

FALL 2016 WGSS GRADUATE COURSES

core courses

Feminist Theories (WST 601)/ Victoria Hesford

Mondays 4:00pm-6:50pm/Humanities 2054

This course will offer a critical history of feminist theory through a sustained engagement with the key concepts and debates that have shaped the contested field of feminist theory over the past forty or so years. We begin with a contemporary preoccupation in feminist theory—"the ontological turn"—and then move out and back, mapping the poststructuralist, postcolonial, Marxist, and psychoanalytic schools of thought with which and against which feminist theory established itself as a distinct body of thought in the late twentieth century. We end with the challenge of queer and trans theory—a challenge motivated by the generative capacities of gender and sexuality—and the questioning of the function—political and epistemological—of the role of theory itself. In our reading of the material we will focus on how feminism has both utilized and “spoken back” to Marxism, post-structuralism, and psychoanalysis, while also paying attention to the theoretical and political impasses and conundrums that continue to make feminist theory an animated and animating practice of thought in the present moment. Key thinkers in this critical history include Gayle Rubin, Audre Lorde, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Rey Chow, Joan Scott, Sara Ahmed, Judith Butler, Chela Sandoval, and Elizabeth Grosz.

Interdisciplinary Research Design(WST 680)/ Kadji Amin

Tuesdays 1:00pm-3:50pm/ Humanities 2018

This hands-on and workshop oriented course has three principle aims. The first is to teach Women's Studies graduate students from diverse disciplines proficiency in minor but important scholarly genres – research and fellowship proposals, conference paper abstracts, teaching statements, job letters, and book reviews. Whereas graduate training is often focused on big ideas and long papers, success in academia means being able to communicate one's ideas effectively within a series of defined genres – the rules of which are often not directly conveyed. Hence, the first purpose of this course is to demystify the hidden rules of distinct scholarly genres and to teach students how to go about decoding the rules of new genres on their own. The second aim is to have students reflect on and improve their research and writing process. As part of this emphasis on process, we will read about and discuss different strategies and platforms for note-taking, keeping track of ideas, using time effectively, organizing, drafting, and revising. Finally, this class will function as a writing workshop. Approximately one hour of each class will be devoted to workshopping one student's writing. The goal of workshopping is to put into action the notion of writing as a process, one of finding the kernels, within one's writing, that are most promising and figuring out the most effective way to develop them.

graduate electives

Sociology of Masculinities (WST 512/SOC 519)/ Michael Kimmel

Mondays 11:30am-2:30pm SBS N403

At first glance, the title of this course might seem a bit misplaced. A course about men? Aren't all courses “about men” – except the ones with the word “women” in the title? Well, yes. This may be true on the surface, anyway. But most courses that deal with men deal with men in their public roles – as historical figures, as writers, psychological personalities, as scientists, as participants in revolutionary mobs, as economic rational profit-maximizers. Rarely, if ever, are men discussed as men; rarely, if ever, is their experience as men seem to matter as they perform the other roles in which we study them. Indeed, this is the first graduate level course at Stony Brook devoted to the study of masculinities. And we intend to take the plural in the name seriously – working through questions about the similarities and differences in the various constructions of masculinity around the world, stressing globalization in the construction of masculine identities.

Theory, Method, and Politics of Ethnography (WST 610/SOC 509)/ Melissa Forbis Wednesdays 4:00pm-6:50pm Humanities 2054

What is good social science research? And what is social science research good for? These will be central questions of our inquiry in this seminar. We will examine ethnography as a qualitative research methodology within in the social sciences, drawing from feminist and gender studies, anthropology, and sociology in particular. Participants in the course will take part in ongoing theoretical debates around the questions of interdisciplinarity, the ethics of field research, the politics of ethnographic representation, and the practice of community engaged research. We will read and discuss a wide range of recent ethnographies, as well as critical contemporary assessments of scholarship and methods. The course will also briefly consider the relationship of other genres of writing to ethnography, asking "what counts as evidence"? In addition to learning and practicing traditional and alternative research methods, seminar participants will be expected to design their own ethnographic pilot project.

Global Women's Film Traditions (WST 610/SPN 612)/ Ann Kaplan & Katy Vernon Tuesdays 4:00pm-7:00pm Melville Lbr N3060

From its earliest manifestations, cinema was born with global ambitions, but throughout time, films have also served as privileged outlets of expression for specific experiences of gender, ethnicity, class, nationality and/or locality. In this course we will explore the role of women in global cinema as this role has changed over time, and as it takes varied forms in select nations and regions. We will establish a critical, theoretical and historical framework for understanding the limits on women's access to film directing and to exhibition and distribution of their work. At the same time we will interrogate the notion of women's cinema, extending its reach beyond an exclusive focus on female directors to consider other claims to authorship and agency by producers, screenwriters, performers and even spectator/critics whose readings assert their role in the production and reception of meaning. We will then raise a number of questions to do with themes women's cinema addresses and how these have shifted: the political issues (individual and collective) their films raise, the choice and uses of film genres, and the increasing transnationalism women's films entail. In doing so we will consider the function of global women's cinema as a means of speaking across borders, East/West and North/South.

Disability Studies Language Narrative and Rhetoric (HAX 667)/ Michele Friedner Tuesdays 10:30am-1:30pm HSC

This course focuses on how language and rhetoric frame how disability is perceived, experienced, and treated. It will include critical and rhetorical analysis of professional discourses as well as personal disability narratives and memoirs. The Society for Disability Studies, an interdisciplinary organization, says in its mission statement, "disability is a key aspect of human experience." So is language. It will explore the interdisciplinary nature of disability studies and the roles language and rhetoric play in representations of disability. Some questions to be explored include: In what ways do clinical or professional discourses and personal narratives reveal experiences of power and powerlessness? How is the bodily experience of disability described in professional contexts as compared to personal narratives? How does description and perception influence the practice of professionals and quality of life for people with disabilities? What assumptions about disability are revealed through rhetorical analysis? These questions will help frame our attention in this course to representations of disability in a variety of texts: academic, professional, literary, clinical, personal, and visual.

Postcolonial Environmentalisms: Literature, Ecocriticism, and the Global South (ENG 606)/ Jeffrey Santa Ana

Mondays 2:30-5:20 pm Humanities 2094

This course explores the literary and cultural representations of what Elizabeth DeLoughrey has called “the postcolonial turn in the dominant fields of American and British ecocriticism” and what the environmental historians Alfred Crosby and Richard Grove have termed “ecological imperialism”—namely, the historical embedment of ecology and the natural world in the Western imperial enterprise. By examining fiction, nonfiction, film, and comics (graphic narratives) from regions and countries of North America and the global south (Anglophone Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Pacific Islands, including Hawaii), we will explore how contemporary writers and artists from these regions represent environmental experience and depict place (home and origins) as fundamentally linked to the natural world in the contexts of colonialism and imperialism, postcolonialism (the aftermaths of colonization), and diaspora (the global movement and refugeism of people from the global south who are called “environmental migrants”). We will examine how these writers and artists critique current environmental crises, and their models of postcolonial environmentalisms and sustainability. We will investigate these concerns in relation to questions at the intersections of gender, sexuality, and race as they apply to discourses in eco-politics, environmental activism, and the social remembering of violence and human casualties that have occurred under colonialism, empire, and the aftermaths of imperial enterprise. Some topics to be explored include epistemologies of nature, land and identity in the wake of forced relocation and displacement, theorizing human/non-human relations, the militarized physical environment, plantation monoculture, and the Anthropocene (our current epoch when human activities started to have a significant global impact on Earth’s geology and ecosystems). The course will address these and other topics through six world regions : India (South Asia), Africa, Caribbean, Hawaii, Asia, and North America.