

GSWS 0100: Introduction to Gender, Sexuality, & Women's Studies

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Office Hours: Mondays 12h00-13h00 in 402 CL or by appointment

Class Meetings: T/R 9h30-10h45

Class Location: 232 Lawrence Hall

Course Attributes: Writing intensive course (W) and fulfils a Social Science General Education requirement

Required Textbooks

Shaw, Susan M. and Janet Lee (eds). *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 6th ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 2014.

All other course readings will be made available on Courseweb or be distributed in class.

Course Objectives

- Demonstrate an introductory understanding of the field of gender, sexuality, and women's studies
- Utilize a range of interdisciplinary tools and methods for understanding and analyzing sex, gender, and sexuality in culture
- Develop a rich comprehension of both feminist and queer approaches to the social and cultural construction of gender, sex, and sexuality
- Construct and enhance a critical understanding of intersectionality, including an awareness of gender and its complex intersections with other social, cultural, and biological categories, including but not limited to sex, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, sexuality, ability, and age
- Cultivate a language framework for thoughtfully articulating the critical vocabulary in the field of gender, sexuality, and women's studies
- Improve reading and writing skills through effective synthesis of written material and, subsequently, the ability to convey course concepts clearly and concisely both verbally and in writing
- Develop a skillset to think critically and thoughtfully about the self and others through a deepened understanding of how social, cultural, and biological categories shape our lives and our worldviews

Topics to be Explored

- Women's studies as an academic discipline

- Theories of the “nature” of gender and sexuality, including the influences of biology, personality, and social roles
- Portrayals of masculinity, femininity, and transgendered bodies as they are mediated and communicated to children and adults
- Roles of women and the family, including the influences of multiple roles (e.g. daughters, sisters, wives, mothers) and alternatives to these roles
- Gender roles in society in the realms of education, religion, healthcare, politics, and the workplace
- Roles of women as influenced by intersections of ethnicity, socio-cultural differences, race, class, and culture
- Masculinity studies as a complimentary field
- Cross-cultural definitions of sexuality

Assignments and Evaluation

- **Participation and Professionalism (150 points):** This course is conceived of as a discussion-based course. Students are expected to come to every class prepared with the reading and ready to discuss what they have read. Attendance and active participation is essential. Students are expected to check Courseweb regularly for information on assignments and to engage in classroom discussion with peers.
- **Reaction Papers (15 points each):** 16 reaction papers are assigned over the duration of this course. Of this, you will select 10 to complete (with the exception of the first reaction paper, which all students must complete). You should use these reaction papers as means of generating ideas for discussion topics in class.
Each reaction paper will be a 2-page, double-spaced typed response that addresses each of the following questions in the form of a complete sentence or as a short answer. Well-argued perspectives, familiarity with the readings, concise writing style, and proofread papers are expected.
 - **Major Claims:** What is/are the major claim(s) set forth by the author(s)? A claim is the basic argument of a writer, which is then proven over the course of the article. Rather than trying to details every nuance of a writer’s claim(s), try to narrow your choice down to one specific or overarching claim that can be summarized in one or two sentences.
 - **Significance/Impact:** What do you think is significant about these claims? In other words, how do these claims impact the study of gender, sexuality, and women’s studies?
 - **Important Concepts:** In your opinion, what are *two* important/interesting concepts or terms introduced in the reading? How would you summarize or define these using your own words?
 - **Notable Quotation:** What was the most interesting, enlightening, provocative, wrong in this reading and why? Write down the exact quotation (with a page number reference) as well as a brief response to explain what you thought about it.

- **Staggering Statistic:** List a statistic or piece of evidence from the reading (with a page number reference). How does this evidence support or complicate the writer's major claim(s)?
- **Synthesis:** Develop a conclusion about what you now know about course topics that is important and new to you that simultaneously takes into account *all* the reading for this day.

Reaction papers must be given to the instructor at the end of each class. All students are required to complete the first assigned reaction paper. (**NB:** You may complete additional reaction papers for extra credit.)

- **Courseweb "Advocate" Posting (30 points):** You will select a feminist/advocate to introduce to the class via our Courseweb site. This assignment is something that you will make your own – you will reflect on class topics that relate to this person, their standpoint(s), their goals, etc. and why you think so. We will discuss this in class.
- **GSWS Event Reflection Paper (30 points):** You are required to attend one GSWS event during the semester and to write a 1-page summary of the event in which you note the date the event took place, describe the topic/speaker(s), and make at least two connections to class content. This assignment is designed to help you to branch out on campus, to attend events with your peers (both in and outside of class), and to engage with academic discussions outside of the classroom. Please note, this assignment is due within one week of attending the event.

A list of events can be found online at <http://www.wstudies.pitt.edu/events>. Several events that may be of interest to you have also been included on the course timeline. If other applicable events interest you, please notify the instructor before attending the event to determine if it meets the standards of this assignment. (**NB:** Additional events may be attended for extra credit.)

- **Examinations**
 - **Midterm Examination (150 points):** The first examination will include both traditional multiple choice and essay questions. Material will be drawn from all readings and notes from the first half of the course. Students are responsible for readings whether or not they are discussed in class and for all notes whether or not they are included in the readings.
 - **Final Examination (150 points):** The second examination will be similar in format to the midterm examination and will cover all readings and notes from the second half of the course. As with the midterm examination, students are responsible for all readings and notes.
 - **NB:** Since both examinations will be administered during normal class time, the only way a make-up exam will be administered is with written evidence from a doctor that the student was too ill to attend class on the day of the exam. The make-up exam will be composed entirely of essay questions.
- **Self-Assessments:** Students will write short, 1-page self-assessments at midterm and end-term outlining their experiences with their learning, including how they perceive their own strengths and weaknesses as learners. This is less about grades (i.e. "This is what grade I feel I might deserve") and more about internalizing our learning styles, behaviors,

and preferences. The instructor will respond to these assessments. **(NB: These are pass/fail assignments.)**

- **Midterm Self-Assessment (12.5 points)**
- **Final Self-Assessment (12.5 points)**
- **Final Paper (200 points):** The final paper for this course will be a 7-9 pages in length, which uses a minimum of 4 outside academic sources (not including the textbook). A handout on this assignment will be provided as well as in-class time to workshop your essay. Students will be required to draft a portion of the paper and submit it for instructor feedback prior to the final, in-class workshop.
- **Oral Presentation (100 points):** Each student will give one polished oral presentation about their final paper using a PowerPoint presentation. Each report is expected to last 5-7 minutes. This activity will be timed and graded.

Grading	Points Possible	My Points
Participation and Professionalism	150	_____
Reaction Papers (10 x 15 points/each)	150	_____
Courseweb “Advocate” Posting	30	_____
GSWS Event Reflection Paper	30	_____
Midterm Self-Assessment	12.5	_____
Midterm Examination	150	_____
Final Self-Assessment	12.5	_____
Final Examination	150	_____
Oral Presentation	100	_____
Final Paper	200	_____
Total Points	1,000	_____

Grading Scale:

A+ 100 – 98.00	B+ 89.99 – 88.00	C+ 79.99 – 78.00	D+ 69.99 – 68.00
A 97.99 – 93.00	B 87.99 – 83.00	C 77.99 – 73.00	D 67.99 – 63.00
A- 92.99 – 90.00	B- 82.99 – 80.00	C- 72.99 – 70.00	D- 62.99 – 60.00

Attendance Policy

Attendance is required. In order for this course to be effective, it is vital to create a supportive atmosphere, to exchange information and opinions, and to listen to each other. Further, exams are based on both reading and lecture materials not included in the reading. Missing class will most likely negatively affect your grade. **(NB: Should you miss a class, please make sure to make arrangements to obtain notes from another student.)**

Also, please be aware:

- Only dated, written, medical excuses from a physician stating that you were too ill to attend class will be accepted for late assignments and exams.
- Each student may miss **two** classes without needing to provide a reason.
- Students who miss **more than four** classes are required to meet with the instructor to determine whether or not they will be able to complete the course successfully.
- Students who miss **more than eight** classes will not be able to pass the course.

- Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class (generally the first few minutes). A student will be considered late if s/he arrives after this has been done. Two late arrivals constitute one absence.

Attendance Penalties

2 absences = no penalty

4 absences = -45 points

3 absences = -15 points

4+ absences = -150 points (required meeting)

Classroom and Online Expectations

- Whenever possible, try to begin comments with sincere **affirmation** of what has been said (e.g. “Alex made a great point when she said...” or “I liked how Ted noticed that...”)
- **Avoid generalizations** about others
- **Avoid essentializing** by assuming that certain experiences are universal
- Discussion should be focused on **academic issues and ideas**, not people
- Use **“I” language** to demarcate your stance from others
- **Support your position** with course texts and/or class notes. This same information can be used to refute claims
- Know that **respectful disagreements are welcome**
- **Write and speak thoughtfully**, both in the classroom and on Courseweb, to avoid any dismissive or misunderstood messages. If you find an online or in-person interaction is unpleasant, please talk to your instructor before/after class.
- **Maintain a climate of civility** where all participants can feel comfortable expressing their views without fear of reprimand. Preferred name and pronoun preference should be respected at all times. Discussion, disagreements, and intellectual growth by thinking in new ways is always welcome.
- **Avoid personal revelations and anecdotes**, unless they are relevant to course topics and you are absolutely certain that you are comfortable sharing these experiences in class or online.

Online Expectations

Students are required to regularly check both Courseweb and their Pitt email accounts for announcements. Additionally, all students are expected to actively participate on the Courseweb site during the course.

- **Introductory Posting** – During the second week of class, you will post a message of introduction and tell us a little about yourself (e.g. your name, year, major) and your interest in Gender, Sexuality, & Women’s Studies (i.e. why you are taking this course and your expectations for it). Only share information that you are comfortable sharing. (**NB:** This post is not graded.)
- **Courseweb “Advocate” Posting**
 - Provide a short biographical paragraph about this person;
 - Summarize 3-5 main points about your chosen feminist/advocate that highlight what you found to be most significant about this person and to introduce this person to your classmates;
 - Make a connection to at least 2 points raised in *Women’s Voices, Feminist Visions*; and
 - Give your reactions (e.g. explain why you did/did not like this person’s views, how you feel this person’s feminist/activist work impacts your life or not) and provide specific examples.

- **NB:** This posting must be made available on Blackboard by **5:00pm the day before the course** in order to allow the other students time to read your posting and to develop questions.

University and Course Policies

- **Academic Integrity** – Students in this course are expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing, you will receive a zero and may be subjected to the proceedings outlined by the University of Pittsburgh academic integrity policy. To see the full list of violations, visit: <http://www.as.pitt.edu/fac/policies/academic-integrity>
- **Attendance** – You are allowed 2 unexcused absences. Beyond that, your professionalism grade will be affected. Two late arrivals or early departures equal one absence. Success starts by showing up.
- **Cell Phones/Technology** – Please silence or turn off your cell phones. If you are monitoring an emergency situation, please notify the instructor before class. Laptop use in class is prohibited.
- **Computer Caution** – Please allow yourself time to complete electronic assignments. Remember to backup your work (e.g. on a USB drive, in Pitt Box, in Dropbox, by emailing it to yourself). This way, should anything happen to your computer, your work will not be lost.
- **Content Warning and Classroom Climate** – Our course readings and classroom discussions will often focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging topics. As with any course in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program, course topics are often political *and* personal. Readings and discussions might trigger strong feelings—anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the readings; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers' understanding of the readings; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom.

I expect everyone to come to class prepared to discuss the readings in a mature and respectful way. If you are struggling with the course materials, here are some tips: read the syllabus so that you are prepared in advance. You can approach your instructor ahead of time if you'd like more information about a topic or reading. If you think a particular reading or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, you can arrive to class early and take a seat by the door so that you can easily exit the classroom as needed. If you need to leave or miss class, you are still responsible for the work you miss. If you are struggling to keep up with the work because of the course content, you should speak with me and/or seek help from the counseling center.

- **Disability Statement** – If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services (140 William Pitt Union, 412.648.7890 or 412.383.7355) as early as possible in the term.
- **Gender-Inclusive Language:** Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (e.g. first-year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind). It also affirms non-binary gender

identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored. For more information, visit: <http://www.gsws.pitt.edu/faculty/gender-inclusivenon-sexist-language-syllabi-statement>

- **Recording:** You are not allowed to record classroom discussions or lectures.
- **Late Assignments:** Late assignments will receive points equal to a “C” or below at the instructor’s discretion. Make-up exams require a medical excuse from a physician, detailing that it was impossible for the student to be in class. If you know you will not be in class, email the instructor your assignment *before* the start of class to ensure that the work is not counted as late. This also applies to situations when adverse weather or illness keeps the student from attending class.
- **Sexual Misconduct, Required Reporting, and Title IX** – The University is committed to combatting sexual misconduct. As a result, you should know that University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence, to the University’s Title IX office so that the victim may be provided appropriate resources and support options. What this means is that as your instructor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly report to me, or of which I am somehow made aware. There are two important exceptions to this requirement about which you should be aware: A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here: <http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report/confidentiality>
An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as part of an academic project, classroom discussion, or course assignment, are not required to be disclosed to the University’s Title IX office.
If you are the victim of sexual misconduct, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:
 - **Title IX Office:** 412.648.7860
 - **SHARE @ the University Counseling Center:** 412.648.7930 (8h30-17h00 M-F) or 412.648.7856 (after business hours)If you have a safety concern, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Police (412.624.2121)
Other reporting information is available here: <http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report-0>