

Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program

Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies (WGS) is an interdisciplinary field that centers intersectional feminism. WGS explores the many ways that sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression shape identities and impact lived experiences. WGS recognizes that the problem is unjust systems not individuals, that the personal is political, and that sexism and heteronormativity intersect with other forms of oppression such as racism, classism, and ableism. WGS centers the experiences of marginalized groups including people of color and those who are women, trans, queer, non binary, disabled, poor, and/or undocumented, among others.

The mission of the program is to empower students to reimagine the future and work towards liberation for all communities. WGS is not just about learning facts and theories, but also about praxis—using learned and experiential knowledge to become practitioners, researchers, learners, leaders and activists. WGS works to create an environment of learning and passionate commitment to the development and implementation of meaningful social change within the university and beyond.

The program operates the Blanche Hersh Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Resource Center located in LWH-2096. The Center is place where students, faculty and staff can gather in a more informal setting. It houses a library of books and periodicals.

- Major in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies (<http://catalog.neiu.edu/arts-sciences/womens-gender-studies-program/womens-gender-studies/>)
- Minor in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies (<http://catalog.neiu.edu/arts-sciences/womens-gender-studies-program/minor-womens-gender-studies/>)
- Minor in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Studies (<http://catalog.neiu.edu/arts-sciences/womens-gender-studies-program/minor-lgbtq-studies/>)

Olivia Perlow, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, Chair
 Kristen Over Ph.D., Associate Professor, English, Program Coordinator

Core Faculty

Sarah Bey West, Ph.D., Associate Professor, World Languages and Cultures
 Brandon Bisbey, Ph.D., Associate Professor, World Languages & Cultures
 Laurie Fuller, Ph.D., Professor, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies
 Stacey Goguen, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Philosophy
 Nancy Matthews, Ph.D., Professor, Justice Studies
 Erica Meiners, Ph.D., Professor, Educational Inquiry & Curriculum Studies
 Adam Messinger, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Justice Studies
 Cynthia H. Sims, Ed.D., Instructor, Literacy, Leadership, and Development
 Brett C. Stockdill, Ph.D., Professor, Sociology
 Durene Wheeler, Ph.D., Professor, Educational Inquiry & Curriculum Studies

Affiliate Faculty

Tim Barnett, Ph.D., Professor, English
 Vicki Byard, Ph.D. Professor, English
 Ashley L. Elrod, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, History
 Aneta Galary, Ph.D., Instructor, Sociology
 Nikolas Hoel, Ph.D., Instructor, History
 Lisa Hollis-Sawyer, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Psychology
 Lauren A. Meranda, M.F.A, Assistant Professor, Art + Design
 Christopher Merchant, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Psychology
 Sophia Mihic, Ph.D., Professor, Political Science
 Francesca Morgan, Ph.D., Professor, History

WGS-101. Introduction To Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies. 3 Hours.

This course introduces students to major issues and debates within the interdisciplinary field of women's, gender, and sexuality studies. (This is a General Education course in the area of Humanities.)

WGS-109A. First Year Experience: Sex Lives In Chicago. 3 Hours.

FYE: Sex Lives in Chicago critically examines sexualities in the social and physical space of Chicago from a feminist, sex-positive standpoint. In this course, the five foundations of the First-Year Experience (Future Planning, Integral Preparation, Research, Self-discovery and Transitions) are interwoven into the concepts of sexualities, gender and power. This course explores the diversity of sexual identities, practices, and behaviors in historical and modern Chicago. Students will discover the diversity and complexity of sexualities in Chicago through readings, speakers, films, and field experiences while simultaneously building personal and academic skills that ensure success at NEIU.

WGS-150. Women's Self-Defense. 1 Hour.

This course develops a framework for understanding violence and self-defense. Major focus is on learning and practicing awareness, prevention, assessment, verbal boundary setting and physical self-defense skills in simulated scenarios. (This course is not repeatable.)

WGS-201. Writing Intensive Program: Writing For Social Change. 3 Hours.

Examines the importance of writing for resistance and advocacy in struggles for social change and justice. Students also learn and practice writing in the discipline of Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies.

Prerequisite: (WSP-101 with a minimum grade of C or WGS-101 with a minimum grade of C) and ENGL-101 with a minimum grade of C.

WGS-210. Introduction To Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer Studies. 3 Hours.

The Introduction to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Queer (LGBTQ) Studies offers an introductory and interdisciplinary approach to studying the lives, histories and cultures of LGBTQ communities and allies. This course focuses on the multiplicity and diversity in gender and sexual expression including how race, class, ability and other identity markers shape LGBTQ lives. Examining introductory questions in gender and sexualities studies, the course addresses the intersection of identity, knowledge and action through critical thinking, analysis, active learning and social engagement.

WGS-300. Feminist Activism. 3 Hours.

This course focuses on the many forms of feminist activism in the U.S. and beyond, including examining the ways that racism, gender and class politics are intertwined with feminist activism of the past and present. This course also explores feminist struggles against domestic and sexual violence, as well as their fight for personhood, citizenship, legal rights, property rights, disability rights, personal freedom, suffrage, education, reproductive rights, workplace equality, and more. Students in the course will create and participate in activist projects during the semester.

Prerequisite: WGS-101 with a minimum grade of C.

WGS-302. Feminist Theory. 3 Hours.

This course examines feminist theory and the complex issues that feminist activism raises including the multiple ways that feminist theory challenges students to imagine justice and liberation.

Prerequisite: WSP-101 with a minimum grade of C or WGS-101 with a minimum grade of C.

WGS-303. Writing Intensive Program: The Power Of Writing: Interdisciplinarity As Critical Practice. 3 Hours.

This course examines the importance of writing for resistance and advocacy in struggles for social change and justice. Students learn and practice writing in the discipline of Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies. The course encourages students to embrace writing critically and creatively in order to express themselves effectively in a broad range of contexts. The course, and the interdisciplinary writing skills on which it focuses, are relevant to students from many academic fields.

Prerequisite: ENGL-101 with a minimum grade of C.

WGS-310. Lesbian & Queer Cultures: Identities, Histories & Resistance. 3 Hours.

This interdisciplinary course introduces students to historical and theoretical research through a series of topics: Identity, Sex, Violence, Activism, and Beyond. This will form the contexts for exploring issues and questions surrounding lesbian and queer cultures. Books, articles, magazines, videos, films, music, art, and more will be used. What makes up, establishes, creates, develops, organizes lesbian and queer cultures? This will be examined, in the context of various struggles over meanings and identities, considering that those meanings change over time and context and differ across race, class and other identity markers.

WGS-311. Power, Knowledge & Communities: Feminists Engagements With Education. 3 Hours.

This course focuses on the role of the educational system in the constructions and reproduction of gender and racial inequality. Using both academic and popular literature to gain perspectives, we will examine relationships between school and society. Topics to be addressed include the historical constructions, representation of schooling and the teaching profession, popular culture and education, and sexuality and schooling.

WGS-312. Women & Global Human Rights. 3 Hours.

Women's issues have recently been viewed through the lens of human rights. Increasingly they are included in the goals, programs and policies of international human rights organizations, from the United Nations to Amnesty International. This course will examine this shift in perspective and the impact it is having on women's lives worldwide. We will explore international human rights as they apply to women. What do we mean by "human rights"? How have these rights been socially defined, struggled over, and, in some cases, won? To what extent have women and women's rights been included in these conversations and struggles?.

WGS-313. Radical Feminist Imagination. 3 Hours.

Examination of literary works broadly representative of something called feminist imaginative response to U.S. patriarchy. The meaning of radical feminism will be explored as authors from a range of racial, class, and sexual identities are placed in dialogue with each other and with their respective socio-historical and cultural contexts. Focus will be on textual interpretation and exploring how each work attempts to develop its version of feminist consciousness. The course will investigate how these texts formulate a narrative of women's liberation against the dominant patriarchal narratives that inform cultural consciousness and social relations.

WGS-316. Science And The Gendered Body. 3 Hours.

This course traces the history of how gender and sex are identified and studied in scientific and medical fields and how cultural conception of gender and sex can influence the interpretation of scientific phenomena. Readings draw from the primary scientific literature, the history and philosophy of science, and cultural anthropological analyses of science and medicine.

Prerequisite: (or).

WGS-318. Fatness, Feminism And Critical Weight Studies. 3 Hours.

We will consider alternatives to the dominant biomedical size discourse that unproblematically considers a large body size as a gendered and racialized "health risk factor." To this end, this course makes use the term "fat" as a reclaimed descriptive term, like short or tall, instead of terms like terms "overweight" and "obese," which reflect medical pathologizations of body size. We will first explore Fat Studies and the ways it challenges dominant belief systems while speaking to power, oppression, and privilege. Then, we will historicize those belief systems as they developed during the 20th century to the present.

WGS-320. Feminisms In Islam. 3 Hours.

This course examines theories, political goals, strategies and activism(s) of the emerging global trend of Islamic feminism(s). Understood as part of a much broader trend in post-colonial and transitional feminisms, Islamic feminism is one of the responses to the hegemonic tendencies of which secular, Western, white, and middle-class focused feminism often accused. This class analyzes Islam through a gendered lens and focuses on how Islamic feminists promote gender equality and social justice based on a feminist reading of Islam's sacred texts. (Please note: this course is not a theology course).

WGS-321. Internship In Women's, Gender And Sexuality Studies. 1 Hour.

Placement in a university or community agency that provides services to women. This will be an opportunity to test classroom concepts in a field setting.

Prerequisite: WGS-101 with a minimum grade of C.

WGS-322. Internship In Women's, Gender And Sexuality Studies. 2 Hours.

Placement in a university or community agency that provides services to women. This will be an opportunity to test classroom concepts in a field setting.

Prerequisite: WGS-101 with a minimum grade of C.

WGS-323. Internship In Women's, Gender And Sexuality Studies. 3 Hours.

Placement in a university or community agency that provides services to women. This will be an opportunity to test classroom concepts in a field setting.

Prerequisite: WGS-101 with a minimum grade of C.

WGS-324. Black Girlhood Studies. 3 Hours.

This course examines the complexities of Black girlhood, particularly from the perspectives of Black girls and women. From an examination of adultification to hypersexualization, this course offers a critical analysis of the various aspects and dynamics of Black girlhood, and how race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and ability specifically impact Black girls' lived experiences. This course spans a wide range of topics, from schooling experiences and representation of Black girlhood in popular culture, to the ways in which Black girls exert radical and humanizing agency — as artists, scholars, activists, and more, reframing dominant narratives about themselves and their communities.

Prerequisite: WGS-101 with a minimum grade of C or AFAM-200 with a minimum grade of C.

WGS-331. Independent Study In Women's, Gender And Sexuality Studies. 1 Hour.

An intensive investigation of a special area of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Prerequisite: WGS-101 with a minimum grade of C.

WGS-332. Independent Study In Women's, Gender And Sexuality Studies. 2 Hours.

An intensive investigation of a special area of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Prerequisite: WGS-101 with a minimum grade of C.

WGS-333. Independent Study In Women's, Gender And Sexuality Studies. 3 Hours.

An intensive investigation of a special area of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Prerequisite: WGS-101 with a minimum grade of C.

WGS-340. Latina/x Feminisms & Social Media. 3 Hours.

This course has two goals: first, students will become familiarized with a panorama of texts exemplifying the historical trajectory of Latina/x intersectional feminist thought in the United States. During the second half of the course, students will research social media activism and contextualize popular Latina/x social media activists and representation, with special emphasis on the disputes and ongoing developments in group identities and senses of self, as well as broad social and political questions relevant to Latina/o/xs, with an eye towards citizenship, consumerism, and immigration issues.

WGS-349. Gloria Anzaldúa: A Deep Dive. 3 Hours.

This course is a "deep dive" into the particular social, political and economic factors contributing to the work of a single author over the long arc of her career, along with her particular contributions to literary culture in her time. Extensive reading involving a representative array of the author's work and a wide variety of critical essays on that work will provide students excellent bases for their research, writing and class discussion, culminating in an essay or creative project suitable for public presentation or publication. This section of the course focuses on the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, as well as her collaborators and literary intellectual/artistic successors.

WGS-350. Women's, Gender And Sexuality Studies Seminar. 3 Hours.

This interdisciplinary capstone course builds on knowledge gained in other Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies courses. Students are asked to reflect on their anti-racist and intersectional feminist learning, produce a portfolio of their work and participate in the WGS student symposium. This course is a requirement for students completing the WGS Major and Minor.

Prerequisite: WGS-101 with a minimum grade of C.

WGS-359. Queering Disability. 3 Hours.

This course questions the "normal" and "natural" bodymind and argues that disability is not natural or biological, but a category invented and managed through powerful institutions - for example law and medicine. Building on the analysis and scholarship of feminist, queer and critical race scholars, we will engage queer theory to explore systems of oppression and how constructions of disability produce presumed deviancy and deficiency. Course materials will engage scholarship in fields including fat studies, ethnic studies, and animal studies. Throughout the course students explore, question, and queer various issues affecting the sexual lives and subjectivities of persons with disabilities.

Prerequisite: (100 - 399 or 100A - 399Z).

WGS-360. Queer Theory. 3 Hours.

Queer theory developed in the early 1990s out of the conjunction of feminist theory, sexuality studies, and queer activism. This course introduces students to some of the key authors and texts in queer theory, shows students how queer theory may be applied in a variety of academic fields, and examines critiques of queer theory as androcentric, Eurocentric, overly intellectual, and impractical. This course aims to foster critical thinking, writing, and discussion. We will go beyond merely digesting theorists' work to actively engaging with the material and critiquing both commonly held assumptions and academic theories about gender and sexuality.

WGS-361. Queer Latin American Narrative And Film. 3 Hours.

This course explores the representation of sexual diversity and gender nonconformity in Latin American cultural production (narrative and film) from a perspective informed by feminist theory, LGBT studies and queer theory. Students critically engage these theoretical paradigms while developing research skills and proficiency in oral and written expression through class assignments, including a final research paper.

Prerequisite: ENGL-101 with a minimum grade of C.

WGS-362. Gender And Sexuality In Latin American And Latinx Resistance Movements. 3 Hours.

The course Gender and Sexuality in Latin American and Latinx Resistance Movements will take a cross-border, feminist, and queer approach to the analysis of the histories of resistance movements in the United States, Mexico, Central America, South America and the Caribbean. The course will explore the comprehensive history of resistance movements through cross-border, feminist, and queer theory and the visual arts, music, and literature that played an integral part in their development and sustainability.

WGS-370. Trans* Feminism: Theories And Approaches To Life Beyond Binaries. 3 Hours.

In this course, we explore activist and academic world-making approaches to the eradication of the gender binary. In the first part of the course, we define trans* feminism—where the asterisk indexes an opening up of the term to include a greater range of gender identities, following Avery Tompkins—via its central assumption that all forms of social oppression are implicated by the logics of gender. From there, we discuss how (gender) binaries are upheld and curated by the state and social cisheteronormative practices while exploring the poetry, art, and intellectual expression of people who seek to live outside those boundaries.