

WGS Fall 2021 Graduate Course Descriptions

WSGS 521/MDIA 521 Sex, Myth and Media

(M Patterson) T/Th 4:30-5:45

This course will examine the role of mass media in reinforcing or challenging common cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity and power relationships between the sexes. In analyzing various mass media--including print, television, Internet publishing, electronic games, and film--we will apply gender theory and connect these artifacts to their historical moment. Students' own experiences, insights, questions, and ideas are a key part of this course. Throughout the term, we will consider not only what is in terms of gender roles, but also what might be.

WSGS 529/HIST 520 History of Human Rights

(R Chapdelaine) Wed 6-8:40

World War I spurred a new era of humanitarianism, which ultimately led to the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948. However, earlier notions of Human Rights existed. This course will examine the history of Human Rights as it developed from early 19TH CENTURY ideas about charity to that of TODAY'S inalienable rights. The assigned readings will explore how the consequences of war, famine, disease, gendered inequities, and historical legacies of slavery and colonialism pushed humanitarians to consider others who lived within and outside of their respective nation states. Contemporary Human Rights efforts will be examined from a historical perspective, taking into consideration various legal, political, religious and philosophical applications.

The writing element of the course is geared toward 1) motivating students to view writing as an ongoing process of critical analysis and intellectual growth, 2) developing and honing the specific skills necessary to write clearly, concisely, and effectively in the humanities, and 3) demonstrating how these skills can be utilized in future courses across the curriculum and in a wide variety of career fields.

WSGS 568/Engl 568 Feminist Theory

(F Barrett) MW 4:30-5:45

This course will introduce students to feminist methodologies, exploring how these methodologies might be useful to the analysis of literary texts and other forms of representation. We will consider developments in feminist theory from the 1960's

through the contemporary moment, beginning with foundational texts from Second Wave US feminism and French feminist theory. While mapping the relationship between different currents in feminist thought, we will also consider the ways that feminist theory has been shaped by the methods of Marxism, Freud, post-structuralism, cultural criticism, and radical feminisms. We will study the ways that feminist theory has served as a foundation for queer and trans theory, and we will also consider how feminist theory has worked to shape post-colonial theory. Readings for the class will be drawn from the work of Simone DeBeauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Monique Wittig, bell hooks, Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde, Donna Haraway, Chandra Mohanty, Gloria Anzaldua, Lauren Berlant and Sara Ahmed among others. Class meetings will be spent discussing critical/theoretical essays and will require active intellectual engagement and exchange among all participants. Students will be given the opportunity to write a final paper that is informed by feminist theories within the context of their particular field of interest.

WSGS 568/ENGL 588 20th C Poetry and Visual Culture

(L Kinnahan) Tues 6-8:40

What do we mean by “visual culture” and its particular forms of emergence in the early twentieth century? In this era, new visual technologies in film, photography, advertising, and print culture accompanied revolutionary ideas about art, commerce, fashion, entertainment, and a whole range of modern activities. In a century suddenly “awash with images,” how does modern American poetry – with its insistence on the importance of the image – engage the growing dominance and range of visual cultures in the modern era? This course focuses upon the conceptual, sociological, and formal relationships between modernist poetry, modern art, and visual culture of the period known as “modernism” (roughly the first half of the twentieth century). We will be exploring how poets theorized relationships between art and poetry and society, how issues of language coincided with visual concepts and operations, and how such ideas came to include considerations of visual culture attending socio-historical contexts. We will pay attention to visual movements like Cubism, Futurism, Vorticism, Precisionism, Dada, Surrealism, documentary photography, and the Harlem Renaissance; moreover, we will consider the impact of modern developments like advertising, cinema, the department store, fashion, and house wares.

Throughout the course, our readings and discussions will center on how poetic forms and content appropriate visual culture to signify a new “modern” expression. Of particular focus, the course will explore poetry’s equation of the modern with changing configurations of gender and race. Modernist poetry attends a popular visual culture populated that both challenges and sustains traditional ideas of gender and race, as do

a range of fine arts movements. How does a distinctively modern assertion of visual means of expression and communication retain but also challenge traditional ideas about gender and race? How are race and gender represented through various forms of visual culture, and what concepts attending these identity categories shape a claim to “modern” ideas about art, or entertainment, or consumerism? How is the gendered and/or racialized body configured by artists to justify a “modern” territory of visual expression? How does a consumerist culture distinctive to the early twentieth century build upon gendered and racial associations through visual means of entertainment, fashion, advertising, etc? How do women and African American poets engage with visual culture to challenge or revise gendered and racialized associations and hierarchies?

WSGS 624/Phil 624 Medieval Women Philosophers

(M Harrington) T/Th 1:40-2:55 (2 seats for WSGS)

The fiery paradoxes of medieval philosophy produce works that sometimes hold these great tensions in balance, and sometimes forcefully release them. We will explore the work of women who did both: holding the world together and breaking it apart. How do you speak without speaking? Herrad, abbess of the monastic fortress known as the Hohenburg, answers this question by composing a text of visual images and quotations: the Garden of Delights. Her work will introduce us to a style we will see more fully developed in Hildegard of Bingen’s Scivias. Hildegard outdoes Aquinas by composing a systematic work whose influence extends well beyond the university. How do you know the unknowable? The letters of Hadewijch, leader of a Beguine community of female mystics, explore a radical and threatening “unfaith” as a path to the unknown. Her work will introduce us to the blistering wit of Marguerite of Porete. Marguerite’s dramatic narrative, the Mirror of Simple Souls, thumbs its nose at the academics of her day in favor of an extraordinary self-annihilation—one that led her to the stake.