

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.

Distribution Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences
AS Foundational Abilities: Citizens and Society (FA4), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

EN Foundational Abilities: Engagement with Society (FA4)

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.

Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

Writing Intensive

AS.363.228. Imperialism and Sexual Politics in the Global South. 3 Credits.

This course investigates the relationship between capitalism, imperialism, gender, and sexuality. Imperialism and Sexual Politics in the Global South will introduce students to major debates about sexual and gendered minorities in African, Asian, Central-Eastern European, and Latin American societies, from the 19th century to the present day. Students are encouraged to challenge preconceived notions about so-called universal concepts, identities, modes of action, and political claims actually developed in the West, while critically engaging with their circulations and appropriation by some actors in the Global South. In addition to an analysis of specific identities (homosexual, gay, queer, trans, LGBT, and... Straight Heterosexual), this course will also interrogate the very notions of "gender" and "sexuality": are they always significant as structures of power over space and time.

AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1)
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.

Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Citizens and Society (FA4), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

EN Foundational Abilities: Engagement with Society (FA4)

Writing Intensive

AS.363.254. Trans Studies. 3 Credits.

This interdisciplinary course will introduce students to key issues in Trans Studies. Topics may include: contemporary trans politics, trans medicalization, indigenous and non-Western forms of gender variance, US trans history across class and race, and trans global governance. We will focus on how institutions, such as policing and medicine, and world-historical forces, such as capitalism, colonialism, and Atlantic slavery, have shaped trans history and politics.

AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Citizens and Society (FA4)

EN Foundational Abilities: Creative Expression (FA3), Engagement with Society (FA4)

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 question, 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 you future endeavours.

Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

Writing Intensive

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.

Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Citizens and Society (FA4), Democracy (FA4.1), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

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.

Distribution Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS Foundational Abilities: Citizens and Society (FA4), Democracy (FA4.1), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

EN Foundational Abilities: Engagement with Society (FA4)

AS.363.333. Poetics and Politics:. 3 Credits.

Topics will vary by term. Please see the specific term and section for current topics.

Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

EN Foundational Abilities: Creative Expression (FA3)

AS.363.334. Feminism and Apocalypse. 3 Credits.

Popular culture today is awash with apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic stories. Feminist literature, though, has been thinking about the end of the world since 1826, when Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* imagined a pandemic wiping out almost the entire global population. The first apocalyptic novel in English describes the end of the world as we know it: in the wake of disaster, *The Last Man* pauses to assemble alternative forms of collective life. Students in this course will read contemporary feminist fiction that responds to *The Last Man* by pressing the genre of apocalyptic literature into dialogue with feminist politics. We will explore key generic preoccupations that are also foci of feminist thought: reproduction and the family; separatism and utopia; gender and the environment; the human and the posthuman. Across our readings, our focus will be the duality of apocalyptic literature as both critique of the existing order and as thought experiment with what might replace it. What is the role of apocalypse in the feminist imagination? How have feminist authors made use of a genre also historically characterized by fantasies of racialized violence and class conflict, orientalist projection, and sexist stereotype? Why—and why not—might it be valuable to feminism to imagine the end of things?

Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

EN Foundational Abilities: Creative Expression (FA3)

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.

Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Citizens and Society (FA4), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.363.336. Sexual Politics of the Cold War: An Inter-Asia Approach. 3 Credits.

Has the Cold War truly ended? What does it mean to end a war? This course invites you to critically examine the Cold War through the lenses of sexuality and inter-Asia. While the general consensus is that the Cold War has concluded, this notion of an absolute “end” has continuously faced challenges in new Cold War studies, particularly posed by scholars across regions and areas within “Asia.” What are the imperatives of these challenges? Simultaneously, growing feminist scholarship on sexual politics reveals the ways in which sexuality serves as a pivotal arena in the construction and transformation of Cold War politics, shaping our ordinary lives. How are possibilities for intimacy and alternative futures woven under seemingly endless conditions of war? Situated at the intersection of sexual politics and inter-Asia methods, drawing from a diverse range of interdisciplinary texts, literature, and visual materials, we explore postcolonial, feminist, and queer discussions surrounding the changing nature of Cold War politics. These discussions engage critically and expand upon the traditionally Western-centric understanding of war, peace, and Asia.

Distribution Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Citizens and Society (FA4), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

EN Foundational Abilities: Engagement with Society (FA4)

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.

Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Citizens and Society (FA4), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

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.

Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

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.

Distribution Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS Foundational Abilities: Citizens and Society (FA4), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

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.

Distribution Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS Foundational Abilities: Citizens and Society (FA4), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

AS.363.367. Learning Sex and Gender: AI, Algorithms, Automotons. 3 Credits.

This course explores the interactions between sex, gender, and cyber-technologies, old and new. How do the internet, smart devices, robots and generative AI shape sex and gender? In turn, how do discourses of sex and gender shape technologies? This seminar will help students answer these questions by introducing them to debates within feminist theory, the historical development of gendered and sexed technologies, the embedding of these technologies in our everyday life and the aesthetics and ethics of such technologies as seen in film and media. We will explore how AI, algorithms, and machines raise complex questions around the ethics, politics, and epistemologies of sex and gender. Through readings of key academic texts, films, and ethnographies, we will try to gain a full picture, through discussion, of what a gendered cyberscape looks like and how it might come to look otherwise.

By understanding such technologies as instruments of power, we will analyze how this power is applied differentially across different marginalized groups and in different regional contexts. Further, we will consider how technologies enter our intimate spaces and reshape our desires and pleasures.

AS Foundational Abilities: Writing and Communication (FA1), Culture and Aesthetics (FA3)

EN Foundational Abilities: Creative Expression (FA3)

AS.363.405. A Century of Trans Cultural Production. 3 Credits.

This discussion oriented seminar will offer an intensive survey of cultural production by trans, non-binary, gender-nonconforming, and intersex artists, writers, poets, and musicians. We will examine how this body of work engages with and contests sexological norms around gender and sexuality, relate it to contemporary critical writing by trans theorists. In a moment of greater visibility for trans people, but one characterized by revanchist backlash, how are forms, genres, and aesthetic strategies used to understand the production of gender in relationship to racism, colonialism, and capitalism? How are trans people forming their own networks to aid in the production and distribution of their work? How do we at Johns Hopkins—site of much problematic medical work on gender and sexuality—understand our positioning relative to these currents? Class discussion will be supplemented by conversations with visiting artists, publishers, and editors, and by an associated series of public readings, lectures, and screenings. We may cover work by Claude Cahun, Leslie Feinberg, Jordy Rosenberg, Juliana Huxtable, Tourmaline, Kai Cheng Thom, Kay Gabriel, Cat Fitzpatrick, and Joshua Whitehead, among others.

Distribution Area: Humanities

AS Foundational Abilities: Citizens and Society (FA4), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

EN Foundational Abilities: Engagement with Society (FA4)

AS.363.406. Feminist and Queer Theory: Marxism. 3 Credits.

Famously, Karl Marx had little to say about gender, sexuality, or race. Yet, scholars have developed Marxist theory to account for how a capitalist political economy generates racial divisions, gender inequalities, and queer and trans subcultures. This course will introduce students to feminist, queer, trans, and Black Marxist theory. Key concepts will include: social reproduction, racial capitalism, and sexual hegemony. Students will consider how Marxist theorists envision the place of race, gender, family, and sexuality in a utopian post-capitalist future.

AS Foundational Abilities: Culture and Aesthetics (FA3), Citizens and Society (FA4)

EN Foundational Abilities: Creative Expression (FA3), Engagement with Society (FA4)