

WGS 120 – Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies

Professor Florentien Verhage

"What was really for me groundbreaking, was exactly that, I will put it [as] 'embodied subjectivity in process'. Meaning that I forever become. Meaning, you cannot enclose me in the identity of my body, of my nationality, etcetera — it's not who I am. So basically, that I'm always changing... That feeling that I can always change, it's quite empowering, and also freedom-creating — at least for me, it has lots of meanings."

-Edyta Just-

In this course we read the work of philosophers, sociologists, legal scholars, literary theorists, anthropologists, and political scientists who are trying to make sense of gendered ways of being, gendered inequalities, and the complicated ways in which gender is enmeshed and formed through other sorts of power structures such as race, class, and nationality. Much of our reading tackles the study of gender from the perspective of women, in part because the field of gender studies originated in attempts to account for the absence of women from many spheres of social life and from the academy. However, “gender” is not something only women have, and so we will also make efforts to see how gendered social structures and discourse constitute men’s experiences and how gendered notions of identity impose on their bearers a male/female dualism that denies the full range of human experience.



Tom Hunter, *Woman Reading a Possession Order* (1997)

In this course:

- You should expect to develop a better understanding of what it means to say that gender is socially constructed.
- You should expect to practice ways of analyzing power as a structural phenomenon.
- You should expect to acquire a variety of means of describing the ways gender intersects with other structural markers of individual identity such as race and class.
- You should expect to come away with a much fuller understanding of the ways in which feminist scholarship informs the pursuits of disciplines across the academy.

This is an interdisciplinary introduction to the academic study of women and gender. The course is designed to provide a foundation in feminist analysis for students who wish to complete a minor in Women's and Gender Studies.

However, it is also an appropriate course for students at any level who are seeking a more systematic understanding of how gendered dynamics shape the subjects of their major studies or the practices of their daily lives.



Marianne Wex, 'Let's Take Back Our Space' (1979)

PEDAGOGICAL COMMITMENT:

As part of this introduction to women's and gender studies, the class will highlight some of the most common pedagogical commitments of feminists. That means, as your professor I will emphasize the importance of:

- Independent critical engagement with course materials.
- Opportunities to make the course materials relevant in the context of your everyday life.
- The value of seeing all perspectives—including yours and your professors'—as in some way contingent on relative position within complex power hierarchies we did not make and do not control.
- The importance of accepting difference as central to shared human experience.
- The protection of spaces for productive disagreements.

CONTACT: *For more information about this course:*

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For more information about Women's and Gender Studies:

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