

University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth

Women's Studies

WMS 101: Introduction to Women Studies

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NOTE: This course satisfies a social science distribution requirement and the “diversity” general education requirement.

“Gender can be defined as the way society organizes understandings of sexual difference. Women’s studies explores our gendered existence: what it means to be feminine and masculine and how this interacts with other aspects of our identity, such as our race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexuality” (1).

Susan M. Shaw & Janet Lee

Women’s Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings (2001)

Course Description: This course will begin with a number of questions:

- What is Women’s Studies?
- What is feminism?
- How do we define gender?
- How do constructions of gender affect women and men?
- How does gender intersect with race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class?
- Why is Women’s Studies important for men?
- What are the current issues affecting women today?

These questions will remain with us throughout the semester as we examine women’s lives, experiences, and issues. Through the class readings and discussions, we will explore a number of different perspectives about women and men ranging from gender roles to economics and workplace issues to sexual politics and reproductive rights. Our goals in the course are to:

- gain an understanding of how the field of Women's Studies has evolved;
- learn feminist approaches to academics and world issues;
- analyze the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, religion, and age on women's identities and issues;
- reflect critically about the materials we read and view;
- communicate effectively through verbal discussion and written work;
- recognize the value of personal experience and activism;
- develop our own informed perspectives on the course materials.
- promote knowledge of women's history and contemporary issues in the United States
- examine how gender interacts with race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity
- develop awareness of the connection of interlocking systems of oppression (colonialism, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism) and how they shape women's lives
- introduce select issues central to women's studies and women in different cultural, economic, religious, ethnic, and class settings (i.e. women and violence; reproductive rights; women and work; women and family)
- develop research skills in Women's Studies and understand the research process (locating sources, evaluating sources, documenting sources, presenting work)
- develop critical reading, thinking, and writing skills
- outline potential individual and collective strategies for remedy of social injustice and ways to resist oppressions

Keep in mind that discussions of gender and gender constructions will concern women and men of all races, classes, sexual orientations, ages, and abilities. Women's Studies strives to be inclusive and to critique the societal structures and expectations that affect all women. Readings will be drawn from both popular and scholarly presses and will cover historical, political, sociological, and literary approaches. Also, our focus for this course will primarily be on issues in the United States, with a course project exploring global perspectives.

Course Texts:

1. Women: Images and Realities A Multicultural Anthology 4th ed. By Kesselman, McNair and Schniedewind
2. Push by Sapphire (Available at the University Bookstore)
3. Articles available through EReserve.

Assessment:

Reading Quizzes	5%
Politics of Location Statement	15%
Revised Politics of Location	30%
Presentation Outline	5%
Presentation Bibliography	5%
Presentation	25%
Participation	15%

Grades will be based upon the following scale: A=93+; A-=90-92; B+=88-89; B=83-87; B-=80-92; C+=78-79; C=73-77; C-=70-72; D+=68-69; D=63-67; D-=60-62; below 60=F

Quizzes: There will be five unannounced quizzes based on the readings due for that day.

Politics of Location Statement: Your first assignment in this class is to write what is called a “politics of location” statement. This 3-page statement (**no longer!**) will explain who you are at this particular moment in time. Such a statement examines your self-identity—who are you and how did you become this person? In explaining your self, you need to address issues of class, race, gender, and age, among other things. For example, how has your class background influenced your identity? How has gender and ideas about gender influenced who you are and how you think about your self? How does your race affect you and position you in this world? In many ways, Rich’s essay offers you a model to follow and draw upon as you construct your own statement.

Politics of Location Statement Revision: Your final assignment is 4-5 page a rewrite of your politics of location statement with which you began the class. Your rewrite needs to include a one page explanation about what has changed since your first statement; in other words, what have you learned? The one page explanation is not part of the length requirements. See separate assignment sheet posted in the course resources section of our site for more details.

Research Investigation: You will complete a research investigation into a topic important for women. This assignment will take shape in the following ways:

- 1) **Bibliography of sources located:** MLA formatted list of three scholarly sources.
- 2) **Presentation:** You will create a 3-5 minute PowerPoint presentation on a topic of your choice.

A few words/ Course Policies:

This course will involve a combination of in class lecture, large-group, and small-group discussion. **Participation and active involvement is a crucial aspect of this course.** I fully expect everyone to come prepared each week to discuss the readings and offer opinions during class discussion. I understand that speaking in class is difficult for some students but it is important that you make an effort to contribute. Asking questions is a great way to participate in class. Participation during classroom discussion will be a lot easier if you are keeping up with the reading. In this class we will discuss some difficult issues and therefore I would also ask that you respect your fellow students and their opinions. All opinions if they are presented in a respectful manner will be carefully discussed and honored. In addition, I fully expect that cell phones will be off during classroom time. If you have special circumstances that necessitate leaving your phone on it must be on vibrate. However, under no circumstances will it be acceptable to focus on text messages, IMs, emails, or the Internet during class. Also, side conversations and side talking to your friends is rude. I will speak with you once if I feel it is a problem and after that I reserve the right to ask you to leave class at penalty to you if the problem continues. Lastly it is important that if for some reason you will miss an assignment or paper you make an effort to contact me before class, not during or after. If valid reasons such as a documented illness, death in the family etc. is provided then I will allow you to make up the exam within 2 weeks. Other graded assignments will lose 10 points if it is submitted at the next class. Anything submitted later than one class will not be accepted.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:

Plagiarism: In any situation, plagiarism is a serious offense and may result in a failing grade in this course. Since much of your work in this class requires the use of an outside source, the citation of sources is mandatory. I expect every student in this class to understand the necessity of citing your sources in all academic work in order to avoid plagiarism.

For a thorough explanation of plagiarism, see

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/research/r_plagiar.html

Course Schedule:

Session 1

Entering into Women's Studies

- Read Syllabus
- *Recommended:* Chapter 1 “What is Women’s Studies” in textbook.

Session 2

Feminisms & Markers of Identity

- (Textbook pg. 548) “The Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention, 1848”

- (Textbook pg. 551) “Sojourner Truth’s Defense of the Rights of Women”
- (Textbook pg. 542) “The First and Second Waves of Feminism in the U.S.” by Amy Kesselman
- (Textbook pg. 577) “Blame it on Feminism” by Susan Faludi

Session 3

Feminisms & Markers of Identity

- (Ereserve) “Ah, ya throw like a girl” by Mike Messner
- (Ereserve) “A New Vision of Masculinity” by Cooper Thompson
- (Textbook pg. 108) “X: A Fabulous Child’s Story” by Lois Gould
- (Ereserve) “The Social Construction of Gender” by Judith Lorber

Session 4

Feminisms & Markers of Identity

- (Ereserve) “Oppression” by Marilyn Frye
- (Textbook pg. 63) “On Being a ‘Good Girl.’” By Elisa Davila
- (Textbook pg. 96) “The Unreal World” by Jennifer L. Pozner
- Rich, “A Politics of Locations” (web-link): <http://www.medmedia.org/review/numero2/en/art3.htm>
- (Possible In Class Video) “DreamWorlds”

Session 5

Privilege and You?

- (Ereserve) “Racism in the English Language” by Robert Moore
- (Textbook pg. 388) “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh
- (Textbook pg. 380) “Defining Racism” by Beverly Daniel Tatum
- (Ereserve) “Class Privilege”
- (Ereserve) “Id Check” please fill out and bring to class.

Session 6

Women and Violence

- **Politics of Location Statement Due**
- (Textbook pg. 488) “Countdown” by Lanette Fisher-Hertz
- (Textbook pg. 507) “Whose body is it, anyway?” by Pamela Fletcher

Session 7	Novel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Textbook pg. 510) “With no immediate Cause” by Ntozake Shange
Session 8	Body Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read novel <u>Push</u> by Sapphire • (Ereserve) “Am I Thin Enough Yet?” by Sharlene Hesse Biber • (Textbook pg. 72) “Klaus barbie, and other dolls I’d like to see” by Susan Jane Gilman. • (Textbook pg. 129) “Homage to my Hair” by Lucille Clifton • (Textbook pg. 137) “Revenge against the Scale” by Jennifer Ollendorf • (Possible In class Video) “Killing us Softly 3”
Session 9	Reproductive Health and Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Presentation Topic Proposal Due</u> • (Textbook pg. 40) “The Egg and the Sperm” by Emily Martin • (Textbook pg. 331) “ The Feminization of Aids” by Marielena Zunig • (Textbook pg. 356) “Pro Choice, Pro Life” • (Ereserve) “Reproductive Rights” by Angela Davis
Session 10	Women Work and Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Bibliography Due</u> • (Textbook pg. 180) “An Overview of Women and Work” by Ellen Bravo, Gloria Santa Anna, and Linda Meric • (Textbook pg. 185) “ Gender Segregation and Pay Differentials in Occupations” • (Textbook pg. 206) “ In Case of Sexual Harrassment” by Bernice Sandler • (Textbook pg. 188) “The Politics of Housework” by Pat Mainardi of Redstockings
Session 11	Presentations	
Session 12	Presentations	
Session 13	Consciousness Raising in Action	

