

Spring 2016  
**WOST 101: INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN'S STUDIES**  
Professor Colleen Martell  
TUESDAY 6:30PM-9:30 PM  
Comenius Hall 114

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Office: The Pavilion (HUB)  
Office Hours: Tuesday 5:30-6:30

### **Course Description**

This course introduces Women's and Gender Studies as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry into the realities of our lives. Readings, discussions, and assignments will introduce issues, topics, and methodologies of women's studies in a global context. We will examine the lives of women around the globe in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, by drawing from multiple disciplines (sociology, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, political science, & cultural studies). Our focus is on gender inequality, feminist ethics, gender as a category of analysis, and the social construction of gender. (M5)

We begin with the assumption that the conditions of our lives are not always and everywhere the same—that they change historically and according to race, class, ethnicity, or sexuality. We also want to ask, though, if there are some conditions that we share. What common problems do all, or most, women face? The focus of the course is on some of the obstacles women still confront as they try to live freely-chosen, productive, and flourishing lives. To put it in a more controversial way: in what areas of their lives are women still oppressed? How? Through a critical analysis of select texts, through class discussion, and through your own thinking and writing, we will seek to understand the causes of women's lingering oppression and thus move toward an understanding of how it can be changed.

The course further presumes that those systems that oppress women also and at the same time shape men's lives—indeed, that women's and men's lives can only be understood in relation to each other. By the end of the semester, we should all have a grasp of the causes (both remote and proximate) of some specific areas of women's oppression, as well as a better understanding of how transformation might occur to create a better society and more livable lives for both women and men.



“I myself have never been able to find out what feminism is; I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute.”

Rebecca West, “Mr. Chesterton in Hysterics,” 1913

## Learning Goals

- Analysis and understanding of how society/social structures affect and are affected by gender
- Knowledge of the main theoretical frameworks and debates within Women’s Studies and Feminism
- Diversity competency - knowledge of how gender intertwines with race, social class, and sexual orientation
- International/comparative perspective on issues in women’s/gender studies
- Application of knowledge to one’s own experience
- Understanding the use of interdisciplinary perspectives

## Course Requirements

### *Reading Journal*

10 reading journals. 1-2 pages typed, submitted on BB by 6pm on class day. The point of this journal is to make substantive notes on the materials you are reading for class, showing intellectual engagement, reflection, and integration of the readings. 10% of final grade

### *Enthusiastic Participation*

This course will be based on discussion rather than lecture. Discussion is an integral part of this course—and the success of your learning experience depends on participating in our discussions. You must come to class prepared, having completed the assigned reading, and ready to discuss the material (this includes bringing to class the book/essays we are discussing that day, having marked all the reading assignments for the day, etc.). I will assess your participation grade in this class based on the *consistency* with which you contribute to class discussion and also on the degree to which your contributions demonstrate a *genuine* and *thoughtful* engagement with the reading.

Similarly, excessive and unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade. To miss discussion is to miss important work.

Respect is a crucial part of discussion, education, and community. We all must be able to listen to and discuss opinions, even those with which we do not agree. We must also respect each other and differences among us. Discriminatory or offensive statements and behaviors are not acceptable.

Beyond your participation in class discussions, in-class writing and reading quizzes are a way for you to demonstrate to me that you are not only doing careful reading, but are also engaging in thoughtful and critical thinking about the readings.

### *Critical Essay*

5 pages, double-spaced, due FEBRUARY 19. Topics TBA. This essay is meant to demonstrate your understanding of and ability to synthesize the major threads of feminist theory and history that have been introduced in the course thus far. 25% of final grade.

### *Media File*

Select a general topic that addresses (either overtly or covertly) gender, sexuality, class, nation, religion, race and/or ethnicity. Examples of topics include: abortion, immigration, same-sex marriage, rape/sexual violence. Select at least three different media sources (may include print, film, television, radio, music, print ad campaign, etc.) for in-depth analysis. Using course materials and discussion notes to help ground your intersectional analysis, craft an argument that explicitly addresses the ways in which gender and sexuality interact with other structures of difference to produce cultural message about your topic. More details to follow. 30% of the final grade.

### *Final Exam*

There will be a final exam for this course that will involve identifying and summarizing short passages from the texts and short essay questions. 20% of final grade.

### **A Few More Things:**

#### *Late things*

Don't turn things in late. If you are struggling with a paper, make sure you talk to me about it *before* the date on which it is due. Late papers will be penalized one grade per day late, unless previous arrangements have been made.

#### *Plagiarism*

Plagiarism will result in an automatic failure of this course and could lead to disciplinary action.

### **Accommodations**

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact the Academic Support Center, located in the lower level of Monocacy Hall, or by calling 610-861-1401. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

“Be critical. Women have the right to say: This is surface, this falsifies reality, this degrades.”  
Tillie Olsen



## Tentative Schedule (subject to change)

### **One: Introduction**

Tues Jan 19      Introduction to the course

### **Two: Genealogies of Feminism: Women of Color/Intersectionality**

Tues Jan 26      Gloria Anzaldua, "La conciencia de la mestiza/Toward a New Consciousness." *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Press, 2012. BB

"The Combahee River Collective Statement." *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*. Zillah R. Eisenstein, ed. Monthly Review Press, 1978. BB

### **Three: Genealogies of Feminism: Ecofeminism**

Tues Feb 2      Carolyn Merchant, "Ecofeminism." *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World*. Routledge, 2005.

### **Four: Global Feminist Politics**

Tues Feb 9      Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes." *Feminism Without Borders*. Duke University Press, 2004.

Susan Muaddi Darraj, "It's Not an Oxymoron: The Search for an Arab Feminism," *Colonize This!* (Seal Press, 2002): 295-311.

View: Afshan Jafar, "Progress and Women's Bodies"

**Five: Reading Gender and Visual Culture**

Tues Feb 16                John Berger “Ways of Seeing.” *Ways of Seeing*. Penguin Books, 1990. BB

Carol Adams, “The Sexual Politics of Meat.” *The Sexual Politics of Meat*.  
Bloomsbury, 2010. BB

View: *Miss Representation*

**Six: Graphic Feminism: Representing Women’s Lives**

Tues Feb 23                *Persepolis*

**Seven: Graphic Feminism: Representing Women’s Lives**

Tues Mar 1                *Persepolis*

**Eight: Spring Break**

Tues Mar 8                No class

**Nine: Families**

Tues Mar 15

**Ten: Graphic Feminism: Representing Women’s Lives**

Tues Mar 22                *Fun Home*

**Eleven: Graphic Feminism: Representing Women’s Lives**

Tues Mar 29                *Fun Home*

**Twelve: Power and Sexuality**

Tues Apr 5                Do Peggy Reeves Sanday

**Thirteen: Body Politics**

Tues Apr 12

**Fourteen: Sex, Gender, and Science**

Tues Apr 19

**Fifteen:**

Tues Apr 26

