



## Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies: Course descriptions

**WGS 101:** An introduction to Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and to its perspectives. The course will use interdisciplinary perspectives to begin to examine the categories of gender and sexuality, as they intersect with race, ethnicity, class, nationality, disability and other sites of social inequality. General Education Requirements: Ethics, Social Contexts and Institutions, and Cultural Diversity and International Perspectives.

**WGS 201: Men and Masculinities.** In this course, we will adopt an interdisciplinary approach to exploring mental health from the perspective of gender. We will examine various mental disorders and their relative occurrence among men and women, including eating disorders, depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, personality disorders, alcoholism, and post-traumatic stress disorder. We will also analyze the ways in which other factors intersect with gender in mental health, such as class, race, age, sexual preference, and gender and sexual identity. Our examinations will focus on the US but also draw on examples from international sources as well to bring this topic into global context. Our readings will be multidisciplinary and will draw on a variety of theoretical models, including sociological theories of mental illness, such as labeling theory, as well as feminist theoretical considerations. We will also read personal accounts of those who have treated people with mental health issues as well as those who have been diagnosed as being mentally ill. Satisfies the General Education Social Contexts and Institutions Requirement.

**WGS 201: Reproductive Health and Justice.** This WGS 201 special topics course is titled "Sexual and Reproductive Health and Justice." Our course of study is informed by a **Reproductive Justice** lens. The Reproductive Justice framework as defined and crafted by the Sister Song Women of Color Collective is as follows: the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities. In this course, we will explore and analyze the many factors that shape these rights including historical, social, economic, political, and more. Much of this course will focus on sexual and reproductive health and justice within the United States and specifically in Maine, with some discussion of these topics on a global scale, particularly with regards to South American countries and abortion rights advocates and their work.

**WGS 205: Intro to Feminist & Critical Data Analysis.** This course explores data and its role in presenting and obscuring disparities of marginalized groups including but not limited to gender, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, indigenous, sexuality, and class. The course will use technology to access, analyze and critique data while also reading about and discussing relevant theoretical lenses and the role western traditions of knowing have had in the creation of these data. General Education Requirements: Quantitative Literacy and Social Context and Institutions.

**WGS 206: Investigating Equity.** This course explores the ways in which equitable practices and mindsets result in inclusion, and whether and when inclusivity leads to diversity. After identifying the privileges at work in historical and contemporary contexts, students construct multimodal projects to represent the way/s that their everyday choices might shape their own and other's experience of equity.

**WGS 230: Women, Health, and the Environment.** This course examines the impact of man-made contaminants and constructs on human health. We explore the connections between health issues such as cancer, autoimmune disease, infertility and gender transition and substances in the environment and body that impact health. Standard scientific approaches will be combined with feminist analyses. Students will consider possibilities for conscious change and are encouraged to engage in transformative work.

**WGS 250: Women and Music:** This class explores the achievements and challenges that women have faced throughout the world as composers, performers, conductors, teachers, and patrons. A wide spectrum of musical works by women in a variety of styles will be studied, through recordings, videos and live performances. This class meets the Gen Ed requirements for 'Artistic & Creative Expression' and 'Cultural Diversity & International Perspectives'. It is open to students of all academic disciplines, and fulfills the upper level music history requirement for music performance majors.

**WGS 260: Gardening as Social Justice.** This course provides an introductory look into the detailed study of gardening as both a site of social justice and as an amateur or professional practice. The practice of gardening is rooted in the histories of feminism, Native American studies, class and food insecurity, racial (in) justice, and more. This class will engage with the history and practice of gardening through an intersectional lens, to see how marginalized populations have reclaimed gardening to meet their needs. Students will also learn some of the scientific and ecological practices behind gardening. Students will work to design their own garden space, modifying and adapting their design as each week goes on, and will end the semester with a garden design of their own that has taken issues of social and environmental justice in mind.

**WGS 280: Intersectionality and Social Movements.** A bridge between introductory WGS courses and more focused WGS courses, WGS 280 explores topics from WGS 101 and WGS 103 such as transnational feminisms, queer theory, and ecology through intersectional perspectives which reveal the interconnected and overlapping nature of social categories such as gender, class, and race. Through close examination of a variety of texts dealing with equity and diversity, students connect pedagogies and theories to activism, self-reflection, and social movements. General Education: Cultural Diversity and International Perspectives.

**WGS 301: Transgender Studies.** The evolution of gender, gender identity, and gender expression has taken societies by storm. Why does gender strike a chord across cultures, geographies, and languages? This course seeks to investigate the historical contexts and cultural ramifications of defining gender. Nonfiction sources include Leslie Feinberg's (1996) *Transgender Warriors* and *Before We Were Trans* (2022) by Kit Heyam; fiction sources include Virginia Woolf's (1928) *Orlando* and contemporary readings like Gretchen Felker-Martin's (2022) *Manhunt*. Students will be exposed to historic archives, recorded medias, and primary documents that reveal the workings of gender as imperative for individuals and systems alike.

**WGS 301: Family Systems that Harm their Own and Pathways to Healing.** In this course we will examine the various patterns that exist in certain family systems that consciously or unconsciously harm one or more of their own members, such as families where alcoholism is present, where there is physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse. We will examine concepts such as scapegoating in family systems, gas lighting, projection, denial, inter-generational trauma, domestic violence, sexual abuse, sibling abuse, family "rules" as well the way in which family narratives and stories often silence the narrative of abuse and privilege the stories of some family members over others. As a system, the family unit would ideally support and protect all of its members; however, we will explore what happens in families when this is not the case and give voice to the stories of the most vulnerable members in a family system, the targeted individual, scapegoat, "black sheep," or "identified patient." We will explore these types of family dynamics across racial, ethnic, class groups and investigate these patterns through the lens of gender as well. We will also examine the various strategies that targeted individuals in families have used to break free from harmful family dynamics, including the role of the first-person narrative (autobiographical writing), expressive arts as therapy (dance, music, art therapy), as well the role of professional counseling. We will draw on a range of literature in this course, including clinical mental health literature but also anthropological, sociological and literary sources to examine the harms that are sometimes done within the most intimate social system in society, the family, harms that are then frequently silenced. The theoretical models employed in our analysis will include feminist pedagogical, sociological, clinical counseling, and family and systems theories.

### **WGS 303: Social Movements, Media and Change**

This course considers the roles of gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, age, religion, and nationality in relation to an understanding of social movements and social change in the Modern Middle East from the 19th century to the present. The course will also assess different varieties of feminism and women's movements such as the rise of the women's press in Egypt and Turkey in the early 1900s, anticolonial activism in the 1940s-1960s, the Arab Spring, contemporary LGBTQ+ activism, and the current Iranian protests for "Woman, life, freedom!" ("Jin, jiyān, azadī!"). Alongside secondary sources, students will examine primary sources produced by these movements – pamphlets, posters, memoirs, and even YouTube videos and Instagram posts. No prior knowledge of Middle Eastern history is required, and all course materials will be available in English.

**WGS 351: Authoring Women's Sexualities.** This course explores how 21<sup>st</sup> century women (trans and cis) in both the US and abroad use fiction, memoir, and other literary forms to resist, revise, and even reinvent heterosexist narratives about gender identity, love, sexuality, marriage and family life. How might writers use literary forms to author (and authorize) diverse ideas about women's sexualities? Multiple lenses will be used to address this question—from the interpretative practices of narrative theory to the questions that arise from gender, feminist and queer theories to research on publishing and the literary marketplace.

**WGS 360: Gender and Cinema.** This course provides an introductory look into the detailed study of cinema and its influence on and reaction to contemporary social issues, including the construction of masculine and feminine identities, motherhood and the family, sexuality, socioeconomics, race, and standards of beauty. Students will learn not only how the social

messages of the film's content provides insight into the role of women in society, but also how visual cues such as lighting, costuming, and sound contribute to social commentary.

### **WGS 371: Border-crossing: Gendered Perspectives on Modern Migration**

In response to ongoing global crises of displacement and migration, writers and artists are constantly inventing ways to circumvent, challenge and soften contested borders of nation, culture, and language. Through the lens of border studies theory, and by examining diverse writing on and about borders, displacement and diaspora, facilitates a range of multi-genre written explorations of different intercultural crossings.

**WGS 401: Gender and Communication.** The course will examine gender and/in communication within cultural, institutional, and relational contexts. We will utilize theories and research to understand how cultural ideas about gender shape communication practices and conversely how mundane communication behaviors produce, challenge, and transform gender(ed) identities and ideas. We will also explore how gender(ed) practices and social systems intersect and interact with cultural norms involving sexuality, race, nationality, social class, age, ability, and other social identities. Through course research activities, students will be expected to critically consider the impacts of the communicative and intersectional production of gender on their/our social worlds. Not open to first year students.

**WGS 401: Gender, Religion and Sexuality.** In this course we will examine the various ways in which religion and gender intersect, across cultures and across historical time periods. We will survey the major world's religions, including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, using gender as the key category of analysis as we ask the following kinds of questions: Is the primary God/ Goddess of this religion viewed as male, female or without gender? Are the primary religious leaders for this religion male or female and what do they teach about prescribed gender roles? How do the key religious texts refer to men and women in society and do they foster gender equality or inequality? In what ways have various world's religions upheld gender role segregation? How have men and women found empowerment within various religions in spite of societal gender inequality? Which religions have allowed women to also begin to step forward as spiritual leaders? How have those in the LGBTQ+ communities been embraced or excluded by various religions? In addition to studying the world's main "patriarchal" religions, we will also examine some of the religions of Indigenous peoples as well as some of Goddess religious traditions and examine concepts such as the "Divine Feminine." Finally, at the end of the course, we will also examine the complex intersection between gender, religion, and sexuality.

**WGS 410: Feminist, Gender and Queer Theory.** If you have enrolled in this course, you are likely either a WGS major or minor familiar with the 'habits of mind' that WGS instructors aim to teach from 101 onwards. These 'habits of mind' are first and foremost a propensity to pose questions about the world and how it might shape or influence who we are, from the decisions we make professionally and personally to our values and beliefs. WGS 410 takes this investment in how we think to an even higher level. That is to say, WGS 410, while maintaining a focus on topics addressing women, gender, and sexuality, also takes as its central subject *how* we think about these and other topics. We return time and again to the related questions of "what constitutes theory" and "how do we recognize theory when we see it?"

### **WGS 411: Internship in WGS**

Students pursue internships in workplaces such as businesses, non-profits, and other organizations. Course meetings provide students with faculty mentorship, opportunities to troubleshoot their internship work with peers, and related course content. Topics covered may include diversity/equity/justice in the workplace, social justice in the community, correlation between academic courses and the workplace, and career-exploration/preparation. For each topic, strategies for improving work place communication is also covered. Each student will design their internship in consultation with their host organization and the course instructor such that it meets their specific interests/goals. Internship work will vary, but typically includes activities, such as research, ideation, communication, writing, public relations, editing, content development, community organizing, and other related activities.