

WGS Spring 2021 Course Descriptions

Undergraduate

WSGS 234/CLSX 234: Sinners & Saints

MWF 11:00-11:50 (S. Miller)

This course examines the representations of sin and sanctity in ancient and medieval texts, and focuses specifically on the ways in which models of corporeality, sex, and gender shape notions of holiness and hellishness. In the texts we will read, the boundaries between divine inspiration, visionary experience, religious passion, demonic possession, madness, and symptoms deriving from gynecological ailments were not clearly delineated. A range of literary genres will be consulted including hagiography, autobiography, and medical treatises.

WSGS 252W/Engl 251W: Nursing and Narrative

MWF 10:00-10:50 (R. Maatta)

This class is for and about nurses, and it considers how narrative form intersects with the profession. The class is divided into four units. First, we will study how nurses have been depicted in works of literature and film. Are they realistic? What made nursing a stereotypically feminine profession, and have present-day nurses escaped the gender stereotypes that have hounded them for more than a century? Second, we examine stories that patients tell about their illnesses: pathographies. We will discuss how illness, trauma, and disability affect a person's identity and their place in their social network. How is illness disempowering and how does it challenge a patient's ability to communicate? What kinds of illness experiences exceed language? How do patients view their nurses and the caregiving institution? How do race, class, and gender affect a person's experience of illness, treatment, and recovery? We will contrast physical and mental illness. Third, we read narratives written by nurses about their work and identities. Narratives surround nurses as patients their stories, nurses chart their shiftwork and narrate differently for doctors, colleagues, patients and their families. We will understand nurses as people who receive, interpret, and create narratives in the unique and critical context of intervening with illness. Finally, we examine how dementia and dying affect language and present nurses with unparalleled listening and interpreting challenges. The actively dying frequently speak in metaphors. How can nurses respond to those metaphors and advocate for the dying? Similarly, demented patients can speak in fragmented, seemingly nonsensical ways. How can we listen for the intention within the speech to increase demented patients' quality of life, and how can we help their families to learn to listen and interpret?

WSGS 305/PHIL 333/GLBH 333/Engl 306: Institutional Narratives of Transgender

TR 10:50-12:05 (L. Rodemeyer)

What are the narratives we tell about our gender? What are the narratives that various institutions—medical, psychological, psychiatric, and other specialists—tell about our gender?

How do those narratives get used to form ideas about what is “normal” or “acceptable? And what is the effect of these narratives on a global scale? In this class, we will strive to address these questions as well as examine our own presumptions about our gender, class, race and other identities—and how these presumptions affect how we see and treat others.

WSGS 316W/Engl 316W: Healthcare and Lit

MWF 11:00-11:50 and TR 9:25-10:40 (R. Maatta)

This course explores representations of healthcare and medical knowledge in the West since about 1800 with an emphasis on cultural constructions of the medical practitioner and his engagement with the body. We will discuss representations of medical practice in word and image. We interpret illustrations from 19th century anatomical textbooks and paintings of surgeries by Thomas Eakins alongside episodes of *The Knick*; we will study the history of human dissection and learn how this vital medical privilege was not always valorized as a legitimate medical practice; we will read non-fiction and fiction about physical and mental illness, disability, medical mismanagement, and medical heroics, including Fanny Burney's 1812 account of her radical mastectomy, Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and Bernard Pomerance's *The Elephant Man*. A guest speaker in physical therapy will visit to discuss PT and chronic pain, and you will have an opportunity to visit the campus cadaver lab.

WSGS 353/Psych 353: Psych of Gender

MW 4:25-5:40 (D. Hook)

In *Psychology of Gender*, we elaborate critical theoretical perspectives on gender toward understanding how gendered conditions affect psychological life, forms of embodiment and sociocultural experiences. We read psychological, philosophical, and literary texts, as well as screening and interpreting film and video. Our focus includes understanding gender in contexts of contemporary popular culture, including music, films, news reporting, television and web culture. Goals for the course include deeply engaged conversation about the rich complexities of our gendered world and increasingly nuanced development of our individual perspectives on what it means to be a gendered subjectivity.

WSGS 416/HIST 420: History of Children and Childhood

Tue 6:00-8:40 (R. Chapdelaine)

History of Children and Childhood will survey how notions of ‘children’ and ‘childhood’ expanded alongside the formalization of social science scholarship focused on children. The study of children as historical subjects is necessary to fully understand the complexities of social, cultural, economic, and political histories worldwide. Because health specialists, child advocates, human rights activists, educators, and historians made evident their interest in children’s health programs, access to education, and child labor conditions this course will examine the social construction of ‘childhood’ in various global contexts . With an emphasis on gender, the assigned texts will show how identity shapes personal and community experiences,

how private and public institutions influence what is expected of children and of the childhood experience, and how the intersection of age and gender became a category by which social control was/is enacted.

WSGS 422/Comm 421: Communication and Gender

TR 12:15-1:30 (P. Arneson)

Examines research addressing differences and similarities in gendered communication styles in a variety of contexts, ranging from personal to social to work relationships, with attention given to philosophical and narrative understandings of communicating in cisgender and Other perspectives.

WSGS 451W/Engl 406W: Medieval Romance

Thur 6:00-8:40 (S. Wright)

Who was King Arthur? Did Robin Hood really steal from the rich to give to the poor? This class will read the texts that made the Round Table and the Merry Men who they are today. We will start by examining the origins of medieval romance as a genre meant to satisfy the desire for a readable national past, an authorizing foundation myth, and a fantasy of gender relations. We will then explore how, by the 15th century, romance came to challenge traditional theological, social, and political structures. As we explore this shift, we will consider critical issues including class irritation, gender and sexuality, and the more-than-human world. Loathly ladies complicate male-dominated foundation myths; monks and noblemen fall victim to woodland games; and cross-dressing confuses established courtly love traditions. As if this wasn't enough, these literary worlds are also rife with magic, inexplicable gigantism, and a surprising number of lions.

WSGS 452W-2/Engl 432W: African American Poetry

Mon 6:00-8:40 (L. Kinnahan)

Over the past century or more, African American poets have bodied forth a poetic diversity that richly attends to words and the shaping power of poetic form. In our readings of African American poetry, we will explore diverse aesthetics, forms, and genres in relationship to intersectional politics of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Our readings of 20th and 21st-century poetry, prefaced by a selective look at late 19th-century poets, will be organized around specific forms, genres, and conventions, contextualized within socio-historical and political conditions. Although our readings will span from the late-19th century through the 20th and 21st centuries, rather than following a linear chronology, we will cluster our readings around several formal distinctions in poetry, including the following: the sonnet & metrical forms; the lyric; dialect use; voice; serial or long poem forms; experimental and/or hybrid forms; intercultural and interarts exchanges. We will ask: How does poetry do work in the world? What is the labor of poetic language and form? How does form speak? How can form be political?

Tentative poets include: Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Gwendolyn Brooks, Audre Lorde, Rita Dove, Amari

Baraka, Nikki Giovanni, Terrance Hayes, Robin Coste Lewis, Harryette Mullen, Kevin Young, Cameron Barnette, Jeffrey Bolden, Erica Hunt, and Tyehimba Jess. (Some poets will be studied more in depth, with book collections, while others will be read in selected clusters of poems). The course will also include critical readings in race and gender studies and in poetics. This course satisfies the post-1900 and Diversity requirements for English majors, and the post-1900 requirement for graduate students, and is cross-listed with Women's and Gender Students.

Graduate

WSGS 522/COMM 521: Communication and Gender

TR 12:15-1:30 (P. Arneson)

Examines research addressing differences and similarities in gendered communication styles in a variety of contexts, ranging from personal to social to work relationships, with attention given to philosophical and narrative understandings of communicating in cisgender and Other perspectives.

WSGS 529/HIST 520: History of Children and Childhood

Tue 6:00-8:40 (R. Chapdelaine)

History of Children and Childhood will survey how notions of 'children' and 'childhood' expanded alongside the formalization of social science scholarship focused on children. The study of children as historical subjects is necessary to fully understand the complexities of social, cultural, economic, and political histories worldwide. Because health specialists, child advocates, human rights activists, educators, and historians made evident their interest in children's health programs, access to education, and child labor conditions this course will examine the social construction of 'childhood' in various global contexts. With an emphasis on gender, the assigned texts will show how identity shapes personal and community experiences, how private and public institutions influence what is expected of children and of the childhood experience, and how the intersection of age and gender became a category by which social control was/is enacted.

WSGS 548/Engl 549: Slave Narratives

Wed 6:00-8:40 (K. Glass)

Navigating sentimental, antislavery, and abolitionist discourses, slave narratives highlight the dignity and humanity of the slave. Calling for abolition in these narratives, black narrators also mobilized this form to document extreme hardships and craft triumphant tales of freedom. Using frameworks of race, class, and gender, students in this course will examine iterations of the slave narrative from 1845-1868. In particular, we will historicize these early black

autobiographies and examine their formal and sociopolitical concerns. Readings will include critical essays and primary texts by Frederick Douglass, Ellen and William Craft, Harriet Jacobs, Solomon Northup, Elizabeth Keckley, and many others. In this course, students will acquire a nuanced understanding of African-American slave narratives and relevant black critical/theoretical traditions.

WSGS 568/Engl 558: African American Poetry

Mon 6:00-8:40 (L. Kinnahan)

Over the past century or more, African American poets have bodied forth a poetic diversity that richly attends to words and the shaping power of poetic form. In our readings of African American poetry, we will explore diverse aesthetics, forms, and genres in relationship to intersectional politics of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Our readings of 20th and 21st-century poetry, prefaced by a selective look at late 19th-century poets, will be organized around specific forms, genres, and conventions, contextualized within socio-historical and political conditions. Although our readings will span from the late-19th century through the 20th and 21st centuries, rather than following a linear chronology, we will cluster our readings around several formal distinctions in poetry, including the following: the sonnet & metrical forms; the lyric; dialect use; voice; serial or long poem forms; experimental and/or hybrid forms; intercultural and interarts exchanges. We will ask: How does poetry do work in the world? What is the labor of poetic language and form? How does form speak? How can form be political?

Tentative poets include: Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Gwendolyn Brooks, Audre Lorde, Rita Dove, Amiri Baraka, Nikki Giovanni, Terrance Hayes, Robin Coste Lewis, Harryette Mullen, Kevin Young, Cameron Barnette, Jeffrey Bolden, Erica Hunt, and Tyehimba Jess. (Some poets will be studied more in depth, with book collections, while others will be read in selected clusters of poems).

The course will also include critical readings in race and gender studies and in poetics.

This course satisfies the post-1900 and Diversity requirements for English majors, and the post-1900 requirement for graduate students, and is cross-listed with Women's and Gender Students.