Otherness, ethics, violence, fantasy, and related themes in medieval culture.  HU

WGSS 207a, Gender, Justice, Power, Institutions  
Inderpal Grewal  
Examination of how inequalities based on gender, race, caste, class, sexuality as well as a host of other identities are embedded in institutions that make up our social world. From the family and the home to the workplace, from the University, and the Corporation, to the Military and Media, we track how inequalities emerge and are sustained by power and institutional structures. We also see how they are challenged and what sorts of instruments are needed to challenge them. In particular, we focus on sexual politics and sexual violence as a key issue to understanding the gendered workings of institutions, in order to examine structures that sustain inequality. Through the semester, we hope to consider many domains of life—bedrooms and boardrooms, international borders and feminist movements—to understand the stubborn and sticky forms and hierarchies of power that are challenged and contested by activists, scholars, and communities.  TR

* WGSS 209a / CLCV 216a / LITR 239a / MGRK 216a, Dionysus in Modernity  
George Syrimis  
Modernity’s fascination with the myth of Dionysus, and 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 210b / HUMS 203b / JDST 358b, Feminism and Judaism  
Igor De Souza  
The impact of feminism in three key areas of contemporary Jewish life: religion, Zionism, and identity. The critique of Zionism, in a trend known as post-Zionism, from feminist lenses. Feminism and Zionism in the construction of sexualized and racialized Jewish identities (LGBT Jews/Jews of color).  WR, HU

* WGSS 220a / PLSC 220a, Gender Politics  
Andrea Aldrich  
Exploration of theoretical and empirical work in political science to study the relationship between gender and politics in the United States and around the world. Topics include women’s representative 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 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 260b, 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.  WR, HU

WGSS 272a / AMST 272a / ER&M 282a / HIST 183a, Asian American History, 1800 to the Present  
Mary Lui  
An introduction to the history of East, South, and Southeast Asian migrations and settlement to the United States from the late eighteenth century to the present. Major themes include labor migration, community formation, U.S. imperialism, legal exclusion, racial segregation, gender and sexuality, cultural representations, and political resistance.  HU
* WGSS 291b / HIST 287b / RLST 347b / SOCY 331b, Sexual Minorities from Plato to the Enlightenment  Igor De Souza
This interdisciplinary course surveys the history of homosexuality from a cross-cultural, comparative perspective. Students study contexts where homosexuality and sodomy were categorized, regulated, and persecuted and examine ancient and medieval constructions of same-sex desire in light of post-modern developments, challenging ideas around what is considered normal and/or natural. Ultimately, we ask: what has changed, and what has remained the same, in the history of homosexuality? What do gays and lesbians today have in common with pre-modern sodomites? Can this history help us ground or rethink our sexual selves and identities? Primary and secondary historical sources, some legal and religious sources, and texts in intellectual history are studied. Among the case studies for the course are ancient attitudes among Jews, early Christians, and Greeks; Christian theologians of the Middle Ages; Renaissance Florence; the Inquisition in Iberia; colonial Latin America; and the Enlightenment’s condemnation of sodomy by Montesquieu and Voltaire, and its defense by Bentham.  HU

* WGSS 293b / CLCV 319b / HIST 243b / 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 304b / ANTH 484b, Men, Manhood, and Masculinity  Andrew Dowe
Cultural and historic constructions of masculinity explored through an investigation of male bodies, sexualities, and social interactions. Multiple masculinities; the relationship between hegemonic, nonhegemonic, and subordinate masculinities.  SO

* WGSS 306b / AMST 314b, 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.  RP

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

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.  SO

* WGSS 339a / ENGL 385a, Fiction and Sexual Politics  Margaret Homans
Historical survey of works of fiction that have shaped and responded to feminist, queer, and transgender thought from the late eighteenth century to the present. Authors include Wollstonecraft, C. Bronte, H. Jacobs, C. P. Gilman, R. Hall, Woolf, Wittig, Walker, Anzaldua, Morrison, Kingston, Winterson, and Bechdel.  WR, HU

* WGSS 352b / ENGL 359b, 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.  WR, HU

* WGSS 355b, Gender, Development and Technology  Inderpal Grewal
Will technology lift all boats? Can it help address global inequalities and solve social and environmental problems? From solar power in Puerto Rico, to biometric ID cards believed to efficiently deliver welfare, to new cookstoves in India that promise to help women, how is technology imagined to furthering the project of ‘development’ that is often seen as synonymous with progress and economic growth? This course surveys a wide range of perspectives, histories, and dilemmas with the goal of understanding how to think of ‘development’ and ‘technology for development’ as subjects of study. We examine the gendered targets of development projects, as well as those who create and imagine these projects. We are especially interested in examining relations between development and economy, development and politics, development and technology. In addition to examining gender (often understood to mean just women) as a key aspect of development, this course uses a critical feminist lens to explore a range of issues, including discourses and practices of development within struggles over power, history and culture, the relation between development projects of today in relation to colonial projects and ideologies of ‘improvement’ and ‘the civilizing mission’ that were built on particularly racialized, sexualized, and gendered ideas. We also consider how the issue of gender and development has changed over time to include questions of gay rights, disability, and protections for children. In this way, we explore how ‘macro’ agendas have shaped the lives of millions of men and women living across the globe.  WR, HU

* WGSS 359b / EAST 392b / RLST 357b, Buddhism and Sexuality  Hwansoo Kim
Critical examination of the relation of religion and sexuality with special attention to Buddhism. Discussion of religious interpretations of sex, sexuality, and gender; the codification and normalization of these rules through texts, symbols, and practices; and recent challenges
WGSS 378b / ANTH 381b, Sex and Global Politics  Graeme Reid
Global perspectives on the sexual politics of gender identity, sexual orientation, and human rights. Examination of historical, cultural, and political aspects of sexual orientation and gender identity in the context of globalization.  SO

* WGSS 387b, Gender, Sexuality, and Islam  Evren Savci
The use of critical texts that span a wide range of disciplines to examine gender and sexuality in the context of predominantly Muslim countries and cultures, as well as the larger transnational discourses that shape the ways in which Islam is imagined in relationship to gender and sexuality. By putting gender and sexuality at the center of our analysis, we are able to tease out the complex relationships between religion, culture, nation-states, and racialization, and think about how particular constructions of gender and sexuality have been central to the production and reproduction of each of these social structures. A critical knowledge of Orientalism, colonialism, and global inequalities is crucial for a careful and nuanced understanding of the different roles gender and sexuality have played, and continue to play in representations of Islam and Muslims. This also underlines the current place of Islam not only as a world religion, or a set of beliefs and practices, but also as a "signifier." Students develop a historical understanding of many contemporary discussions around Islam and what gets referred to as "Muslim cultures" and should be able to critically engage with and complicate the terms and issues such as "cultural difference," "women's and LGBT rights," and "modernity/civilization" that are widely and easily deployed in current political and moral discourses around the Middle East and Islam.

* WGSS 390b / ER&M 360b / HLTH 370b / HSHM 432b / SOCY 390b, 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 401a / EAST 401a / HIST 305Ja, Gender in Modern Korea: History and Representation  Young Sun Park
This seminar examines the cinematic representation of Korean masculinity and femininity through history: from the appearance of the New Woman in the early twentieth century to the commercialized woman under the wave of neoliberalism more recently. By contextualizing these themes within the history of modern Korea, this class introduces students to major filmic texts and encourages them to historicize the dominant representations of gender by identifying the relevant, preferred categories and aesthetics of particular periods. Students are expected to engage in critical reading, analysis, and writing. Students also analyze and interpret the cinematic depictions to ask how these films illuminate issues of gender within the context of major historical themes such as national identity, external relations, and political and social conflict. Korean history presents a special opportunity for such an exercise because of South Korea's very sophisticated popular culture industry, and because of this industry's welcome dedication to re-imagining historical figures, events, and settings.  HU

WGSS 405a / EALL 211a / EAST 241 / 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 408a / AMST 345a / ER&M 409a, 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.  SO

* 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 415b / AFAM 413b / AMST 448b / THST 420b, Race, Sex, and Gender in Downtown New York City 1945–1984  Tavia Nyong'o
Archivally-driven exploration of the post-war downtown scene in New York City. Particular attention to the intersections of jazz, nightlife, avant-garde performance, literature, and visual art, within the context of social movements for black and brown power and women's and gay liberation.  HU

* WGSS 427b / HIST 127Jb, Witchcraft in Colonial America  Rebecca Tannenbaum
The social, religious, economic, and gender history of British North America as manifested through witchcraft beliefs and trials.  WR, HU
Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

* WGSS 430b / ANTH 441b / MMES 399 / MMES 430b, 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 453a / HIST 142Ja / HSHM 445a, Women and Medicine in America from the Colonial Era to the Present  Naomi Rogers
American women from the colonial era to the present as midwives, patients, healers, reformers, revolutionaries, innovators, and entrepreneurs. Ways that women have shaped American health care and medical research.  WR, HU

* WGSS 459b / ANTH 455b, Masculinity and Men's Health  Staff
Ethnographic approaches to masculinity and men's health around the globe. Issues of ethnographic research design and methodology; interdisciplinary theories of masculinity; contributions of men's health studies from Western and non-Western sites to social theory, ethnographic scholarship, and health policy.  SO RP

* WGSS 461a / AMST 450a / ER&M 430a, 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.  WR, SO

* 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.  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.