Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Gender Studies Minor

Fall 2017 Course Descriptions

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Information is subject to change
Introduction to Gender Studies

Instructor: Steven Gotzler
Meetings: TR 12:00—1:20 p.m.
Units: 9
Prerequisite: 76-101 Interpretation & Argument (May be taken concurrently.)

What is gender? What is sex? And how do we "perform" these identities in everyday life? Covering topics such as pornography, feminism, bros, queer theory, and transgender rights, this course will introduce you how power and inequality have historically and structurally impacted categories of gender in American society. We will read novels, scholarly texts, and even blogs in an effort to understand how gender intersects with other forms of identity (such as race, class, sexuality, ability, and nationality). Through a combination of class discussions, written essays, and short presentations, we will ultimately understand gender as a social construct that nonetheless is meaningful, personal, and significant for all members of society.

Jane Austen

Instructor: Jamie Smith
Meetings: MWF 10:30—11:20 a.m.
Units:
Prerequisites: 76-101 Interpretation & Argument (May be taken concurrently.)

It is a truth universally acknowledged that Jane Austen is one of the most popular writers of the past two hundred years. In this course, students will have the opportunity to indulge in the work of this beloved author and answer: What can an exploration of Austen's time tell us about her novels and about ourselves as readers? In this course, we will read Austen's six published novels (Northanger Abbey, Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility, Emma, Mansfield Park, and Persuasion) as we consider: In what ways can we describe Austen's novels as "romantic," and how does her work fit within the parameters of the Romantic canon? With increases in literacy rates and the emergence of lending libraries, what can Austen's novels tell us about readership and popular fiction in the early nineteenth century? How do these vibrant texts engage with important issues of their (and our) time, like revolution, women's rights, race, sexuality, nationality and religion?

Additionally, we will encounter excerpts from Austen's contemporaries and explore other cultural materials - like diaries, letters, periodicals, maps, music, fashion, and the visual arts - to paint a rich historical context around our reading. Finally, we will consider how cinematic adaptations of Austen's works can contribute to our interpretations of her novels.

Acting Out in the London Theater

Instructor: Kristina Straub
Meetings: TR 9:00—10:20 a.m.
Units: 9
Prerequisites: 76-101 Interpretation & Argument

More Londoners went to the theater between 1660 and 1800 than read novels or even newspapers. The theater was THE social media of this formative period in the history of an English-speaking, urban public, and this course explores the power of the theater as a means of both social control and political resistance. What audiences did and said in the theater could matter as much as the plays in the formation of public opinion. A growing print media carried public consensus or dispute from the theater into coffee shops, taverns, and private libraries. Instead of taking a traditional "survey" approach to this period in the English theater, we will study a succession of "nights at the theater," specific performances of plays that happened on particularly eventful evenings when the play--while significant--was not the only important performance. The introduction of an actress to a king who would make her his royal mistress, the final performance of a beloved actor, and the violent riots that were frequent occurrences in theaters are examples of cultural performances that shaped public
opinion. We will read plays, of course, but also print and visual documents that speak to the moment of the play; we will listen to music, and generally immerse ourselves in the social and political struggles over public opinion in a world that very much prefigures our current world of celebrity and fake news.

76-441  Theorizing Sexuality
Instructor:  Kristina Straub
Meetings:  TR 3:00—4:20 p.m.
Units:  9
Prerequisites:  76-101 Interpretation & Argument
This course offers a foundation in the history of theorizing sexuality that brings us from the Greek classical concept of man/boy love, through medieval concepts of the "one-sex body," and up to contemporary transgender theory. We will read canonical theories of sexuality in the modern period, such as Freud's psychoanalytic Three Essays on Sexuality and Michel Foucault's revisionist History of Sexuality. To ground our theoretical investigations in social and historical context, we will focus on three discursive sites: the feminist "sex wars" of the 1980s, the theory and practice of "trans"--both gender and sexuality--from modern and contemporary periods, and late 20th and 21st century queer concepts of sexuality.

79-327  Modern Girlhood
Instructor:  Carrie Hagan
Meetings:  MW 3:00-4:20 p.m.
Units:  6
Prerequisites:  None
Through primary documents, film and popular media, material culture, and interdisciplinary scholarship from the emerging field of girl(hood) studies, this course will examine historical conceptions of girlhood and accounts of girls' lives, to contemporary concerns and representations. In seeking to understand the meaning and experience of "modern" girlhood, our focus will primarily be on the 20th and 21st century American experiences, though at times we may look to perspectives from earlier periods and elsewhere in the world. Because there is no single experience or representation of girlhood, we will pay attention to the ways that girlhood is lived and constructed through the frameworks of race, class, culture, and geographic specificity.

79-331  Body Politics: Women and Health
Instructor:  Lisa Tetrault
Meetings:  TR 10:30—11:50 a.m.
Units:  9
Prerequisites:  None
Women's bodies have been the sites of long-standing, and sometimes deadly, political battles. This course takes a topical approach to the history of American women's health in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to understand why women's bodies have been such heated sites of struggle. It covers topics such as the history of contraception, abortion, menstruation, sexuality, female anatomy, rape, domestic abuse, menopause, pregnancy, and childbirth. It explores how American culture has constructed these issues over time, while also examining women's organizing around them. This course is open to all students.

79-333  Sex, Gender, and Anthropology
Instructor:  Shawn Alfonso-Wells
Meetings:  TR 12:00—1:20 p.m.
Units:  9
Prerequisites: None
This course introduces students to an anthropological perspective on the relationship between sex (biological) and gender (cultural). In order to understand the various debates, we will examine the ideas of manhood, womanhood, third genders and sexuality in cross-cultural perspective. The focus will be primarily on non-western cultures and will examine the construction of status, sexuality, and gender roles within the broader context of ritual, symbolism, marriage, kinship. Utilizing film, the popular media, and anthropological case studies this course will provide students with ways to understand and question how and why we express ourselves as "men," "women," and "other."

85-221 Principles of Child Development
Instructor: David Rackison
Meetings: TR 1:30—2:50 p.m.
Units: 9
Prerequisites: None
This course is about normal development from conception through adolescence. Topics include physical, perceptual, cognitive, emotional and social development. Students will learn facts about children at various points in development, theories about how development works, and research methods for studying development in infants and children. Students will be encouraged to relate the facts, theories and methods of developmental psychology to everyday problems, social issues and real world concerns.