

WMST 1301 Gender Matters
Foundational Component Area: Language, Philosophy & Culture

Gender Matters **(sample course syllabus)**

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class is designed to provide an introduction to the study of women and gender in a variety of disciplines. We will be asking some fundamental questions: What is gender? Why does gender matter? What is a woman? How do we define what it means to be a man? How does our culture construct gender and gender difference? How do gender, race, class, ethnicity and sexuality intersect and interact with each other in our society? Further, the course is designed to develop analytical and critical skills for understanding women's lives within larger social, political and cultural structures.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- a) express a **basic knowledge of the core concepts** in the discipline as they relate to women's lives and the role of gender in women's experiences;
- b) articulate an **understanding of diversity** (e.g., how social institutions marginalize particular groups of people); and
- c) **critically analyze** readings or other materials (e.g., popular media) using feminist theory and additional relevant theories.

TEXAS CORE CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

The following four items represent the Texas Core Curriculum objectives for the Language, Philosophy, & Culture Foundational Component Area:

- **Critical Thinking Skills** - to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- **Communication Skills** - to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication

- **Social Responsibility** - to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
- **Personal Responsibility** - to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making

REQUIRED TEXTS

** Women, Images and Realities: A Multicultural Anthology, ed. Amy Kesselman et. al. Third edition. (WIR)

** Listen Up: Voices From the Next Feminist Generation, ed. Barbara Findlen. Second edition. (LU)

** The Color Purple, Alice Walker

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

** Readings: Each topic that we will be studying is allotted 1-2 weeks in the syllabus. You must keep up with the readings in order to be prepared for each class. You must have the readings done by the date listed on the syllabus. It is important that you come to every class prepared to discuss the texts.

**Gender log: During the first three weeks of classes, you will keep a log of experiences you have (at least 3 per day) that make you aware of your gender. Your log should be a list, which you will be required to turn in. During weeks 4 and 5, you will look back over your log and write a 3-4 page paper in which you analyze your log, looking for patterns, connections, things that surprise you. It is due on February 17th.

** Exams: The midterm will be given in class on March 3rd. It will consist of definitions and a series of short essay questions designed to test your understanding of key concepts discussed in class and in the course readings. The final exam will focus mainly on the second half of the semester, but will include cumulative essay questions. I will give review sessions for both exams in class.

** Cultural images project: For this project, you will select an example(s) of media/cultural representations of women. You can make a collage of advertising images of women, choose a passage from a romance novel, illustrations from children's books, song lyrics, scenes from a film or television program, etc. Whatever you choose, you must be able to bring it to class in either visual or written form. The point of the assignment is to present an analysis of how women and gender are represented in mainstream media and popular culture. Your project will be accompanied by a 5-6 page essay which explains the concept behind your project and places it in the context of class readings and discussions. You will also be required to post an abstract of your project on the course website. The paper is due on the last day of class.

**** Participation and attendance:** Our class sessions will be primarily discussion-based; therefore, your attendance and participation in discussions are both vital to the success of the class as a whole. You are allowed four unexcused absences before your final grade is affected. Your final grade will be lowered by three points for each additional unexcused absence.

**** Grade breakdown:**

Participation in class discussion: 10%

- Helps students meet the Learning Objective of (c) critical analysis and Texas Core Objectives of critical thinking and communication

Gender log: 20%

- Helps students meet the Learning Objective of (c) critically analyzing and the Texas Core Objectives of critical thinking, communication, and social responsibility

Midterm: 20%

- Helps students meet the Learning Objective of (a) basic knowledge of core concepts and the Texas Core Objectives of critical thinking and communication

Cultural images project: 25%

- Helps students meet the Learning Objectives of (b) understanding diversity and (c) critically and all four of the Texas Core Objectives of critical thinking, communication, social and personal responsibility

Final exam: 25%

- Helps students meet the Learning Objectives of (a) basic knowledge of core concepts, (b) understanding diversity, and (c) critical analysis and the Texas Core Objectives of critical thinking and communication

Learning Outcomes	CO	Assessment Methods	Criteria/Targets
Express a basic knowledge of the core concepts in the discipline as they relate to women's lives and the role of gender in women's experiences	COMM	discussion participation; gender log; midterm exam; cultural images project; final exam	75% of students will meet a standard of acceptable
Articulate an understanding of diversity (e.g., how social institutions marginalize particular groups of people);	SR; PR	gender log; cultural images project	75% of students will meet a standard of acceptable

Critically analyze readings or other materials (e.g., popular media) using feminist theory and additional relevant theories	CT	discussion participation; gender log; midterm exam; cultural images project; final exam	75% of students will meet a standard of acceptable
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COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: What is gender and why does it matter?

Tu 1/18: Introduction to the course. What does it mean to say that “Gender Matters?”

Th 1/20: “What is Women’s Studies?”; Michael Kimmel, “Men and Women’s Studies”; The Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention, 1848, “Declaration of Sentiments” (WIR).

UNIT ONE: Identities

Week 2: Sex and Gender Roles

Tu 1/25: Curtis Sittenfeld, “Your Life as a Girl” (LU); Lois Gould, “X: A Fabulous Child’s Story” (WIR).

Th 1/27: Kate Bornstein, “Welcome to your Gender Workbook” and “Solving the Gender Puzzle” (handout).

Week 3: Intersecting Identities in Women

Tu 2/1: JeeYeun Lee, “Beyond Bean Counting”; Sonja D. Curry-Johnson, “Weaving an Identity Tapestry” (LU).

Th 2/3: Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference”; Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” (WIR).

Week 4: Sexuality

Tu 2/8: Rebecca Walker, “Lusting for Freedom” (LU); Robyn Ochs, “Bisexuality, Feminism, Men and Me” (WIR).

Th 2/10: Carla Trujillo, “Chicana Lesbians: Fear and Loathing in the Chicano Community”; Suzanne Pharr, “Homophobia and Sexism” (WIR).

Week 5: Bodies

Tu 2/15: Abra Fortune Chernik, “The Body Politic”; Nomy Lamm, “It’s a Big Fat Revolution”

(LU).

Th 2/17: Naomi Wolf, “The Beauty Myth” (WIR). ****Gender log papers due****

UNIT TWO: Narratives and Representations

Week 6: Media and Popular Culture

Tu 2/22: Film showing and discussion: *Killing Us Softly 3*. Midterm review session.

Th 2/24: Anastasia Higginbotham, “Teen Mags: How to Get a Guy, Drop Pounds, and Lose Your Self-Esteem”; Deborah L. Rhode, “Media Images, Feminist Issues” (WIR).

Week 7: Media and Popular Culture

Tu 3/1: Venise T. Berry, “Female Images and Roles in Music”; Naomi Weisstein, “Mutineers in Mainstream Music: Heralds of a New Feminist Wave?” (WIR).

Th 3/3: **Midterm in class.**

Week 8: Literature

Tu 3/8: Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, pp. 1-73.

Th 3/10: *The Color Purple*, pp. 74-147.

****Spring break: March 14-19****

Week 9: Literature

Tu 3/22: *The Color Purple*, pp. 148-214.

Tu 3/24: *The Color Purple*, pp. 215-end.

UNIT THREE: Social Issues

Week 10: Women and Work

Tu 3/29: Ellen Bravo and Gloria Santa Ana, “An Overview of Women and Work”; Ann Crittenden, “The Price of Motherhood” (WIR).

Th 3/31: Aisha Hakim-Dyce, “Reality Check” (LU); Julia Whealin, “Sexual Harassment: An Overview of its Impact on Women” (WIR).

Week 11: Women and Family

Tu 4/5: Susan Lehrer, “Family and Women's Lives”; Alix Kates Schulman, “A Marriage Agreement” (WIR).

Th 4/7: Amy Richards, “The Immaculate Conception” (LU); Mary Helen Washington, “Working at Single Bliss” (WIR).

Week 12: Women’s Health and Reproductive Rights

Tu 4/12: Inga Muscio, “Abortion, Vacuum Cleaners, and the Power Within” (LU); Kathryn Kolbert, “Developing a Reproductive Rights Agenda for the Next Century” (WIR).

Th 4/14: Carol Stevens, “How Women Get Bad Medicine”; Evelyn Hammonds, “Missing Persons” (WIR).

Week 13: Violence Against Women

Tu 4/19: Emilie Morgan, “Don’t Call Me a Survivor” ; Whitney Walker, “Why I Fight Back” (LU).

Th 4/21: Ann Jones, “Battering: Who’s Going to Stop It?”; Susan Griffin, “Rape: The All-American Crime” (WIR).

Week 14: Feminist Activism

Tu 4/26: Daisy Hernández, “Bringing Feminism a la Casa” (LU); Charlotte Bunch, “Bringing the Global Home”; Rebecca Walker, “Becoming the Third Wave”(WIR).

Th 4/28: Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, “Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future” (WIR). Final exam review session.

****Cultural images projects due****

****Final exam- during scheduled time during Finals week****