GWS102: WOMEN, SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS, AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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Office Hours: Monday, 10:00am – 12:00 pm

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will explore the way that gender has shaped the experiences with the social institutions that structure our lives everyday. How we understand work, science, or the media is influenced by the way our culture conceives of what it means to be a woman or a man. Over the course of the semester, we’ll ask how the relationship between gender and social institutions has changed historically, how current events are shaped by that relationship, and how race, class, and sexuality work with gender to affect how we relate to institutions and the things that change them.

This is an introductory course, and as such, the topic is impossibly broad. I’ve chosen to focus on the history of institutions in the US. This is a deliberate narrowing of our focus, and should not be taken as a sign that the topics we explore aren’t just as relevant (in their own way) in countries. The hope is that, over the course of the semester, you’ll learn how to think about gender beyond the limits of this course, taking the things that you’ll learn and applying them in other courses, in conversation, and in how you think about the world.

Required Texts: (Available at A Room of One’s Own)
Judith Walzer Leavitt, Typhoid Mary: Captive to the Public’s Health, (New York: Beacon Press, 1997)

Expectations:
Education is not customer service. Instead, both the students and the teacher are members of a team whose goal is to further understanding of the subject at hand. I will depend on you to attend lectures and discussions, participate and engage with the material, and give me and your TAs feedback about what works for you about how class is conducted and what does not work for you. You can depend on me to come to class prepared, to help you learn the material in a way that is effective for you (I'll need your help to know what is and is not effective), and to respond to constructive criticism to the best of my ability. Plus, I want us to have fun, to enjoy the process of learning the material, and to work together to come to a better understanding of what this subject means for each of us.
GRADING:
Your grades will be determined by your performance in four, evenly divided areas as follows:

25% Participation
25% Exam One
25% Paper One
25% Final Paper.

Please note that your participation in section and lecture has equal weight with the exam and the papers. You cannot participate if you do not attend. Therefore, your final grade in the class will be heavily determined by your ability to show up, on time, for each class. The other assignments will be discussed in class and you’ll have ample opportunity to speak with me and your TAs in office hours or via e-mail about those assignments. There will be no final exam, but instead a research paper due on the last day of class.

E-Mail Policy:
Though your primary contact in this class will be with your TAs, I still look forward to getting to know you. I encourage you to use e-mail to ask questions, share ideas, and make requests. But keep in mind that your e-mails are a reflection of your ability to be professional and responsible for your work. Please do not expect me to respond to e-mail that asks questions that can be easily answered by reading the syllabus or asking a fellow class member. I love hearing from you by e-mail, and I don’t want you to be afraid to contact me, but I do want you to keep in mind that time spent answering questions you could answer on your own is time I do not have to answer e-mails with legitimate comments, concerns and ideas. Please show equal consideration of your TAs.

Disclaimer: This is a class about gender. We will, as a result, often discuss and consider sexual topics. We’ll read about, watch movies about, and discuss sexuality and sexual activity throughout the course. If this is something that you would rather not confront in a classroom setting, then you might want to rethink whether this is the course for you. If you have any concerns about this, now or as the class progresses, I encourage you to speak with your TAs or with me directly.

READING SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2:  What is gender? What are social institutions? Why do we care?

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9: Do social institutions see gender?

Reading:

UNIT ONE: HOME AND WORK

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14: The relationship between home and work, Historical Perspectives

Reading:


WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16: Continued Historical Perspectives

Reading:

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 21: Labor Activism

Reading:


WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23: Migrant Labor and Labor Activism

Guest Lecture: Maia Surdam, Department of History

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28: Contemporary Labor Issues

Reading:
Barbara Ehrenreich, Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 30: Contemporary Issues, Continued
EXAM:

October 5: No class, Exam prep

October 7: Exam in class. No sections this week.

UNIT TWO: LEGAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS:

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12: Feminism and Women as Citizens, Historical Perspectives

Readings:


WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14: Feminism and Women’s Rights

Reading:


MONDAY OCTOBER 19: Challenging Legal Wrongs: Civil Rights

Reading:


WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 21: Challenging Legal Wrongs: Civil Rights (continued)

Reading:
excerpt from Crow Dog, Mary, Lakota Woman, (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26: Contemporary Political Movements

*Reading: TBD*

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28: Contemporary Political Movements, Continued

**PAPER DUE:**

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2: PAPER WRITING DAY, NO LECTURE

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4: PAPER DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS
    NO SECTIONS THIS WEEK

**UNIT THREE: SCIENCE AND MEDICINE**

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9: The Science of Sex and Gender, Historical Perspectives

*Reading:

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11: The Science of Sex and Gender, Continued

*Reading:

Kessler, Susan, “The Medical Construction of Gender” in *Feminist Frontiers*

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16: Gender and Disease:

*Reading:
Leavitt, Judith Walzer *Typhoid Mary: Captive to the Public Health* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18: Gender and Disease, Continued

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23: Gender and Health Care
Reading:


Feinberg, Leslie, “I Can’t Afford to Get Sick” from *Transliberation: Beyond Pink and Blue* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25: THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS

UNIT FOUR: CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS:

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30: What Are Cultural Institutions, Why Do They Matter?
Advertising and Material Goods: What Do We Make of Them?

Reading:

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2: What’s With All the Vampires? Blood Suckers Past and Present

MONDAY, DECEMBER 7: What’s With All the Vampires?
Gender and the Media Empire

Reading:

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9: What’s With all the Vampires?
Vampires on Television

Additional Reading, TBD

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14: Concluding Class,
Final Paper Due in Class.