WGST 3301.001: Introduction to Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Professor Jennifer Sorensen
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Course Meets 7:00 pm - 8:15 pm Mondays & Wednesdays in EN 107
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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 4 - 5 pm and Tuesdays 2:00 – 5:00 pm & by appointment

Course Description:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has decreed that “We should all be feminists” and Beyoncé has sampled her definition of “Feminist” in “Flawless”: “Feminist: the person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes.” Are you a feminist? Does that word terrify you or strike you as alien, unclear, or old school? This course will introduce you to major theories and histories of feminist critique. We will analyze cultural representations of women across a variety of media forms and learn how women's and men's lives have been shaped by structures of gender inequality. This interdisciplinary course will also examine the roles of women in patriarchal society, with emphasis on how intersectional factors such as race, class, gender, and sexuality contribute to the oppression of women and ways they can be challenged through feminist critical practices.

Course Texts: *In addition to these books, other materials will be made available online and will need to be printed and brought with you to class—Thus, please be sure to factor in this printing cost into your course budget. Available at the TAMUCC Bookstore: (or order online but be sure to get these editions)


Available on Blackboard (when directed will need to be printed out OR watched and brought to class):
Roxanne Gay, *Bad Feminist* (excerpts)
Rebecca Solnit, *Men Explain Things to Me* (excerpts)
bell hooks, *Bone Black* (excerpts)
Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (excerpts)
Gloria Anzaldúa, “La Consciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness”
Beyoncé *Lemonade: A Visual Album
Wonder Woman* (directed by Patty Jenkins)
Episodes and Clips from “Crazy Ex Girlfriend” and “Jane the Virgin”

And a large selection of additional theoretical and critical texts on Blackboard

Course Goals & Student Learning Outcomes:

I have designed the course to help you develop and hone the following skills:

* The ability to understand foundational concepts in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, including the roles that class, race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and other axes of difference play in our culture and society.
* The ability to engage with feminist theory and criticism and to use these materials to deepen your engagement with cultural texts and lived experiences.
* The ability to persuasively analyze a variety of genres and media; we’ll be analyzing words and images and exploring a diverse and genre-bending group of texts including a popular book aimed at de-stigmatizing feminism, an adapted TEDx talk, a graphic novel/memoir, a visual album, several films and TV episodes.
* The ability to think critically about unequal power structures and oppressive systems in your lived experiences, in popular culture, in institutions, and in the state.
* The ability to understand how feminist social and political action will benefit all people.
* The knowledge and understanding to serve as a foundation for future study in Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies.

Assessment:
Your final grade for this course will be determined by the following breakdown of the percentage weighting of each course component:

1 Close Analysis Practice Post (to Blackboard) 50 points
Midterm Exam 200 points
Activist Connections 100 points
Oral History Project 250 points
Zine Project 250 points
Attendance & Participation 150 points

Course Grading Scale:
890-1000: A
790-890: B
690-790: C
590-690: D
590 or below: F

Assignments and Policies:

Close Analysis Practice Post (50 points): This semester you will practice and develop your analysis skills working with a cultural text from our course by submitting 1 short response to our course blackboard site. This short (1 page) response will be directed by more specific instructions and will be submitted electronically via the Discussion Board area on our course Blackboard site. The short analytical write is designed to encourage you to write-to-learn and the emphasis is placed on the process of closely engaging with course materials. The Post will be given full credit for 50 points IF you turn it in on time, submit your own work, and follow the instructions. In addition to the points, you will receive a lot of feedback from me including a √ (for fulfilling the expectations of the assignment), √ + (for exceeding expectations through an
exceptionally thoughtful and interesting response), a √- (if you don’t fully follow the instructions or analyze the material specifically enough). Late responses (after the due date and time but within 24 hours) will receive partial credit.

**Midterm Exam** (200 points) (In Class Exam): This exam will involve short answer questions that ask you to analyze a specific moment in one of our course texts and will also involve a longer essay question that you will be able to prepare notes for in advance of the exam. Further details and practice questions will be handed out in class.

**Oral History Project** (250 points) (Due Sunday February 24 by MIDNIGHT on Blackboard): This project is an individual writing assignment in which you will interview a woman of a different generation (with at least a twenty year age difference between you). Your interview should take place in person or over the phone, and you may interview a family member. You will need to prepare interview questions in advance and should plan for the interview to take a minimum of 30 minutes. After doing the interview, you will write a 3 to 4 page, typed, double-spaced paper, which discusses the experiences of your interviewee and places them in the context of the readings that we have done in class.

**Activist Connections** (2-3 pages) (100 points) (Due Sunday April 7 by MIDNIGHT on Blackboard): You will identify and attend 1 campus, community, or virtual activist event that relates to the themes of the course (this may be a speaker series, protest or rally, live chat, art show, virtual conference, performance, public celebration, or teach-in). You may choose an event you are helping to plan, or you may choose one you will just attend. You should take notes while attending the event to analyze later. After attending the event, you will write a 2-3 page analysis of that event, drawing on at least 2 readings from the class—you should think critically about what the event was trying to achieve, how that goal was communicated to organizers and participants, the form of the event and why that form was useful or not useful for achieving the event’s goal, and the historical, cultural, or political significance of the event in its specific context.

**Zine Project** (250 points total) (Due during our final exam meeting time on Wednesday May 9th): For your final project, you will create a zine with a small group. You will work together to choose a topic and then collaborate on the material. You will be asked to work on your zine intermittently throughout the semester and then groups will present your zines to the rest of the class at the end of the semester. Additionally, each student will write a paper that discusses your topic in relation to and supported by class resources and information from the course readings. While this is a “group project,” you will each receive an individual grade, and your final paper will help me assign your grade. More information will be given out about the final project.

**Attendance & Participation** (150 points): Your participation grade will be based on your active engagement with class materials, your frequent and thoughtful contributions to class discussions of all shapes and sizes, your active listening to your classmates and to me, your productive work in frequent in-class small group activities, your reflections upon and completion of the assigned reading, and your coming to class prepared (with materials, thoughts, questions, and assigned work) every day. In order to engage actively with these texts and to promote lively discussions, you will need to prepare diligently for class each day—I encourage you to thoroughly mark up your texts (write all over them, use post-it notes, keep a reading journal on a separate page if you prefer), flag key passages that interest you, jot down questions as they occur to you, and come to class ready to discuss and to contribute questions and themes, passages, and patterns that you find particularly intriguing and worth talking about. For our frequent Blackboard readings (i.e. the electronically circulated ones), **you will need to print them out**, follow all the instructions for marking up your texts as above, and **bring them to class with you in order to effectively participate on those days (and to earn full points for each class day)**.
As you will see, I keep records of participation every single class meeting so that these grades are fair and able to be documented: I keep a huge spreadsheet of each day’s grade (assessed using a 4 point grading scale from 4 (an A for outstanding, engaged, thoughtful participation) to a 0 (total non-participation)) and the semester’s participation grade is an average of all of these daily marks (thus local highs and lows get evened out). Also, participation in this course can also extend beyond the boundaries of the classroom and efforts to engage more fully with the reading and writing in the course during office hours also contributes to good participation (I also record frequent office hours attendance and will bump up one or more of the daily marks to reflect this alternative, valuable form of engagement). I will give everyone mid-term participation grades so that you can see how you are doing in this area of the course. If you are concerned about your ability to effectively participate, please come and talk with me in office hours and we can develop strategies to improve your active participation.

You are responsible for obtaining all of the class readings for the course (including printing out any electronic resources assigned and accessible through Blackboard), for reading them carefully prior to class, and for bringing them to class with you as we will work actively with the assigned readings every single class session. If you do not bring your reading materials assigned for a given class meeting to class with you, then you will receive a zero for that day’s participation. We will work actively with the texts every single day and thus you need to have them with you in order to actively contribute and even to keep up with our discussions.

Please turn off all cell phones before class begins. No electronic devices—including computers—are to be used during class sessions. If you have your cell phone or any other electronic device out during class, you will receive a zero for that day’s participation.

Attendance Policy and Lateness: This course will be very discussion-intensive—so if you miss a class meeting, you are missing a lot any day that you miss. But obviously I understand that life sometimes gets in the way and so you may have two absences with no penalty. For each absence after the first two, your course grade drops 1/3 of a letter grade (i.e. from B to B-). So please use those two permitted absences wisely, they are to be used for times when you absolutely cannot make it to class (illnesses, family or personal emergencies, planned trips, etc.) and not for sleeping in, work for other courses, etc. Being more than fifteen minutes late to class constitutes a full absence and each day that you are even slightly late will deduct from that day’s participation grade. Please be right on-time to class every day as we will start promptly at 7:00 pm.

Late work: Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each 24 hour period that they are late (i.e. if it was due on Sunday at Midnight it will be marked 1/3 grade down if it is turned in after then but before Thursday by Midnight; if it is turned in after Midnight on Thursday, it will be marked down an additional 1/3 of a letter grade and so on). Please make every effort to have all your assignments in on time! I do not accept papers or read drafts over email.

The 24-Hour Rule: Please wait 24 hours after I return your graded paper before you come to discuss that paper with me. If you would like to discuss your paper with me, please come to my office hours or schedule an appointment (I often require several days notice if you need to make an appointment outside of office hours). Please come prepared with a short paragraph write-up of your response to my comments on your paper.

Academic Integrity: University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Violations of academic integrity include cheating, plagiarism (failure to acknowledge via appropriate citation the sources for written, visual, on-line, and other sorts of material), fabrication, illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity, and multiple
submissions (e.g., submitting the same or substantially the same paper for two or more courses without prior approval of all instructors). In this class, any assignment found to violate the TAMUCC guidelines for academic integrity will receive a zero grade and will be reported to the college dean and the Office of Student Affairs in accordance with university policy.

Please read “Academic Integrity” guidelines carefully and ask me if you have any questions: these guidelines are posted at http://catalog.tamucc.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=177#Academic_Integrity

I have also included the link below to the procedures for student academic misconduct cases. Please read the information found here as well: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.04_student_academic_misconduct_cases.pdf

**Plagiarism:**

Definition: In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. Plagiarism is a violation academic expectations, but it is sometimes difficult to understand what plagiarism actually is. Often, students commit unintentional plagiarism (not citing sources properly, for example), because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Plagiarism includes:

* Using the work of another as your own,

* Downloading or purchasing ready-made essays off the web and using them as your own,

* Using resource materials without correct documentation,

* Using the organization or language of a source without using quote marks and proper citation.

* Turning in a researched project without citing sources in an appropriate documentation style.

When you are confused about citation of quotes or ideas, please visit the Writing Center or me to get help. Information on MLA documentation rules and APA documentation rules is available at Purdue University’s OWL: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/ and from our local Writing Center at CASA.

**Classroom/Professional Behavior**

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

**The Writing Center**

You will be doing a lot of writing in this course and the TAMUCC CASA Writing Center is an excellent resource to help you. The Writing Center offers one-on-one tutoring sessions with experienced student writers to help you with a whole range of skills—getting started, building arguments, grammatical issues, organization, and many more—and I highly recommend using this resource. They offer appointments (easy to schedule with their online system) and also walk-ins during their open hours. See their website for more details: http://casa.tamucc.edu/wc.php

**Disabilities Accommodations:**
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Academic Advising**
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

**Religious Observances:**
If a class meeting conflicts with a religious holiday, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we can make alternate arrangements. In most cases, I will ask you to turn in your assignment ahead of your scheduled absence, but, in accordance with the TAMUCC policy on Religious/Academic conflicts, your absence will not affect your grade in the course.

**Statement of Academic Continuity:**
In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane, if classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi, this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

**Dropping a Class:**
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Friday April 5th is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

**Grade Appeals Process:**
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, *Student Grade Appeals*, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, *Student Grade Appeals*. These documents are accessible online at:
http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in
the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

**Communication:**
The best way to get in touch with me outside of class and office hours is by email. During the semester, I check my email regularly every weekday. I probably will not be able to respond as promptly on weekends or late at night (I will most likely not respond on the same day if you email after 6 pm). Email is a great way to ask a question, share a comment, or make an appointment to talk in person. If you have a long, complicated question, please come visit during office hours or make an appointment so that we can talk it over in person. All conversations about grades and comments on written work should take place in person.

I will email the class if class should be cancelled due to extreme winter weather or other emergency, or if I want to circulate course information to the class so please check your own email regularly.

If you must miss a class, please do not email me asking what you missed. It is your responsibility to check in with a classmate to find out what was covered and to obtain the notes from that day. You should exchange email addresses with at least two of your classmates so that you can contact them if you have to miss class.

Name: ____________________________________________________

Email: ____________________________________________________

Name: ____________________________________________________

Email: ____________________________________________________

I reserve the right to make minor changes and to adjust this syllabus if necessary for the improvement of the course.
Weekly Schedule:  All Readings are due on the date that they appear

Week 1:
   In class activity: Rich, “Claiming an Education” (Handout) & In class: Beyoncé, “Flawless”
   In class: Watch Kimberlé Crenshaw’s TEDtalk

W January 16:
   Full Frontal Feminism, Introduction & Chapter 1
   Baumgardner & Richards, “A Day without Feminism” (Blackboard)
   Thank a Feminist (Blackboard)

Week 2:
M January 21: Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

W January 23:
   Adichie, We Should All Be Feminists (read all of this short book adapted from TEDx talk)
   Full Frontal Feminism, Chapter 10
   O’Driscoll “Ways to Think about Gender” (Blackboard)
   Lorber, “‘Night to his Day’: The Social Construction of Gender” (Blackboard)

Week 3:
M January 28:
   hooks, Bone Black (excerpts on Blackboard)
   Full Frontal Feminism, Chapter 3
   Gould, “X: A Fabulous Child's Story” (Blackboard)

W January 30:
   hooks, Bone Black (excerpts on Blackboard)
   Kirk and Okazawa-Rey, “Identities and Social Locations” (Blackboard)
   Wong, “When I Was Growing Up” (Blackboard)
   Waters, “Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only?” (Blackboard)

Sunday February 3: Close Analysis Post Due by Midnight on Blackboard

Week 4:
M February 4:
   Lorde, Zami (excerpts on Blackboard)
   Gay & Coates, Black Panther: The World of Wakanda (on Blackboard)
   Gay, Bad Feminist (selected essays on Blackboard)

W February 6:
   Full Frontal Feminism, Chapter 13
   McIntosh, “White Privilege & Male Privilege” (Blackboard)
   Pharr, “Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism” (Blackboard)
   Mantziros, “Class in America – 2003” (Blackboard)
   Frye, “Oppression” (Blackboard)

Week 5:
M February 11:
   Moraga, The Hungry Woman (Act 1) (Blackboard)
   Gloria Anzalduá, “La Consciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness”
W February 13:
Moraga, *The Hungry Woman* (Act II) (Blackboard)

Week 6:
M February 18:
Beyoncé, *Lemonade: A Visual Album* (to be posted in one pdf on Blackboard and **watched once before class**) & Selections from Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Blackboard)

W February 20:

Sunday February 24: Oral History Project Due to Blackboard by Midnight

Week 7:
M February 25:
*Full Frontal Feminism*, Chapters 2 & 7
Wolf, “The Beauty Myth” (Blackboard)
Martin, “Love Your Fat Self” (Blackboard)
Solnit, *Men Explain Things to Me* ("Men Explain Things to Me" and "The Longest War")

W February 27:
*Full Frontal Feminism*, Chapters 4
Solnit, *Men Explain Things to Me* ("Cassandra Among the Creeps" and "#YesAllWomen")
Find one “#Metoo” post on Twitter or Facebook that you found moving and bring it to class.

Week 8:
M March 4:
Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Chapter 1 – 9, pp 3 – 53)

W March 6:
Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Chapter 10 – 17, pp 54 – 99)

Week 9: **Spring Break No class on March 11 or March 13**

Week 10:
M March 18:
Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Chapter 18 – 26, pp 103 – 163)

W March 20:
Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Chapter 27 – 31, pp 164 – 206)

Week 11:
M March 25:
Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Chapter 32 – 40, pp 207 – 263)

W March 27:
Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Chapter 41 – END, pp 264 – 311)
Week 12:
M April 1:
   In class: Midterm Exam

W April 3:
   In Class: Screening of Pilot episode of The Handmaid’s Tale Netflix series
   Discussion of the adaptation of The Handmaid’s Tale
   Critical Readings on Representations of Sexual Violence on Television

Sunday April 7: Activist Connections Due To Blackboard by Midnight

Week 13:
M April 8:
   Bechdel, Fun Home (Chapter 1 & 2)

W April 9:
   Bechdel, Fun Home (Chapter 3)

Week 14:
M April 15:
   Bechdel, Fun Home (Chapter 4 & 5)

W April 17:
   Bechdel, Fun Home (Chapter 6 & 7)

Over weekend: Wonder Woman film screening via Blackboard mediasite! Watch at least once BEFORE class.

Week 15:
M April 22: Wonder Woman discussion
   In class: Zine Workshop
   Sample zines

W April 24: Wonder Woman discussion
   In class: Zine Workshop
   Sample zines

Week 16:
M April 29: In class: Zine Workshop

W May 1: In class: Zine Workshop

Final Exam Time Class Meeting:
Wednesday May 8th 7:15 – 9:45 pm: Zines due at Start of Scheduled Exam Time: Due by 7:15 pm
(submitted electronically through Blackboard AND turned in hard copies at start of exam).
Presentations and sharing of all the zines.