AS.363 (STUDY OF WOMEN, GENDER, & SEXUALITY)

AS.363.125. Women writers and the sonnet from the European Renaissance to the Harlem Renaissance. 3 Credits.
Shakespeare’s description of his lover’s eyes as ‘nothing like the sun’ is both an homage and a sendup of the 300-year-old Petrarchan tradition in which the male poetic persona remains forever enraptured by an unattainable female beloved, who never speaks. Beginning with a review of Shakespeare’s sonnet sequence and selections from Petrarch’s sonnets to an elusive Laura, we will read a series of fifteenth-and sixteenth-century women writers who inserted their own voices into this evolving tradition by allowing “Laura” to talk back. These include Vittoria Colonna (and her interactive sonnets with Michelangelo), Veronica Colonna, and Gasparo Stampo; dueling personas in sonnets by French poets Peronette du Guillet and Maurice Scève, and sonnets by more familiar Shakespearean contemporaries Lady Mary Wroth and Sir Philip Sidney and Sidney’s niece, Mary Sidney Herbert, Lady Wroth (both of whom reflect back on Petrarch but from quite different viewpoints). In the final section of the course we will apply our newly acquired historical perspective to selections from a more recently available corpus of female-authored sonnets from the Harlem Renaissance. All continental works will be read in translation; no previous familiarity with the topic is required.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.363.201. Introduction to the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality. 3 Credits.
This course offers an introduction into the fields of Women’s Studies, Gender Studies, and Sexuality Studies. It explores why we need these fields of inquiry, how they have emerged historically, what some of the major and most interesting contributions are and where we might go from here. The course is meant as a preparation for the other WGS core courses.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS.363.301. Feminist and Queer Theory. 3 Credits.
This course will encourage encounters with a number of concepts from a critical gendered perspective, including: sameness/difference, identity politics, race/gender, loyalty, security, queer ethics, and queerness in media.
Writing Intensive

AS.363.305. Feminist & Queer Theory: Feminist Queer Theories: Past & Present. 3 Credits.
This course offers a range of transnational and US feminist and queer theories, starting from the present with which we are familiar and moving backwards into history. It is designed to facilitate deep engagement with feminist and queer theoretical language/s and concepts, as well as critical approaches applicable to further discourses beyond the class in other disciplines and outside them. The course is divided into 5 units, which roughly organize the reading thematically around the topics of: 1. language and cultural translation, 2. feminist critique, and thinking through the lenses of 3. queerness, 4. race and 5. class. The organization reflects the focus of each unit, yet the topics are intertwined. Students are encouraged to be patient with themselves and the readings and, especially if encountering theoretical discourses for the first time, not to expect to understand everything immediately but rather to acclimate to the radically different thinking of others throughout the course of the semester.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.363.306. Feminist and Queer Theory: Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality-Intersectional Feminist Theory. 3 Credits.
In this course, we will get to know intersectional feminist philosophy through the lens of a Black feminist epistemology. What does this mean? That means that we will focus on how the contributions of Black feminist authors can bring out the specific political and philosophical nature of an intersectional theoretical framework.
Area: Humanities

AS.363.307. Feminist and Queer Theory: Family Matters: Queer and Feminist Responses to Family Life. 3 Credits.
This course examines the historical development of feminist and queer critique, focusing on how the concept of family life has been understood by generations of writers, activists, and theorists. We will read important early works on western forms of kinship and family structure, and investigate how contemporary developments in reproductive technology, queer marriage, and workplace integration have produced new imaginings of familial belonging and its alternatives.
Area: Humanities

AS.363.328. Beyond the Global West: Gender/Sexuality, Post-colonialism & Global Capitalism: Feminist Inquiries from Asian Perspectives. 3 Credits.
This course examines gender and sexuality issues in both East and South Asian Societies and situates subject matters in the broader contexts of post-colonialism, state formation, revolution and global capitalism.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.363.329. Gender and Sexuality Beyond the Global West: Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Art in North Africa and the Middle East. 3 Credits.
This course aims to explore how gender and sexuality is situated in contemporary artistic practices in the geographical Middle East, through concepts of religion, war, revolution, resistance, nation-state, post-colonialism, and neoliberalism, especially as written and observed first-hand by artists, curators and scholars from the Middle East and North Africa region and their diasporas. Every week, under an overarching topic, notions of gender and sexuality will be questioned through works of selected artists across the region, as well as texts that provide the historical, theoretical, sociological and political background.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive
AS.363.330. Gender and Sexuality Beyond the Global West. 3 Credits.
The course is an exploration of issues of gender and sexuality beyond the Global West.
Area: Humanities

AS.363.331. Gender and Sexuality beyond the Global West: Stitching Women-Sewing and Gender, Labor, and Art. 3 Credits.
What’s radical about stitching? And how did sewing coming to be viewed—across centuries, cultures, regions, and political epochs—as (in embroidery artist Hannah Hill’s words) "women’s work"? This course will analyze and discuss how work with needle and thread has been associated with women, their bodies, and the domestic space where the repetitive labor of mending, the mixed opportunity for making, and the devalued practice of the “applied arts” took place. Looking at histories of work, fictions, and visual objects, we will explore stitching’s gendered past and its potential for oppressive normativity and radical, creative expression alike. Over the semester, our course follows the "red thread" of stitching via four short response papers (or one Unessay), one in-class presentation, and one final oral history/research project on an inter-disciplinary discussion related to the (often radical) politics and poetics of women’s lives and works. Authors and artists may include Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Gaskell, Virginia Woolf, Alice Walker, Carol Ann Duffy, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Tracey Emin, Louise Bourgeois, Elaine Reichek, Silvia Federici, Mariarosa dalla Costa, Kyung-Ah Ham, and Project Runway.
Area: Humanities

AS.363.332. Poetics and Politics: Eros & Literature. 3 Credits.
What does it mean to love? From Antiquity to now, from Plato to Jeanette Winterson, writers have staged conversations on love and sex. In this way, they provide us with a “science of sex” (to use Foucault’s notion) that, though fully attuned to the power differentials that inhabit our most intimate physical experiences, gives free range to the imagination of desires. With Plato, the legend of Tristan and Isolde, and the study a few Renaissance love lyrics as a backdrop, we will delve into stories of desire that chart new configurations and break away from “normative heterosexuality.” Readings involve novellas by Balzac, George Sand, Colette; stories by Woolf, by Proust, and selected from Gender Outlaws as well as two films M. Butterfly and Call Me by Your Name. Meshing such stories with fundamental concepts in gender theory will enable us to chart ever changing configurations of desire from the double perspective of queerness and of sexual politics.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.363.333. Poetics and Politics: Gender and Modernity. 3 Credits.
This course explores the complex and diverse ways in which gender and sexuality have been imagined, constituted and unsettled by the artistic creations and political institutions of modernity around the world. Emphasizing the close relationship between politics and aesthetics, we will study works of cinema and literature to gain a deeper understanding of gender and sexuality with respect to some of the themes of modernity, such as human rights, modernism, psychoanalysis, religion and secularism, the postcolonial order and globalization. Each week, selections from a literary or cinematic work will be paired with a theoretical reading that responds to similar themes and concerns.
Area: Humanities

AS.363.334. The Poetics & Politics of Sex: Feminist Utopia in Theory and Fiction. 3 Credits.
This course examines the historical development of feminist utopia in theory and fiction. Readings will center Indigenous, Black, postcolonial, diasporic, and transnational perspectives that engage the topic of feminist utopia.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.363.335. Poetics and Politics of Sex: Gender and Modernity. 3 Credits.
This course explores the complex and diverse ways in which gender and sexuality have been imagined, constituted and unsettled by the artistic creations and political institutions of modernity around the world. Emphasizing the close relationship between politics and aesthetics, we will study works of cinema and literature to gain a deeper understanding of gender and sexuality with respect to some of the themes of modernity, such as human rights, modernism, psychoanalysis, religion and secularism, the postcolonial order and globalization. Each week, selections from a literary or cinematic work will be paired with a theoretical reading that responds to similar themes and concerns.
Area: Humanities

AS.363.336. The Poetics & Politics of Sex: Feminist Separatism & Its Afterlives. 3 Credits.
In 1977, feminist theorist Marilyn Frye asked, “What is it about separation, in any or all of its many forms and degrees, that makes it so basic and so sinister, so exciting and so repellent?” Her essay, “Some Reflections on Separatism and Power” was a response to the emergence and persistence in the 1960s of a feminist separatist politics, as well as its many detractors, both from outside the feminist movement and within (many black feminists, for example, critiqued the movement’s essentialism and its positioning of gender and sexuality above considerations of race). Today, Frye’s question still remains a live one; think, for example, of the now commonplace exclamation that one will “move to Canada” (or “leave Earth” as Tina Fey has it) in the face of an ominous political possibility. In a less facetious form, one might consider the separatism latent in the emergence of queer futurity politics, safe space discourse, and a more general pessimism about reform and assimilation as satisfying answers to a continually oppressive status quo. In this course, we will consider the ongoing salience of the idea of separatism, particularly as it is engaged within politics of gender and sexuality.
Area: Humanities

AS.363.337. The Poetics & Politics of Sex: Struck From the Record: Reclaiming Women’s Contribution to the Global March Towards Modernity. 3 Credits.
The course examines claims that present women’s historic role as limited to confinement in the home, and bearing children. Students will gain an understanding of the complexity the world’s path to modernity and the important, and?until recently, silent?roles that women have played.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.363.338. The Poetics and Politics of Sex: Feminist Utopia in Theory and Fiction. 3 Credits.
This course examines the historical development of feminist utopia in theory and fiction. Readings will center Indigenous, Black, postcolonial, diasporic, and transnational perspectives that engage the topic of feminist utopia.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.363.341. The Making of Modern Gender. 3 Credits.
Gender as we know it is not timeless. Today, gender roles and the assumption that there are only two genders are contested and debated. With the binary gender system thus perhaps nearing its end, we might wonder if it had a beginning. In fact, the idea that there are two sexes and that they not only assume different roles in society but also exhibit different character traits, has emerged historically around 1800. Early German Romanticism played a seminal role in the making of modern gender and sexuality. For the first time, woman was considered not a lesser version of man, but a different being with a value of her own. The idea of gender complementation emerged, and this idea, in turn, put more pressure than ever on heterosexuality. In this course, we will trace the history of anatomy and explore the role of literature and the other arts in the making and unmaking of gender.
Area: Humanities
AS.363.345. Zora Neale Hurston: Ethnography as Method. 3 Credits.
While many recognize Zora Neale Hurston's creative literary work, her methodological innovations are often overshadowed. This course will examine Hurston's contributions to theorizing the African diaspora and creative use of ethnography. Dr. Amari Estrella, the 2020-2021 ACLS Emerging Voices Postdoc, will teach this course. For more info on Dr. Estrella, see https://history.jhu.edu/directory/amariyls-estrella/
Area: Humanities

AS.363.400. Feminist Modernisms. 3 Credits.
Prize Teaching Fellowship seminar. Triangulating feminist psychoanalysis and theories of embodiment and subjectivity with art criticism and case studies of artistic practice (primarily painting), this course comparatively investigates the routes modernism takes after the Second World War and decolonization (1945/1947). We will be interested in specific postcolonial and postwar contexts where modernism in the domain of the visual arts was mounted as a feminist project. Each week will pair readings that establish conceptual frameworks with close analyses of works by specific artists, including those represented by the Library's Special Collections and the Baltimore Museum of Art. Texts include Freud, Spivak, Butler, Irigaray, Kristeva, and Mahmood.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.363.415. WGS Internship Practicum: The Carceral State, Gender, and the Family. 3 Credits.
This class will examine the U.S. government’s use of incarceration, parole, and house-arrest as default forms of social management, in lieu of social welfare policy. We will explore the origins of the “carceral state” and its impact on targeted communities. The class will focus on often neglected aspects of the ongoing crisis of mass-incarceration in the U.S., in particular its debilitating effects on single-mother households, children who grow up with incarcerated family members, and the extreme violence and deprivation of basic medical needs faced by incarcerated women and LGBTQI individuals. Topics will include black-feminism and “black matriarchy,” the relationship between domestic violence and mass-incarceration in communities of color, women and non-gender conforming prisoners, the “school-to-prison pipeline,” the psychological effects of policing on targeted communities, and the fiscal interests served by mass-incarceration. We will engage sociological, historical, and philosophical materials, as well as literature, film, and past and present social movements.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.363.416. WGS Internship/Practicum: Feminist Animals: Sex, Nature, and Nonhumans. 3 Credits.
Introducing feminist approaches to ecology and nonhumans, this course considers the interconnections between heteropatriarchal domination and the domination of nonhuman animals and ecologies. What different sensibilities and ways of seeing sex and gender open up when attention shifts to nonhumans? What tensions within and between feminism, animal liberation, and ecological concern come to the fore when each approach is alongside the others? How does the study of nonhumans extend the promise of feminism, and vice versa? In responding to these questions, we will see the real breadth of issues that the theory and practice of feminism can address.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.363.419. Internship/Practicum: Dividing the Divisions. 3 Credits.
This course examines the essentially political ways in which class, race, and gender relate to one another in the context of social division of labor, resources, and representation. It intends to show how reflection and transformative practice can best change the instances of social injustice through introducing new divisions within the existing imposed divisions in a manner that will make ineffective and inoperative the latter. With the help of the analytic of the central modern notion of class and class relations, we will revisit the relations of gender and race in concrete situations. The course is twofold, practical and theoretical within the framework of Women, Gender, and Sexuality. In one fold, students will have the chance to engage in some kind of practical-social activity out in an actual community with people who are committed to all sorts of social work. This can span from LGBTQ or immigrant workers to addiction among women. In the other fold, we will undertake theoretical reflections on various aspects of these activities. We will read texts mainly in feminist and Marxist traditions. How these two folds relate to one another will be one key question of the whole course.
Area: Humanities

AS.363.445. Reading Judith Shakespeare: Women and Gender in Elizabethan England. 3 Credits.
If Shakespeare had a sister who went to London to be a writer, what would she write? Virginia Woolf's account of the thwarted career of Shakespeare's hypothetical sister, Judith, in A Room of One's Own frames our reading of plays and poetry by Shakespeare and contemporary women writers, including Isabella Whitney, Elizabeth Cary, Mary Sidney, Aemelia Lanyer, and Mary Wroth. Working within a selected historical context, students will create fictional biographies of "Judith Shakespeare," including her perspective on our identified authors and a sample or description of Judith's own literary accomplishments. Secondary course readings will reflect contemporary economic, political, and religious contexts.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.363.601. WGS Graduate Colloquium.
Presenting new scholarship and art, the WGS Graduate Colloquium will catalyze intellectual discussions in which gender and sexuality concerns play important roles. The seminar includes lectures by invited speakers and a film series. Graduate students are encouraged to develop critical and comparative approaches to the study of gender and sexuality—often in interaction with related issues such as race, class, violence, law, medicine, art, and emotionality. This seminar can be taken for credit or audit.
Area: Humanities