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), 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), Sally Promey (American Studies, Institute of Sacred Music), Frances Rosenbluth (Political Science), Alicia Schmidt Camacho (American
Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Studies), Michael Warner (English, American Studies), Laura Wexler (American Studies, Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies), Elisabeth Wood (Political Science), Ana Ramos Zayas (Ethnicity, Race, and Migration)

Associate Professors Crystal Feimster (African American Studies), Joseph Fischel (Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies), Moira Fradinger (Comparative Literature), Zareena Grewal (American Studies, Religious Studies), Janet Henrich (School of Medicine), Deb Margolin (Adjunct) (Theater Studies), Angel David Nieves (Women’s Gender & Sexuality Studies) Naomi Rogers (History, History of Science, Medicine, and Public Health)

Assistant Professors Rene Almeling (Sociology), Greta LaFleur (American Studies), Eda Pepi (Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies), Vida Maralani (Sociology), Dixa Ramirez (American Studies)

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Assistant Professors Rene Almeling (Sociology), Greta LaFleur (American Studies), Eda Pepi (Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies), Vida Maralani (Sociology), Dixa Ramirez (American Studies)

Senior Lecturers Becky Conekin (History), Rebecca Tannenbaum (History), Maria Trumpler (Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies)

Lecturers Melanie Boyd (Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies), Igor De Souza (English, Humanities), Andrew Dowe (Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies), Ziv Eisenberg (History), Graeme Reid (Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies), George Syrimis (Hellenic Studies)

Gateway Courses

WGSS 120a, Women, Food, and Culture Maria Trumpler
Interdisciplinary exploration of the gendering of food production, preparation, and consumption in cross-cultural perspective. Topics include agricultural practices, cooking, pasteurization, kitchen technology, food storage, home economics, hunger, anorexia, breastfeeding, meals, and ethnic identity. SO

* WGSS 222b / AMST 206b / ER&M 221b, Introduction to Critical Refugee Studies Quan Tran
Reconfiguring refugees as fluid subjects and sites of social, political, and cultural critiques. Departing from dominant understandings of refugees as victims, consideration instead of refugees as complex historical actors, made visible through processes of colonization, imperialism, war, displacement, state violence, and globalization, as well as ethical, social, legal, and political transformations. Focus on second-half of the twentieth century. SO

Intermediate Courses

* WGSS 205a, Bodies and Pleasures, Sex and Genders Staff
Sexuality explored as an embodied, historical production. Focus on the dynamic, contested relationship between the concepts of gender and sexuality. Investigation of sexuality at the sites of racial difference, psychoanalysis, AIDS, transnationality, U.S. law, publicity, and politics. Ways in which pleasure, power, and inequality are unevenly imbricated. Includes occasional evening screenings. SO

* WGSS 206b, Globalizing Gender and Sexuality Andrew Dowe
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

Junior Seminars

* 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. WR, HU

* WGSS 398b, Junior Seminar: Theory and Method Staff
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, HU, SO

Senior Courses

* 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.

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 sex 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 210b / 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 239a / 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 243b / 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 242b / 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.  SO
* WGSS 300b, Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Global South Andrew Dowe
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. HU

* 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. RP

* WGSS 310b / AFAM 310b / AMST 309b / ER&M 310b / LITR 334b, Zombies, Pirates, Ghosts, and Witches Dixa Ramirez
Study of the literature and history of the Atlantic Caribbean region (including the U.S. Northeast and Deep South) through its most subversive and disturbing icons—zombies, pirates, ghosts, vampires, and witches. Texts include Francis Drake on piracy, Katherine Dunham on zombies, Lauren Derby on vampires (chupacabras), Maryse Condé and Sandra Cisneros on witchcraft, and Toni Morrison and William Faulkner on ghosts. Films include documentaries and several horror classics, including White Zombie (1932), I Walked with a Zombie (1943), The Serpent and the Rainbow (1988), The Witch (2015), and Get Out (2017). WR, HU

* WGSS 314a / EP&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. 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 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. TR

* 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. HU, SO

* 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. HU

WGSS 346a / 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. HU

* 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. WR, HU

* 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. SO

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 403b / SPAN 323b, Women Writers of Spain Noel 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
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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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. SO

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. SO