

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

## Courses

### AS.363.201. Introduction to the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality. 3 Credits.

This course will serve as an intensive introduction to contemporary approaches to theories of gender and sexuality, and their relationship to cultural production and politics. Students will develop a historically situated knowledge of the development of feminist and queer scholarship in the 20th and 21st centuries, and consider the multiply intersecting forces which shape understandings of sexual and gender identity. We will consider both foundational questions (What is gender? Who is the subject of feminism? What defines queerness?) and questions of aesthetic and political strategy, and spend substantial time engaging with feminist and queer scholarship in comparative contexts. Students will be introduced to debates in Black feminism, intersectionality theory, third world feminism, socialist feminism, queer of colour critique, and trans\* theory. We will read both canonical texts and recent works of scholarship, and the final weeks of the course will be devoted to thinking with our theoretical and historical readings against a selection of feminist and queer literature and cinema. No prior familiarity with the study of gender and sexuality is necessary.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

### AS.363.226. 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 Gambara, and Gaspara Stampa; dueling personas in sonnets by French poets Pernette du Guillet and Maurice Scève, and sonnets by more familiar Shakespearean contemporaries Lady Mary Wroth and Sir Philip Sidney (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.363.253. Disease, Illness and Medicine from the Perspective of Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies. 3 Credits.

This course invites students to take the perspectives of women, gender and sexuality studies in the study of illness and disease. The course asks: What difference do such perspectives make in the study of disease? Are ways of describing and responding to illness and suffering made available for us to rethink the experience of affliction as such? The course will invite students to consider disease, illness, and suffering as embedded within social worlds and as sites where institutions, medical knowledge, and intimacy are entangled. We will explore topics including: the gender politics of asylum, displacement and refugeehood; the clustering of violence and illness in neighborhoods marked by chronic exposure to police violence; the counter-politics of care in the context of claims to reproductive justice; the politics of the population and the household decision-making in relation to scarcity; the rethinking of the clinical encounter as it is criss-crossed by law in cases of sexual violence.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

### 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.363.302. Feminist and Queer Theory: Women in Western Thought an Introduction. 3 Credits.

Women in Western Thought is an introduction to (the history of) Western thought from the margins of the canon. The class introduces you to some key philosophical questions, focusing on some highlights of women's thought in Western thought, most of which are commonly and unjustly neglected. The seminar will be organized around a number of paradigmatic cases, such as the mind/body question in Early Modern Europe, the declaration of the rights of (wo)men during the French revolution, the impact of slavery on philosophical thought, the MeToo debate and others. By doing so, the course will cover a range of issues, such as the nature of God, contract theory, slavery, standpoint epistemology, and queer feminist politics. Students will engage with questions about what a canon is, and who has a say in that. In this sense, Women in Western Thought introduces you to some crucial philosophical and political problems and makes you acquainted with some women in the field. The long term objective of a class on women in Western thought must be to empower, to inspire independence, and to resist the sanctioned ignorance often times masked as universal knowledge and universal history. People of all genders tend to suffer from misinformation regarding the role of women and the gender of thought more generally. By introducing you to women who took it upon themselves to resist the obstacles of their time, I am hoping to provide role models for your individual intellectual and political development. By introducing you to the historical conditions of the exclusion and oppression of women (including trans and queer women as well as black women and women of color), I hope to enable you to generate the sensitivities that are required to navigate the particular social relations of the diverse world you currently inhabit. By introducing philosophical topics in this way, I hope to enable you to have a positive, diversifying influence on your future endeavours.

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.363.330. Ecofeminist Debates: Gender and Sexuality Beyond the Global West. 3 Credits.**

This course develops an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to introduce students to ecofeminism through a special focus on its inflections in non-western contexts. Through class discussions and sustained writing engagement, we will develop an understanding of the history of ecofeminism, including theoretical debates linking gender perspectives with political mobilization, as well as ecofeminism's enduring influence on new intellectual and political movements.

Area: Humanities

**AS.363.331. Gender and Sexuality beyond the Global West. 3 Credits.**

Gender and Sexuality in the Global West. Topics change each semester. See class search for specific topic being taught each term.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

**AS.363.333. 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.363.335. Gender and Friendship: The ".....". 3 Credits.**

How far does it make sense to say, as Harry Burns put it in *When Harry Met Sally*, "that men and women can't be friends"? What presumptions of female and male friendships underlie such a claim? Does it even make sense to talk of a distinctive difference between male and female friendships? Beginning with tracts on friendship from the Western philosophical tradition, and then weaving between sociological analyses and representations of friendship in literature and film, we will explore in this course how gender inflects friendship as we live it. Assignments include two 6-8 page papers and a short summary of readings due each week.

Area: Humanities

**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. Making 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 modern 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, imposed heterosexuality more forcefully than ever. 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. Amarily Estrella, the 2020-2021 ACLS Emerging Voices Postdoc, will teach this course. For more info on Dr. Estrella, see <https://history.jhu.edu/directory/amarily-estrella/>

Area: Humanities

**AS.363.346. Queer Performativity. 3 Credits.**

Introduces students to the intersections of queer theory, performance studies, and LGBTQ history with a focus on "queer worldmaking" the ways in which performances—both theatrical and everyday rituals—have the ability to establish alternative views of the world. Case studies include the ballroom scene in Baltimore and beyond, migratory street youth subcultures, and queer nightlife. This course also offers a unique lens on the archive and historical research by approaching embodied memory, gestures, and ritual as systems for learning, storing, and transmitting cultural knowledge.

Area: Humanities

**AS.363.353. Genealogy of Sexual Morals. 3 Credits.**

Apart from ethical questions about how we have sex, perhaps most familiar from the contemporary discourse on consent, there are questions of how ethical positions on sex have evolved over the course of history. Taking Nietzsche's method in his *Genealogy of Morals* as our starting point, as well as Foucault's application of this method in his *History of Sexuality*, we will then examine sexual taboos both past and present: gay sex, public sex, BDSM, pedophilia, bestiality, prostitution, digital sex, pornography, incest, and rape. Assignments include two 6-8 page papers and a short summary of readings due each week.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

**AS.363.360. Popular Sexual Knowledge in the 20th Century: Sexology, Obscenity, Pornography. 3 Credits.**

This seminar course will investigate three interconnected areas which shaped public understandings of sexuality in the 20th century: the scientific discipline of sexology and its popular publications; legal debates around obscenity and public morality; and the production of pornographic and erotic aesthetic material, including literature, photography, and film. How did these domains produce a shifting sense of sexual knowledge across the 20th century, and how was popular knowledge regulated, challenged, resisted, and subverted? Students will be introduced to historical and critical perspectives on these areas, and will cover areas of debate influenced by queer, feminist, trans, and labour oriented methods. We will study material related to the production of normative sexualities and their relationship to radicalization and class, the historical restriction of access to sexual knowledge, and the appropriation of pornographic aesthetics by experimental artists and writers, among other subjects. Sexological readings may include selections from Freud, the Kinsey Report, Masters & Johnson, John Money, Anne Fausto-Sterling, and Gayle Rubin, and time will be spent discussing research emerging from Johns Hopkins' Gender Identity Clinic (1965-1979). We will read several works which were subject to legal proceedings seeking to restrict their publication, including Allen Ginsberg's 'Howl' and selections from James Joyce's 'Ulysses'. A variety of feminist and queer perspectives on erotic representation will be discussed in class, but students should be prepared to engage with materials which feature explicit scenes.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

**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.363.445. 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. 3 Credits.**

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