Gender Studies 490: Senior Seminar  
Professor Melissa M. Wilcox  
MW 1:00-2:20, Olin 246  
Whitman College  
Fall 2005

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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 2005 senior seminar is structured around three areas of concentration. These are: classical and cutting-edge scholarship in gender studies, feminist research methods and research ethics, and thesis development.

Required texts:

- *Feminist Studies* Vol. 30, no. 3 (2004). College Park, Md: Published by the Women’s Studies Department at the University of Maryland.

Course requirements:

Final grades in the course will be determined as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annotated bibliography</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research question and methods statement</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Rough draft</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Final proposal</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Oral presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class preparation and participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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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 and lists some possible research questions. 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 abstract should also name your thesis advisor – so you need to select an advisor and request her/his approval well before this assignment is due. If you wish, you may also suggest possible committee members on your abstract (the usual committee size, including the advisor, is three). Once you turn in your abstract, the gender studies faculty will review it and suggest appropriate committee members.

Annotated bibliography: This should contain at least twenty works that bear direct relevance to your thesis topic and 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.

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, describe in detail the methods you will use to determine the answer to your question. This assignment should be no more than two pages, double-spaced.

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

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 pages in length (not counting the bibliography) and should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins and 12-point font. Add that it should include an outline and timeline.

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:

- Length: 20-30 pages, excluding illustrations, tables, charts, bibliographies, etc.
- Due date for final draft: **April 7, 2006**
- An oral defense of your thesis, involving all three of your committee members, will take place some time after April 7.

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.**

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.
Course Schedule

Week 1: Research in gender studies
  Wednesday, 8/31: Feminist epistemologies
  Read: Letherby, Introduction, Ch’s 1 & 2

Week 2: Troubling gender
  Monday, 9/5: Troubling feminism
    Read: Butler, Preface (1999), Preface (1990)
  Wednesday, 9/7: Gender and the subject
    Read: Butler, Ch. 1
  ➔ Come to class with a preliminary formulation of your thesis topic

Week 3: The sexed and gendered subject
  Monday, 9/12: Gender, sexuality, and power
    Read: Butler, Ch. 2
  Wednesday, 9/14: Gender and subversion
    Read: Butler, Ch. 3
  ➔ Come to class with a narrowed formulation of your thesis topic

Week 4: Troubling the waters
  Monday, 9/19: Body politics
    Read: Butler, Conclusion; Handout (introduction from Bodies That Matter)
  Wednesday, 9/21: Research and theory
    Read: Letherby, Ch’s 3 & 4
  ➔ Abstract due via e-mail attachment (.doc or .rtf) by noon on Friday, 9/23

Week 5: Contemporary feminist studies I
  Monday, 9/26: Bodies, metaphors, stories
    Read: Feminist Studies 561-616
  Wednesday, 9/28: Women, Islam, and the state
    Read: Feminist Studies 617-685

Week 6: Contemporary feminist studies II
  Monday, 10/3: Scholars and artists
    Read: Feminist Studies 686-730
  ➔ Annotated bibliography due
  Wednesday, 10/5: Globalization, localization
    Read: Feminist Studies 731-784 (skip “Notes on Contributors” unless you’re interested in it)

Week 7: Contemporary feminist studies III
  Monday, 10/10: Fall break – no class
  Wednesday, 10/12: Globalization and intersectionality
    Read: Signs 1741-1800
Week 8: Contemporary men's studies I
Monday, 10/17: Global and local masculinities
    Read: Signs 1801-1849
Wednesday, 10/19: Feminism and research methods
    Read: Letherby, Ch’s 5 & 6; possibly a reading from bell hooks (tba)
Thursday, 10/20: bell hooks on campus! More info to come…

Week 9: Contemporary men’s studies II
Monday, 10/24: Mediated masculinities
    Read: Signs 1851-1909
    ➔ Research question and methods statement due
Wednesday, 10/26: Masculinities in practice
    Read: Signs 1911-1962

Week 10: Contemporary sexuality studies I
Monday, 10/31: Cutting edges
    Read: Signs 1963-2000, plus ads in the back. Consider: Where are the “gaps” in the literature? How do people find such gaps? How might these gaps be filled?
    ➔ Literature review due
Wednesday, 11/2: Early twentieth-century sexualities
    Read: GLQ 371-436, 457-471, 479-481, 485-487

Week 11: Contemporary sexuality studies II
Monday, 11/7: Sexualities and the state
    Read: GLQ 335-370, 437-455, 472-478, 482-484, skim ads at back
Wednesday, 11/9: Visiting faculty
    Read: TBA

Week 12: Gender studies at Whitman I
Monday, 11/14: Visiting faculty
    Read: TBA
    ➔ Rough draft of proposal due
Wednesday, 11/16: Discussion of proposal rough drafts
    Read: Proposals

11/19 – 11/27: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 13: Gender studies at Whitman II
Monday, 11/28: Visiting faculty
    Read: TBA
Wednesday, 11/30: Visiting faculty
    Read: TBA
    ➔ Final draft of proposal due

Week 14: Conclusions
Monday, 12/5: Research ethics and writing
    Read: Letherby, ch. 7
Wednesday, 12/7: Visiting faculty or oral presentations
    Read: TBA

Friday, 12/16, 9:00-11:00 (our final exam session): Oral presentations (if not 12/7)