

WS 201: Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies
Michigan State University
Spring 2021

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COURSE OVERVIEW:

This course draws on feminist ideas and scholarship in developing historical, theoretical and cross-cultural frameworks for the comparative study of women and gender. This interdisciplinary course will examine the ways that gender roles and gender socialization shape our experiences. For example, we will investigate the Western and global perspectives on many gendered challenges that women face (e.g. pregnancy, romantic relationships, work, politics).

Questions addressed include: What does it mean to study "women" as a group? When is it useful to focus on commonalities among women, when is it necessary to stress differences? In what ways do gender differences and gendered power relations organize the social world and shape people's experiences and self-perceptions? The course aims to sharpen students' critical awareness of how gender operates in institutional and cultural contexts and in their own lives, and to give them an opportunity to imagine participating in social change.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will be able to *identify* major theoretical, biological, psychological, and social and political aspects of gender.
2. Students will be able to *describe* and *integrate* current feminist issues into existing frameworks.
3. Students will be able to *apply* major concepts and theories of women's and gender studies to their own personal experiences.

COURSE FORMAT:

The class will consist of some recorded lectures (w/updates and answers to questions), readings, videos, and podcasts. You will also be assigned to discussion groups to record discussion of readings, lectures, and book clubs. Questions about course material are encouraged at all times, as is sharing your own experiences with the class.

REQUIRED TEXT:

- Susan Shaw & Janet Lee: *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions*: 6th edition

COURSE EVALUATION:

Syllabus Quiz: Please read the syllabus several times per semester, it is essential to your success in the course. There will be a short quiz to test your knowledge of the course structure and expectations will be due **on 1/24 at 11:59pm**. This quiz is timed, but “open syllabus” and you may take up to 3 times for 100%. **(5 points)**

Quizzes: There will be 4 quizzes throughout the semester to test your knowledge of course materials. The quizzes will contain information from the required course readings as well as assigned lectures, films, and podcasts. I will post a short study guide of what to focus on for the quiz. The quizzes are multiple choice, on D2L, and you have 2 attempts to receive 100%. Quizzes will open on Thursdays at 12am and close on Sundays at 11:59pm of their assigned weeks. Because we all have difficult weeks, if you do poorly on 1 quiz it will not impact your grade. Your worst score out of 4 will be “dropped.” If you do well on all of them, you will essentially receive extra credit. Quizzes will be worth 5 points each for a total of 15 points. However, you could earn as much as 20. **(15 points)**

Recorded discussion sessions: You will meet with a virtual group 4 times on zoom during the semester. During these meetings, you will record your 15-30 minute discussion of readings, films, and my recorded lecture and submit those recordings on D2L by 11:59pm on Sunday of their respective assigned weeks. Only 1 student needs to record. Please volunteer to submit for your group if you are tech savvy. I will “attend” 1 of these meetings to enhance and supplement your discussion. Please schedule your discussion time between 9am-5pm M-F so that I am able to attend. I encourage you to use [when2meet](#) to schedule your meeting time. Make sure to invite me to your scheduling if I am joining your week! Each group meeting is worth 5 points depending on the participation and depth of discussion. Each member of your group will receive the same grade (0-5 pts) for each discussion meeting **(20 points)**.

Reflection Papers: The knowledge gained from this course will often surpass a purely intellectual experience. Given the personal nature of our gendered experience of the world, the information gleaned from this course could transform your own identity or world perspective. However, our own experiences and identities vary so greatly that I cannot determine which reading or other course material will move you the most. Thus, you will choose a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 3 additional readings in the course textbook to reflect on in each reflection paper (approximately 500-1000 words). Please integrate the reading(s) into another aspect of the course (lecture or video), and to your own experience. For example, comparing and contrasting how the ideas expressed in the reading are similar and different from those in lecture or video and how they are similar or different from your own experience. There will be 3 reflection papers worth 10 points each. **(30 points)**

Book Club Group Project: This aspect of the course was inspired by 3 realities: (1) I truly believe that there is much to learn outside of a textbook and there are many contemporary feminist authors generating important knowledge for all of us; (2) the advancement of women in post-modern society is the result of “organizing”. Organizing is simply the act of gathering in groups, sharing lived experiences, identifying needed change, and acting to implement that change; (3) most of you will not go on to live academic lives, but you will all need to be able to digest, apply, and discuss information with friends and coworkers throughout your lives. Thus, the Book Club group project was born. A group of 4 students (min 3, max 5) will read the same book and meet at least 3 times throughout the semester to discuss the book and how it ties into course material. At the end of the semester, you will record a presentation on your process of reading the book and applying it to course material and your own lived experiences. Then, you

will turn in a final paper in the form of an edited volume for your final assignment. This volume will be a series of short essays (1 for each member of your group) reviewing the book from a specific lens. Everyone in your group will receive the same number of points (up to 25) for the final product as a whole (quality of oral presentation and paper; as well as submitting meeting “minutes” on time). However, every individual in the course will receive differing points (up to 10) for how you worked as an individual within your group (your level of effort to help your group succeed). More information on the details of this project will be revealed in class. D2L will contain complete instructions and grading rubrics. **(35 points)**

COURSE GRADING BREAKDOWN:

Syllabus quiz	5 points	93%-100% = 4.0
Quizzes	15 points	86%-92% = 3.5
Recorded discussions	20 points	80%-85% = 3.0
Reflection papers	30 points	74%-79% = 2.5
Book Club group project	35 points	69%-73% = 2.0
		64%-68% = 1.5
Total points	105 points	60%-63% = 1.0

EMAIL ETIQUETTE:

Please remember that e-mail should be treated with the same care and respect that you would a face-to-face interaction. Compose e-mail carefully, using a pertinent subject line, an appropriate greeting and a concise message, without spelling or grammatical errors. **I will attempt to return all e-mail promptly, within two business days.** Please note that I may not always respond to questions when the information is readily available in the syllabus or on an assignment sheet.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Participation in this course assumes that you will adhere to the statements set out in the syllabus as well as the University Policy on academic integrity. MSU’s policy is covered in the *Spartan Life* handbook, found on the *Spartan Life* web site at: <http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu>.

If the instructor suspects a student has violated the University policy on academic integrity, the instructor will proceed as guided by University policy. The student will be approached by the instructor. For advisory purposes, the instructor may also consult faculty members who serve on departmental, College or University committees that address academic integrity, the department chairperson, the academic dean, or the Ombudsman; in all of these interactions, the instructor will keep the student’s identity confidential. The goal of these consultations is for the instructor to seek guidance to aid her in arriving at a decision about whether the suspicion merits an allegation of academic misconduct. The student may or may not be informed that the instructor is seeking advisement pertaining to a situation involving the student (the student’s identity will not be disclosed). The student may be contacted by the instructor for the purpose of arranging a meeting to discuss the circumstances that prompted suspicion.

If after consulting the University policy, there may still remain details that you may need further clarification on. You are encouraged to seek answers to your questions from an appropriate source. For more information on the University policy, first consult the online handbook. If you have any remaining questions and the instructor cannot adequately address them, the instructor will refer you to a

knowledgeable source. The Office of the Ombudsman is a knowledgeable and neutral source (and students may post confidential inquiries with this office, see <https://www.msu.edu/~ombud/> for more details), and can also serve as a point of first contact.

ACCESSIBILITY:

Michigan State University seeks to ensure that its programs are accessible to all persons. Students in need of special assistance or an accommodation regarding any of the course requirements as outlined in the syllabus and other course content are advised to notify the instructor immediately. We will meet privately to discuss a resolution of your matter, which may or may not include an appropriate referral. Confidentiality will be maintained regarding these discussions. For more information on University policy and accommodations, please consult the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities:

www.rcpd.msu.edu.

STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY:

Michigan State University and the Department of Human Development and Family Studies affirm the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

SIRS EVALUATION POLICY:

Michigan State University takes seriously the opinion of students in the evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction and has implemented the Student Instructional Rating System (SIRS) to gather student feedback (<https://sirsonline.msu.edu>). This course utilizes the online SIRS system, and you will receive an e-mail during the last two weeks of class asking you to fill out the SIRS web form at your convenience. In addition, participation in the online SIRS system involves grade sequestration, which means that the final grade for this course will not be accessible on STUINFO during the week following the submission of grades for this course unless the SIRS online form has been completed. Alternatively, you have the option on the SIRS website to decline to participate in the evaluation of the course. We hope, however, that you will be willing to give us your constructive feedback so that we may instruct students even better in the future. If you access the online SIRS website and complete the online SIRS form or decline to participate, you will receive the final grade in this course as usual once final grades are submitted.

MANDATED REPORTER STATUS:

As a faculty member at MSU, I am a mandatory reporter for issues of sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence and stalking. Disclosures of such behavior cannot remain confidential. Disclosures will be reported to the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) and to the police, in some instances. An investigator from OIE and possibly the police, will contact you about the incident and in most cases, it will be your decision whether you want to speak with them. Although I am a mandated reporter, please don't let that be a deterrent to come to me for help. However, if you have experienced sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking or relationship violence, I encourage you to make an appointment at the MSU Counseling Center.

RESOURCES:

Here are some resources that may be of help to you while you're a student at MSU:

- Intimate partner violence, stalking, harassment: MSU Safe Place: <http://safeplace.msu.edu/>
- MSU Sexual Assault Program: <http://endrape.msu.edu/>
- Counseling and Psychiatry Services (CAPS): <http://counseling.msu.edu/>
- Women's Resource Center: <http://wrc.msu.edu/index.html>
- MSU LGBTQ Resource Center: <http://lbgtrc.msu.edu/>
- Center for Gender in Global Context: <http://gencen.isp.msu.edu/>
- Women's Center of Greater Lansing: <http://www.womenscenterofgreaterlansing.org/>
- Sexuality and gender trainings
 - QuILL: <http://lbgtrc.msu.edu/quill/>
 - Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence Prevention Program
 - (SARV): <http://sarv.msu.edu/>
- Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives:
<http://www.inclusion.msu.edu/education/learn-at-lunch.html>
- Self Defense: <http://recsports.msu.edu/instructional-programs/Self%20Defense.html>
- Transforming Theatre Ensemble:
<http://www.inclusion.msu.edu/education/transforming-theatre-ensemble/index.html>

THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MODIFY THE COURSE SYLLABUS IF NECESSARY. STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR NOTING THOSE CHANGES. CHANGES WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN CLASS AND ON D2L.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Read	Watch/Listen	Submit
1	1/11-1/17	Ch 1-WGS: Perspectives & Practices (p. 1-27)	-Welcome video (D2L)	
2	1/18-1/24	Ch 1-WGS: Perspectives & Practices (p. 1-27)	-Intro to WGS lecture (D2L) - <i>Hillary</i> (2020): Episode 1	Syllabus Quiz
3	1/25-1/31	Ch 2-Systems of Privilege & Inequality (p. 49-71)	- <i>Hillary</i> (2020): Episodes 2 and 3	Quiz #1
4	2/1-2/7	Ch 2-Systems of Privilege & Inequality (p. 49-71)	-Privilege and Inequality lecture (D2L) - Dark Girls 2 (2020)	Discussion #1
		Dr. Maas joins discussion group 1		
5	2/8-2/14	The Yellow Wallpaper (D2L)	-Yellow Wallpaper lecture (D2L) - <i>Hillary</i> (2020): Episode 4	Meeting minutes #1
6	2/15-2/21	Ch 3-Learning Gender (116-135)	-Biological Sex vs. Gender lecture (D2L)	Reflection #1
7	2/22-2/28	Ch 4-Inscribing Gender on the Body (p. 181-204)	-Women's Bodies lecture (D2L) - <i>The Female Orgasm, Explained</i>	Discussion #2
		Dr. Maas joins discussion group 2		
8	3/4-3/7	Ch 5-Media and Culture (p. 250-275)	- <i>Miss Representation</i> (2011)	Quiz #2
9	3/8-3/14	Ch 6-Sex, Power, & Intimacy (p. 313-333)	-Women's Sexualities lecture (D2L) - <i>What Young Women Believe About Their Own Sexual Pleasure</i>	Meeting minutes #2
10	3/15-3/21	Ch 7-Health & Reproductive Justice (p. 362-394)	- <i>The Lies We Tell Pregnant Women</i> - <i>The Business of Being Born</i> (2008)	Reflection #2
11	3/22-3/28	Ch 8-Family Systems, Family Lives (p. 433-451)	-Romantic and Family Configurations lecture (D2L) - <i>The Double Shift</i> (Podcast)	Discussion #3
		Dr. Maas joins discussion group 3		
12	3/29-4/4	Ch 9-Work Inside and Outside the Home (p.	- <i>Why Women are Paid Less, Explained</i>	Quiz #3

		470-499)	- <i>The Double Shift</i> (Podcast)	
13	4/5-4/11	Ch 10-Resisting Gender Violence (p. 537-564)	-Sexual Violence lecture (D2L) *Suggested* viewing: <i>The Hunting Ground</i> (2015) <i>Audrie and Daisy</i> (2016)	Meeting minutes #3
14	4/12-4/18	Ch 11-State, Law, and Social Policy (p. 582-605)	- <i>It's A Girl</i> (2012)	Reflection #3
15	4/19-4/25	Ch 13-Activism, Change, and Feminist Futures (p. 635-649)	- <i>RBG</i> (2018)	-Discussion #4 -Book Club presentation
		Dr. Maas joins discussion group 4		
16	4/26-4/30			-Quiz #4 -Book Club paper