

Gender Studies 490: Senior Seminar

Professor Melissa M. Wilcox
Tuesdays 9:00-11:45
Whitman College, Fall 2007

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Course summary:

The senior seminar in gender studies has three related goals: to provide majors with a “capstone” experience as gender studies students, to begin their development into gender studies *scholars*, and to prepare for the spring semester completion of their theses. Accordingly, the 2007 senior seminar is structured around three areas of concentration. These are: classical and cutting-edge scholarship in gender studies, feminist methods and ethics, and thesis development.

Required texts:

- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble* (Tenth anniversary edition only). New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Alexander, M. Jacqui. *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. Duke University Press, 2005.
- *Signs* Vol. 32, no. 4 (Summer 2007). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- *Men and Masculinities* Vol. 9, no. 4 (April 2007). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- *GLQ* Vol. 13, no. 1 (Spring 2007). Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Note: All journals are available electronically through the Penrose site (click on “Find a journal” on the main page).

Course requirements:

Final grades in the course will be determined as follows:

Class preparation and participation.....	15 %
Abstract.....	5 %
Annotated bibliography.....	10 %
Literature review.....	15 %
Research question and methods statement	5 %
Rough draft.....	10 %
Final proposal.....	30 %
Oral presentation.....	10 %

Remember to keep all papers I return to you so that you can track your own grade.

Abstract: This assignment will be your first chance to articulate your thesis topic. Please turn in a detailed paragraph (absolutely no more than one page, double spaced) that describes your proposed thesis topic, lists some possible research questions, and names your thesis advisor and your two other thesis committee members. If you still have your *Pocket Style Manual* from Core, you may want to look at section 25 for ideas about formulating a research question. Your thesis advisor is the one you chose last spring, unless you've changed your mind – in which case be sure to talk with me before selecting a new advisor. Your two other thesis committee members can be faculty members (or certain staff) of your choice, but you will need to approach them to discuss your topic and request their participation in your committee *well before* this assignment is due.

Annotated bibliography: This should contain at least twenty works that bear direct relevance to your thesis topic and that will help you to formulate your research question and your methods. The bibliography may include both books and articles, but multiple articles from the same book or journal issue should be counted as a single entry. Remember that an *annotated* bibliography includes a sentence or two with each entry, describing the general topic of the work and its relevance to your research. Your bibliography at this point should be mostly secondary sources; see me if you want to include more than two or three primary sources.

Literature review: This will be a central component of your final thesis proposal. In five to seven double-spaced pages, the literature review should explore the recent research conducted on your topic (usually from the last ten years or so), briefly summarizing and then commenting upon the findings of other authors as well as showing the questions that remain to be asked, and/or the new ways in which previous questions might be explored.

Research question and methods statement: In one sentence, or at most two, directly state the question you will be attempting to answer in your senior thesis. Then, in no more than two double-spaced pages, describe in detail the methods you will use to determine the answer to your question, and the preparation you have had that will enable you to carry out these methods professionally. Methods can include anything from a description of social scientific research procedures to a brief discussion of the theoretical approaches that you will use to answer your research question – they will vary significantly depending on your project.

Proposal: You will turn in two drafts of your thesis proposal: a rough draft, which everyone in the class will read and comment upon, and the final draft that will go to your thesis committee as well as to myself and members of the class. Your final proposal should be 10-12 pages in length (not counting the bibliography) and should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins and 12-point font. As appendices (after the 10-12 pages of text and the bibliography), your proposal must include the proposed length of your thesis (as approved by your committee), a tentative outline of your thesis, and a timeline for completion.

Oral presentation: The final session of this course is designed as a practice session for your senior thesis orals. You will present and field questions about your thesis proposal, in the company of your classmate(s), myself, and all committee members involved in this year's gender studies theses.

Class participation: Since this course relies heavily on discussion, it is extremely important that you be in class, on time and prepared, each day. Please do the day's reading before coming to class, and be prepared to discuss the reading assignments. You are expected to bring the day's reading materials to class unless you are physically unable to do so. **Students who miss more than four class sessions without informing me in advance will lose 50% of this portion of their grade.**

Thesis guidelines:

You will work out most of the specifics of your thesis with your thesis advisor and your thesis committee. Here are the basic guidelines for all gender studies theses:

- ✓ You will work with your committee to determine the expected length of your thesis. The absolute minimum is 20 pages.
- ✓ Your polished final draft is due to all of your committee members on April 7, 2008.
- ✓ An oral defense of your thesis, involving all three of your committee members, will take place some time after April 7.
- ✓ If you wish to be considered for honors in the major, you must submit an honors candidacy form in class by October 16. Please keep in mind that honors candidacy simply allows your committee to consider granting honors; it in no way guarantees that they will do so. Conversely, if you do not declare candidacy, your committee cannot grant honors no matter how stellar your work is.

Course policies:

Students with disabilities: If you have a disability and need my help in making this course fully accessible to you, please feel free to contact me, either in person or through the Academic Resource Center (527-5213). I'll be happy to help in whatever way I can.

Inclusive language: If you've gotten this far in gender studies without adopting some form of gender-inclusive language in your writing, we need to talk! Needless to say, it's required in this class.

"Late fees": All class assignments will lose 5 percentage points for each day they are late (including weekends). Without prior arrangements, there will be no make-ups for the oral presentation (and you don't want your entire thesis committee angry with you, right?).

And the usual two policies, which again should go without saying at this point in your college career:

Academic dishonesty: Honesty is an integral part of academic learning; any form of cheating expresses gross disrespect for the efforts of your teacher, the hard work of your classmates, and your own privilege in having access to a quality education. I will not hesitate to report and pursue incidents of suspected academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and copying others' assignments.

The maximum penalty for academic dishonesty is permanent expulsion from Whitman.

<p>This class is an educational safe zone. It welcomes and respects the viewpoints of students of all sexual orientations and genders as well as all races, ethnicities, religions, and abilities. All members of this learning community are expected to treat each other with respect and dignity, and to listen especially carefully to the voices of cultural and social minorities.</p>

Course Schedule

Week 1: Troubling gender

Tuesday, 8/28: Butler, Preface (1999), Preface (1990), Ch. 1

Week 2: The sexed and gendered subject

Tuesday, 9/4: Butler, Ch. 2, Ch. 3 to 141

Handouts available for next week

→ **Come to class with a preliminary formulation of your thesis topic**

Week 3: Troubling the waters

Tuesday, 9/11: Butler, 141-end; handouts (Selection from *Undoing Gender*; “A ‘Bad’ Writer Bites Back”)

→ **Come to class with a narrowed formulation of your thesis topic**

Week 4: Transnational feminism

Tuesday, 9/18: Alexander, Introduction, Chs. 1, 2

→ **Abstract due in class**

Week 5: Feminism and neo-imperialism

Tuesday, 9/25: Alexander, Chs. 3, 4

Week 6: Gender, sex, race, empire

Tuesday, 10/2: Alexander, Chs. 5, 6

→ **Annotated bibliography due in class**

Week 7: Fall break – no class

Please read the first four articles in *Signs*.

Week 8: Race, Gender, and War

Tuesday, 10/16: We will discuss the first eight articles in *Signs*. Consider: How do these authors engage with their source texts? How do they frame their research questions? What are their methods?

→ **Deadline to turn in honors candidacy form**

Week 9: Feminism and masculinity studies

Tuesday, 10/23: Finish *Signs*. Read also the call for papers at the front, and “About the Contributors,” “Guidelines for Contributors,” and ads at the back. Also read O’Neill (not McNeill!) and Currarino in *Men and Masculinities*. Consider the same questions as last week.

Week 10: Men’s bodies, health, and work

Tuesday, 10/30: *Men and Masculinities*, McNeill, Holter, Campbell/Carroll, and Marshall.

→ **Literature review due in class**

Week 11: Contemporary sexuality studies I

Tuesday, 11/6: *Men and Masculinities*, Gilmartin; *GLQ* to book reviews (i.e., read articles and *Brokeback Mountain* section)

→ **Research question and methods statement due in class**

Week 12: Gender Studies Research Roundtable

Tuesday, 11/13: Visiting researchers! Reading TBA

11/17 – 11/25: THANKSGIVING BREAK

→ Rough draft of proposal due *in advance* of 11/27 class!

Week 13: Gender studies at Whitman I

Tuesday, 11/27: Hour 1 – discuss thesis proposals; Hours 2 and 3 – visiting faculty. Read proposal drafts, plus faculty articles (TBA).

Week 14: Gender Studies at Whitman II

Tuesday, 12/4: Visiting faculty. Reading TBA

→ Final draft of proposal due to Melissa, other class member, and all committee members by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, December 7. Please submit hard copies directly to each person (or to her/his mailbox).

Finals week (12/10-12/14): Oral presentations TBA