GSC 60001

Perspectives on Gender

MW 12:30-1:45pm
Mary Celeste Kearney/FTT

This interdisciplinary seminar provides students with an overview of key concepts and terms in gender theory. Students will read prominent feminist and queer theorists of gender, analyze their arguments, and learn to critique and apply them. We will begin with early feminist explorations of gender. However, we will also explore contemporary theories, including those from outside feminist theory that move our understanding of gender outside heteronormativity and beyond the binaries of male/female and masculine/feminine. Our constant concern is to consider what these theories mean in their specific sociohistorical contexts and to contemplate their potential implications for our own and others’ lives, not to mention culture and society at large. This seminar requires close reading and discussion of theoretically rigorous and critically sophisticated texts and thus requires the active participation of committed students.

GSC 60517

Locke, Rousseau, Wollstonecraft

M 3:30-6:15pm
Eileen Botting/POLS

(Course knowledge applies to Early Modern section on the Political Theory comprehensive exam) This graduate seminar in modern political theory will cover Locke's Letter on Toleration and Two Treatises of Government; Rousseau's First Discourse, Second Discourse, and Social Contract; and Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. The seminar will culminate in a reading of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, so students can think about the impact of these three political philosophers on the greatest work of speculative fiction as well as on modern conceptions of humanity, morality, children, women, gender, family, education, human rights, and political community.

GSC 60521

Theory and Theater

MW 3:30-4:45pm
Susan Harris/ENGL

In this course we will explore the theoretical questions raised by the history and practice of theater from Aristotle's time to the present. We will focus especially on problems of identity and of embodiment which are fundamental not only to performance theory but to psychoanalytic, feminist, and queer theory. In addition to theoretical texts produced by playwrights, directors, and performers, we will also read theory that engages with questions of performativity, phenomenology, subjectivity, semiotics, and affect from outside the boundaries of performance studies. We will use the history of Western theater to organize our explorations of these texts, and we will periodically ground our theoretical discussions in our readings of selected dramatic texts. Authors will include Aristotle, Diderot, Emile Zola, Constantin Stanislavsky, Bertolt Brecht, Antonin Artaud, Edward Gordon Craig, Nietszche, Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzscche, Jacques Lacan, Peggy Phelan, Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, Sianne Ngai, and others. Students will write one 20-30 page paper and will give at least one 15-20 minute oral presentation.
Race, Law and Utopia in Atlantic America

MW 12:30-1:45pm

Cyraína Johnson-Roullier/ENGL

Is it possible to think of the 21st century as a post-racial, post-feminist world? In her provocative 2012 study, Body as Evidence: Mediating Race, Globalizing Gender, Janell Hobson suggests that rather than having been eradicated, millennial hopes that the historical difficulties represented by race and gender have lost their significance in the present day are as far, if not even further away from the mark as they have ever been. For Hobson, policing the body, whether that be in terms of its race, its gender, or its sexuality, has remained paramount. “...[W]hile the early-twenty-first century discourse of ‘postracial’ and ‘postfeminist’ often declares the loss of meaning attached to race and gender,” she argues, “...the global scope of our media-reliant information culture insists on perpetuating raced and gendered meanings that support ideologies of dominance, privilege, and power.” In Hobson’s view, the body and how it is imagined rests at the center of such ideologies, pointing also to a number of crucial questions that become particularly important when considering the significance of race and gender through the lens of modernity. How might a reconsideration of race point also to a rethinking of gender and vice-versa? How can the conversation on race be continued without becoming trapped in what seems to be an ongoing critical circle, endlessly vacillating between an irreparable past and a tentative future? What does race actually mean? How does/can it alter the way we understand gender? Is it possible to think race beyond the idea of race? What might a new conception of race actually look like, and how might this influence our thinking on gender? Would it help us to break through familiar stereotypes tired from overuse to a new blueprint for racial, gendered and democratic possibility? How are the problems of race and gender intertwined, and how is/has the body been imagined in and through them? What can such questions tell us about today’s racial and gendered realities, both inside and outside of the university, both in the past and the present? This course takes a step backward to investigate these and other like questions in the context of the utopic impulse and its emphasis on the imagination in several 19th-century American authors whose work may be viewed as participating in a broad yet under-acknowledged vision of race, gender and Atlantic modernity that seeks to interrogate hierarchies of race and gender as these have been constructed and maintained within dominant ideologies. Grounding our analysis in a number of 16th-, 17th- and 18th-century political philosophical texts on law and utopia and drawing on the theories of Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Derrida and others in addition to insights from critical race theory, gender studies, feminist theory, theories of law and literature, and utopian studies, our goal will be to gain a more nuanced understanding of our racialized past and its troubled link to questions of gender both then and now, so that we may better hope to imagine—and reimagine—the shape of our collective democratic future in the 21st century’s global community.

Archaeology of Death

MW 11:00am-12:15pm

Meredith Chesson/ANTH

While many anthropologists may argue that there are very few universals throughout human cultures today and in the past, one fact of life is shared by everyone: death. Drawing upon ethnographic and archaeological case studies of mortuary practices, this course explores the social, economic, political, and ritual structures associated with how people in the past (and even today) dealt with their dead. Topics to be covered include how death and mortuary practices resonate strongly with issues of gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and notions of personhood; the notion of social memory; power and inequality; and the ethics of studying the dead. While we will focus on archaeological approaches to
understanding what people do with and believe about the dead, the breadth of the case studies encompass many disciplines, including classics, art history, gender studies, history, and anthropology.

Queer Media Studies

GSC 60608/61608
MWF 3:30pm – 4:20pm
M 5-7pm Lab
Mary Kearney/FTT

This course introduces students to the critical analysis of queer media culture. Focusing primarily on media texts produced in the United States, we will explore the dominant strategies used by the media industries to represent members of the LGBTQI community and their issues, as well as those utilized by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, and intersexed folks in practices of self-representation. Important to this project are historical shifts in the representation of non-straight individuals, in particular their growing visibility in commercial media culture and the mainstreaming of queerness. In addition, we will examine media reception practices among queer folks, as well as the alternative media economies developed by members of the LGBTQI community. Key to this course is an exploration of the intersections of queer identity, queer politics, and media culture. In order to ensure that our analyses of queer media culture are not essentialist, we will take an intersectional approach to identity, keeping in mind the interdependencies of sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, class, and age.

Nabokov

GSC 60655
TR 3:30-4:45pm
Sergey Karpukhin/ RU

Taught in English. Intended for those who are interested in the works of the Russian-American novelist Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977), the course spans both the Russian- and English-language parts of the writer’s career and focuses on his achievement as an innovative stylist and thinker. Students will learn more about the “Nabokov effect,” or the tension between realism and its subversion in literature; the writer’s love of pattern; and the system of cognitive challenges and rewards in his prose. We will also discuss Nabokov’s views on sex in literature and his ideas on the relationship between sexuality and art. The purpose of the course is to delineate Nabokov’s creative philosophy and to demonstrate its relevance for the contemporary reader from the perspectives of history (the “nightmare of history” in the European 20th century), art (the connection between art and play), and cognition (the evolutionary advantages of sophisticated artistic endeavor). The writing component will include two 7-9-page papers and weekly quizzes.

The Science-Gender Connection

GSC 63515
TR 2:00pm – 3:15pm
Janet Kourany/PHIL

Attributes: Interdisciplinary Seminar

Through much of its history, academia has been gendered in a particular way—male dominated, focused on men’s interests, and privileging those interests—and much of it still is. In response, the area of enquiry known as women’s studies or gender studies emerged in the 1970s as part of the feminist movement. In this course we will explore gender, the concept that lies at the heart of this area of enquiry. We shall find that this concept is as complex and multi-faceted as the diverse disciplines from which it now draws and as political as its feminist origins suggest. We shall also find that it is fraught with controversy.
Though the disciplines that contribute to the idea of gender comprise nearly all of academia, we will concentrate on the sciences, from which the concept of gender first emerged. No particular scientific background will be presupposed, however, and visits from science faculty will be organized to help us understand the terrain. We will start with the gendered origins of the concept—the gender of science—and then proceed to the science that developed as a result—the science of gender; and we will conclude with some questions concerning the connection between the two—the gender of science and the science of gender.

This course will be run as a seminar. Students will lead class discussions, present the results of individual research projects to the group, and have the opportunity to further develop those projects using feedback from the group. Throughout, our aim will be for each student to develop a fully informed and defensible response to the controversial terrain we shall be exploring.

**Sociology of Gender**

W 12:30-3:15pm
Elizabeth McClintock/SOC

Gender is arguably the most fundamental social division and axis of inequality in human society. Although gender categories differ cross-culturally, all societies use gender as a key organizing and stratifying principle. But what exactly is gender and how does it relate to biological sex? What is the history of gender as a category of analysis in sociology and how have gender scholars influenced other sociological sub-fields? In this course we will read foundational tracts on theorizing gender and gendering theory, we will consider feminist methodological critiques, and we will examine empirical manifestations of gender and of gender inequality across varied arenas of social life and sociological research.

**Special Studies**

Department Approval Required

Special studies are available with Gender Studies – Affiliated Faculty.