Gender Studies Minor

Spring 2017 Course Descriptions

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Information is subject to change
76-241  Introduction to Gender Studies
Instructor: Natalie Suzelis
Meetings: MWF 9:30 a.m. to 10:20 a.m.
Units: 9
Prerequisite: 76-101 Interpretation & Argument

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.

76-341  Gender and Sexuality in Performance
Instructor: Kristina Straub
Meetings: TR 10:30 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.
Units: 9
Prerequisites: 76-101 Interpretation & Argument

“Performance” describes a wide range of practices, from the everyday to the artistic. Gender and sexuality are key elements in everyday, political, and artistic performances, from the very personal—how you order a latte at Tassa D’Oro, tell a lover goodbye at the airport or comfort a crying child—to the very public—performing a Bach cello suite or an iconic King Lear, staging a demonstration against police violence or marketing a new app.

How does everyday performance define gender and sexual identity? How do gender and sexuality define everyday performance? How does aesthetic performance—art, theater, film, digital media, poetry—intervene in the ways in which gender and sexuality are performed? Readings in theory at the intersection between gender studies and performance studies will help us explore these questions. We will read Judith Butler’s work on gender as performative, Joseph Roach’s work on the history of celebrity, Marvin Carlson’s work on theater, and important essays in queer and transgender theory. We will also read and view a wide variety of cultural and artistic practices, from the British 17th century up to the recent work of feminist and queer performance artists. Your written and spoken contributions to the class will, besides regular postings on the course materials and participation in class discussions, entail the investigation of an everyday, cultural, or aesthetic performance of your choosing.

76-342  Love: A Cultural History
Instructor: Marian Aguiar
Meetings: MW 10:30 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.
Units: 9
Prerequisites: 76-101 Interpretation & Argument

This is a course about the cultural history of love. We will focus on romantic love, with an emphasis on how ideas about love have been a dynamic part of our social, political and economic world. Some of the questions to be addressed include: How, historically, did the idea of love become coupled with freedom? How did romantic love come to be considered the epitome of self-fulfillment and what are the problems with that idea? How has the idea of romantic love
been mobilized on behalf of things like the state, the nation, capitalism or revolution? How do types of love function as a measure of belonging or deviance? How does the discourse of love enter different kinds of institutional arrangements, such as marriage or state citizenship? As a way to explore these questions, this course looks to literature but also philosophy, history, anthropology, sociology and law. Students will immerse themselves in an interdisciplinary range of material as they read, discuss and write about these representations. We will roam through cultural theory of affect, psychoanalytic notions of love, historical constructions of marriage, and feminist discussions of love and sexuality. The emphasis will be on Euro-American narrative traditions, but the final part of the course will include a contemporary global comparative context.

76-455 Performance Theory
Instructor: Kristina Straub
Meetings: TR 1:30 p.m. to 2:50 p.m.
Units: 9
Prerequisites: 76-101 Interpretation & Argument

Emerging from anthropology, semiotics, theater studies, and cultural studies, the interdisciplinary field of Performance Studies offers new ways for practitioners in the field of literary and cultural studies to interpret texts and visual artifacts, as well as media and theater productions. This course will introduce key theories of performance and celebrity by writers such as Richard Schechner, Diana Taylor, Joseph Roach, and Judith Butler, and give students experience in using these analytic frameworks to study a range of objects, from print texts to visual images and even ephemeral performances. While performance is key to how humans make meaning across all times and places, the uses of performance and the forms of celebrity vary historically, and we will ground our theoretical studies in case studies drawn from the early modern British and 20th century American entertainment cultures. Celebrity is a very modern phenomenon that first became a visible part of political, religious, and artistic culture over the course of the long 18th century, between 1660 and 1800. We will investigate the genealogies of modern celebrity, considering such questions as, what do the Kardashians have to do with dead English kings? What can cross-dressing actresses teach us about 21st-century drag performances?

79-320 Women, Politics, and Protest
Instructor: Lisa Tetrault
Meetings: MW 12:00 p.m. to 1:20 p.m.
Units: 9
Prerequisites: None

This course examines the history of women's rights agitation in the United States from the early nineteenth-century to the present. It investigates both well-known struggles for women's equality--including the battles for women's voting rights, an Equal Rights Amendment, and access to birth control--and also explores the history of lesser-known struggles for economic and racial justice. Because women often differed about what the most important issues facing their sex were, this course explores not only the issues that have united women, but also those that have divided them.

79-325 U.S. Gay and Lesbian History
Instructor: Timothy Haggerty
Meetings: TR 12:00 to 1:20 p.m. (mini A4)
Units: 6
Prerequisites: None
US Gay and Lesbian History offers an overview of the changing context and circumstances of sexual minorities in American culture. From early constructions of moral opprobrium, criminal deviance or medical pathology, the LGBT community emerged in the twentieth and twenty-first century as a political constituency and a vital part of contemporary society. Students should be aware that this course will necessarily address issues of intimate relations and sexuality as well as broader historical issues.

79-331  Body Politics: Women and Health in America
Instructor: Lisa Tetrault
Meetings: MW 1:30 p.m. to 2:50 p.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.

82-238  Topics in Chinese Culture: Gender & Sexuality in China
Instructor: Zhongxin Sun
Meetings: TR 10:30 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.
Units: 9
Prerequisites: None

Over the past 100 years, Chinese women and men have seen tremendous changes in their social and private lives as China underwent wars, revolutions, market reform and opening up. The study of gender and sexuality provides a unique opportunity to explore how Chinese social/private life has been transformed through economic development and social revolution in China. The course begins with a background discussion of Chinese traditions in the field of gender and sexuality, and covers the period from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. It aims to help students explore the answers to questions on the cultural expectations behind the idea of "man", "woman" and "sex" and the role the government has played in regulating intimacy/sex/gender in different historical periods of China. Discussions will also be conducted on the changes in Chinese people's gender/sexuality experiences in contemporary to help students develop a deeper understanding of the sexual revolution in China, and changing conceptions of gender/sexuality identity under Confucianism, Western Imperialism, socialism and globalization. Course materials include articles, books, as well as films.

82-245  Bodies of Conflict: Gender, Violence, and Protest in Latin America
Instructor: Therese Tardio
Meetings: MW 6:30 p.m. to 7:50 p.m.
Units: 9
Prerequisites: None

This course will focus on the dynamics of power and violence in relation to the construction of gender, and the social movements of women and sexual minorities in Latin America. We will consider violence imposed by colonialism, patriarchy and neoliberalism, examining how political violence, organized violence, and domestic violence have affected
women and sexual minorities. The class will provide an understanding of how these communities have responded to and resisted this violence, through participation in armed movements, as human rights activists, as artists and cultural workers, mounting protest in both private and public spheres. We further will consider the interplay of gender and power in indigenous and afro-latino communities, questioning the tensions between universal and cultural rights. Our class will include the study of women's participation in guerrilla movements, maternity and the struggle for reproductive rights, human trafficking, and femicide, with particular attention to the body as a site of struggle and resistance. This course will be taught in English and is open to students from all majors; students with an advanced level of Spanish will be provided the opportunity to do readings and assignments in Spanish but it is not required for the course.

85-221    Principles of Child Development
Instructor: Sharon Carver
Meetings: TR 3:00 p.m. to 4:20 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.

85-350    Psychology of Prejudice
Instructor: Chante Boyd
Meetings: TR 10:30 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.
Units:    9
Prerequisites: 85-241 Social Psychology

This course is devoted to the study of both traditional and more modern forms of prejudice and discrimination and the psychological processes that can arise from categorizations and stereotyping. The class provides an overview of the cognitive and emotional underpinnings of prejudice and discrimination as it pertains to many forms of inequality. The psychological theories underlying these behaviors will be examined as well as their impact on the lives of stigmatized individuals. Its goal is to examine a number of social differences and understand how prejudice can impact many areas of society. In addition to the traditional forms of prejudice based on such things as race, gender and age; other inequalities that result from less traditional groupings such as social class, appearance, and disability and will be explored. Research on issues of social identity, intergroup relations and the reduction of prejudice will be examined through readings and class activities.

98-311    Student Taught Courses (StuCo): Female Empowerment
Instructor: Connie Yang and Lily Olsakovsky
Meetings: TR 6:30 p.m. to 7:20 p.m.
Units:    3
Prerequisites: None
Note:   This course does not count towards the minor.

This course will engage with both historical and contemporary readings, as well as draw from anecdotal experiences and observations to understand how female empowerment has been viewed and obtained throughout history and today.
We will consider the ways in which female empowerment has interacted with feminist theories of gender, and other demographics. In this course we will focus around how society defines female empowerment, and reshaping and transforming the ideas of female empowerment locally, nationally, and globally.