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**Master Syllabus**

**WGS 499, Women’s and Gender Studies Capstone**

**Cluster Requirement 5A**

This University Studies Master Syllabus serves as a guide and standard for all instructors teaching an approved course in the University Studies program. Individual instructors have full academic freedom in teaching their courses, but as a condition of course approval, agree to focus on the outcomes listed below, to cover the identified material, to use these or comparable assignments as part of the course work, and to make available the agreed-upon artifacts for assessment of learning outcomes.

**Course Overview:** The WGS capstone course is designed to cohere the student’s core curriculum work in the major. It offers an opportunity for students to integrate their major course knowledge and demonstrate their ability to apply feminist theory and research methods.

The subject matter encompasses a selection of representative readings from each of the WGS major’s four concentration areas (Gender Studies; Politics, Justice and Policy; Cross-Cultural Inquiry; Arts and Letters).

The course is grounded in interdisciplinary feminist scholarship and requires a research project that draws upon feminist theories and research methods, along with a presentation at the end of the semester to the class and WGS faculty.

This course may use blended learning methodology, and it may also be offered in a fully online version.

**Course Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

* 1. Explain the historical, social, and political contexts of women's movements and feminist thought (WGS Core Major Learning Outcome 1)
  2. Explain feminist theories and apply them in critiquing and transforming their world (WGS Core Major Learning Outcome 2)
  3. Identify and evaluate the social construction of gender and the ways gender intersects with other forms of identity (WGS Major Gender Studies Learning Outcome)
  4. Explain the gendering of our socioeconomic and political worlds and the individual and collective components of social change (WGS Major Politics, Justice, and Policy Learning Outcome)
  5. Identify, compare, and evaluate culturally and historically specific ideas of gender, sex, and sexuality (WGS Major Cross-Cultural Inquiry Learning Outcome)
  6. Apply a feminist perspective to the study of literature, history, and/or the arts (WGS Major Arts and Letters Learning Outcome)

**University Studies Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of the capstone study, students will be able to:

1. Synthesize the knowledge and skills gained within major courses, independently complete a research-based project or creative work and integrate the results of both in an open-ended project or experience (projects within the major are encouraged).

2. Integrate knowledge and principles from the field of study with those of the broader University Studies curriculum.

3. Demonstrate advanced information literacy skills by selecting, evaluating, integrating and documenting information gathered from multiple sources into discipline-specific writing.

4. Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, the results of the project or experience.

**Examples of Texts and/or Assigned Readings**

Firestone, Shulamith. *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for a Feminist Revolution*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970.

Garber, Marjorie. *Vested Interests.* New York: Routlege, 1997.

Kessler, Suzanne and Wendy McKenna. “Who put the "Trans" in Transgender? Gender Theory and Everyday Life.” *The International Journal of Transgenderism* 4.3 (2000). Online. <http://www.iiav.nl/ezines/web/ijt/97-03/numbers/symposion/kessler.htm>

Kristof, Nicholas, and Sheryl WuDunn. *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. New York: Vintage Books, 2009.

Piercy, Marge. *Woman on the Edge of Time*. New York: Fawcett, 1985. [1st edition, 1976]

Reischer, Erica and Kathryn S. Koo. “The Body Beautiful: Symbolism and Agency in the Social World.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 297-317.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. and Shelley J. Correll. “Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations.” *Gender and Society* 18.4 (2004): 510-531.

Risman, Barbara J. “Gender As a Social Structure: Theory Wrestling with Activism.” *Gender and Society* 18.4 (2004): 429-450.

**Example Learning Activities and Assignments**

**Discussion Board Activities (180 points):** There will be 8 discussion boards for 20 points each where you are expected to participate. Directions will be included with each board and they typically require you to post a response about the assigned readings and respond to at least 2 classmate postings. Directions regarding length and deadlines will be included with each board. These responses are graded for content, interaction with classmates, and writing. There are also two low stakes discussion board activities (introduction and conclusion to course) for 10 points each.

**Response papers (200 points/4 for 50 points each):** During the course, you will write four response papers of 600-700 words each (no more and no less). These are thesis-driven, argumentative papers that offer close readings of the course texts. Your response should make judicious use of quotations and develop your own analysis of the text.

A successful response paper:

* + Has an effective controlling idea (thesis or theme);
  + Uses the texts for support and analysis;
  + is 600-700 words in length, typed, double spaced, and carefully proofread;
  + Uses proper MLA or APA or CMS formatting and provides a Works Cited section.

**Reflective statement (part of Electronic Portfolio) (50 points)**. You will write a reflective statement of approx. 1,500 words for your portfolio in which you discuss both your learning process in the Women’s and Gender Studies major and how courses you have taken outside of WGS have influenced the way you think about WGS major outcomes. I will comment on your statement, and you will be able to revise it before posting to your portfolio. Although the statement is due at the end of the semester, you’re strongly advised to draft it gradually, throughout the semester, as we move along through the four concentration areas.  
  
**Instructions for the Reflective Statement**

In this statement, your overall goal is to **reflect on** the assignments you have chosen to submit as part of your portfolio, explaining how the different parts of the portfolio illustrate the ways in which **you have accomplished** the relevant core major learning outcomes and the concentration-specific outcomes.

¶ Paragraph 1: Using the assignments selected for Core Major Outcomes 1 and 2, reflect on how you have come to be able to (a) explain the historical, social, and political contexts of women’s movements and feminist thought and (b) explain feminist theories and apply them in critiquing and transforming their world.

¶ Paragraph 2: Using the assignment(s) selected for the Gender Studies learning outcome, reflect on how you have come to identify, evaluate, and understand the social construction of gender and the ways gender intersects with other forms of identity. How has your understanding of the social construction of gender developed?

¶ Paragraph 3: Using the assignment(s) selected for the Politics, Justice, and Policy outcome, reflect on how you have come to understand the gendering of our socioeconomic and political worlds and the individual and collective components of social change.

¶ Paragraph 4: Using the assignment(s) selected for the Cross-Cultural Inquiry outcome, reflect on how have you come to be able to apply to **identify, compare, and evaluate** culturally and historically specific ideas of gender, sex, and sexuality.

¶ Paragraph 5: Using the assignment(s) selected for the Arts and Letters outcome, reflect on how you have come to be able to apply a critical feminist perspective to the study of literature, history, and/or the visual/performance arts.

¶ Paragraph 6: Reflect on **what the portfolio as a whole says about your learning process as a WGS major,** how courses outside of the WGS major have influenced how you think about the major outcomes, **as well as what a WGS major has meant for your educational journey and your personal goals.**

**Electronic portfolio (45 points):** Each student will prepare an electronic portfolio spanning her/his work in the Women’s and Gender Studies major. Portfolios are a reflective collection of student work that are created with goals in mind and used for assessment of the students’ learning in her/his discipline. Using an online database, you will organize, display, and discuss your work. Through the e-portfolio process, you will demonstrate your accomplishment of the major learning outcomes in Women’s and Gender Studies. More detailed instructions will be provided early in the semester.

**Research Project (300 points):** Each of you will conduct a research project this semester. For some of you, this project may be a continuation of the research you started in WGS 312, Feminist Research Methods, or in another upper-level WGS class. Others may wish to embark on a new topic. Your topic is completely up to you, as long as its substantive focus is on women and/or gender and as long as you approach it using the skills you have developed as a Women’s and Gender Studies major.

The project comprises the following stages:

1. Topic proposal (20 points)
2. Annotated bibliography (50 points)
3. Reading journal (50 points)
4. Oral presentation (30 points)
5. Seminar-length paper (15-18 pages) (150 points)
6. **Topic proposal (20 points)**: Write a 2-page topic proposal identifying your topic and reason for choosing it; your working thesis question and “plan of attack” for addressing that thesis; the questions you are using to help guide your research; the specific text(s) you hope to examine; any difficulties, questions, or problems you anticipate. Your proposal should also indicate how you plan to draw on your previous Women’s and Gender Studies class experiences (i.e., your learning). This is the place you should begin to articulate your ideas; you will get feedback, so ask questions as well.
7. **Annotated bibliography (50 points)**: Submit ten scholarly sources (from peer-reviewed journals and/or books; videos; qualified websites) you are considering for use in your paper; type a citation in MLA or APA format for each source; write a brief summary of the article, chapter or book (2-3 sentences); briefly state how each text might be useful for your essay (2-3 sentences). Your annotated bibliography may not include more than 3 websites.
8. **Reading journal (50 points):** You will use the Journal feature in myCourses to note down initial reactions and questions to the material you are reading for your research project. This is meant to be a useful tool that could provide raw material for your seminar-length paper. The journal will be visible to your classmates and the professor, so that we can read and comment on each other’s journals, offering advice and insight.
9. **Oral presentation (30 points):** You will each present your research topic and paper to the class and WGS faculty. Your oral presentation has two key components: 1) a 5-minute verbal, extemporaneous (don’t read something verbatim that you’ve typed out) introduction to and explanation of your research project. 2) A written outline of the key points you are making in your presentation included in the presentation area (directions will be in myCourses) Note that you are writing this outline prior to writing the full seminar paper. This will help you in your writing process.
10. **Seminar-length paper (15-18 pages) (150 points)**: This is your chance to really pursue something that has interested you in your career as a WGS major, so follow your interests. You are expected to draw on your scholarly research to help make your argument about your chosen topic. Use feminist theorists and empirical scholarship on women and gender. Consider including qualitative research that you conduct yourself by interviewing people. Or, develop a statistical approach and find quantitative information that can lend weight to your discussion.

**Sample Course Outline**

## Week 1: Introductions

## Discussion Board #1: Introductions

**Weeks 2 & 3: Gender Studies Concentration**

**Readings**

* “Who put the "Trans" in Transgender? Gender Theory and Everyday Life,” Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKenna in *The International Journal of Transgenderism*.
* “The Body Beautiful: Symbolism and Agency in the Social World,” Erica Reischer and Kathryn Koo in the *Annual Review of Anthropology.*
* “Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations,” Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Shelley J. Correll in *Gender and Society*.
* “Gender As a Social Structure: Theory Wrestling with Activism,” Barbara J. Risman in*Gender & Society.*

**Discussion #2: Gender Issues Part I**

**Discussion #3: Gender Issues Part II**

## Assignment due: Response Paper #1

**Weeks 4 & 5: Politics, Justice and Policy Concentration**

**Reading**: Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*

**Discussion #4**: Firestone, chapters 1-5

**Discussion #5**: Firestone, chapters 6-10

## Assignment due: Response Paper #2: Responding to *The Dialectic of Sex*

**Weeks 6 & 7: Arts and Letters Concentration**

**Reading**: Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time*

**Discussion #6**: Piercy

**Discussion #7**: Piercy

## Assignment due: Response Paper #3: Responding to *Woman on the Edge of Time*

**Weeks 8 & 9: Cross-Cultural Concentration**

**Reading**: Nicholas Kristoff and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky*

**Discussion #8**: *Half the Sky*, chapters 1-7

## Assignment due: Research Project Topic Proposal

**Discussion #9:** *Half the Sky,* chapters 8-14

## Assignment due: Response Paper #4: Responding to *Half the Sky*

## Weeks 10-13 Independent Research and E-portfolio Development

Here, our course moves into more of an independent study format.

Annotated Bibliography due:

Oral Presentations date:

Reading journals due

Seminar-length paper due:

Discussion #10: Final Thoughts due:

E-portfolio, including reflective statement, due: