

## Women's Studies Course Descriptions – Spring 2008

**ANTH 149-08: *Gendered Lives: The Cultural Politics of Gender & Sexuality in Latin America***  
(Garcia) Block: 8

This seminar explores the ways in which the cultural construction of gender and sexuality structure the lives of Latin American men and women. In Latin America, ideas about what it means to be a man and a woman have powerful consequences. These ideas are challenged, turned upside-down, negotiated, and accepted in a variety of ways that make up the cultural politics of gender in the Americas. In this seminar students will interrogate such themes as the intersections of gender, race, and class; power and sexuality; and gender in social movements and revolution. A few of the specific case studies include the deployment of motherhood as a political tool of resistance in Argentina, the politics of masculinity in Mexico City, the history of the gay movement in Brazil, violence against women in Guatemala and Ciudad Juárez, and indigenous women's struggles in Mexico and the Andes. This course is open to all interested students

**ANTH 185-05/WS 195: *Globalization & Feminism: Political Thought, Institutions & Organizing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*** (Burtner) Block: M 4:30-7:00

In this seminar we will explore the development and content of "an international feminist movement" in the context of globalization. This exploration begins with the question "How does taking gender into account change our understanding of political thoughts, institutions, and organizing?" To answer this we will integrate social science with public policy perspectives. We will analyze the impact of various traditions of feminist methodologies on interpretations of the state, civil society and international relations, by studying the impacts global political developments (such as democratization) and national and regional economic policies (such as liberalization, privatization, decentralization and transnationalism) are having on women and on the agendas of the female-centered organizations they work with. We begin by 1) reviewing and critiquing debates related to gender identity, sexual difference and socio-political and sexual domination and 2) discussing globalization as a process that affects women and men differently in different contexts. Once this theoretical framework is established, we move on to explore how feminist analyses have dealt with the pressing issues of violence, security and political participation – as they are experienced through the human body, drawing on cases from Latin America, Asia and Africa. We conclude by demonstrating just how strongly gender is linked to globalization, analyzing the work of feminist leaders and organizations in the areas of human rights and the ongoing struggle for global economic and environmental equality and social justice - and considering what should be included on the global feminist agenda in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This seminar is designed to provide students with a solid foundation in contemporary theory, practice, and debate in feminist anthropology (ethnography and ethno-history), examining issues including: feminism and postmodernism/poststructuralism; subjectivity and difference; power and marginality; labor and resistance; kinship and reproduction. Emphasis will be given, throughout the course, to intersections between gender and other social relations including race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation.

**Community Health 104: *Women & Health*** (Spielberg) Block:H+

This multi-disciplinary course introduces a broad range of concepts and issues related to contemporary women, health, and health care in the United States. We begin with an examination of critical concepts including sex, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, class, and racism through analytical and narrative readings. Conventional indicators of women's health, past and present research on women's health, and the women's health movement help us begin to understand our knowledge about women's health status. Violence and mental health, including depression, eating concerns, and substance abuse receive extended attention. Poverty and the social safety net, private health insurance and health care reform precede our attention to women's traditional healing roles as midwives, home health workers, and family caregivers, as well as the growing role of *promotoras*.

**Comparative Religion 10-13: Gender & Islam** (*Kennedy-Day*)

Block: E+ M,W

This course will focus on the specifics of gender in Islam. Formerly, the emphasis has been on women, specifically women at the Qur'an: What is their status, as reflected in the Qur'an? This semester we will open the course up a bit more and investigate other gender issues, particularly constructions of masculinity (because an investigation of the female alone is incomplete) and homosexuality in Islam, including the thought of Joseph Massad. We hope to move beyond stereotypes and investigate the origins and ramifications of woman in the modern world.

**\*Comparative Religion 104: Feminist Theologies** (Hutaff)

Block: H+

"Feminism," says theologian Judith Plaskow, "is a process of coming to affirm ourselves as women/persons - and seeing that affirmation mirrored in religious and social institutions." This course will survey the impact which the growth of feminist/womanist consciousness during the last three decades has had on the religious commitments of women, as well as on traditional religious institutions, beliefs, and practices. We will explore new approaches and methods which recent feminist scholarship has brought to the study of ancient religious texts and other historical sources, and will assess how the inclusion of women's perspectives is challenging, enlarging, and enriching the craft of theology itself. Also to be considered: the rise of new women's rituals and alternative spiritualities, and the relationship of religious feminism to other struggles for human dignity and liberation.

**Comparative Religion 192-15: Women & Religion in America: 1600 to the Present** (*Curtis*)

Block: 2

This seminar examines the significance of women's presence in American religious history from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present. We will explore the role of religion in shaping, upholding, resisting and transforming gender norms in a variety of social and cultural contexts. Drawing upon a range of primary sources, including poetry, court records, conversion narratives, autobiographies and novels, as well as on important secondary works in the field of women's history, we will ask how participants in diverse religious traditions have understood women's "nature," defined their "roles" in society, and debated their "calling" to religious leadership. Students will undertake a semester-long project based on primary-source research in the religious history of American women.

**Drama 46: International Women Film Directors** (*Kouguell*)

Block: Th 11:50-2:20

Although female directors are still considered a minority in the international film industry, their contribution is significant. The films that we will screen are not Hollywood studio films and do not cater to predictable conventions and "happy endings." These films are diverse and unique, yet share such themes as female oppression, gender identification, women's roles in everyday life, and female empowerment. We will analyze the directors' narrative and visual storytelling processes and choices, and how their diverse backgrounds influence their films, as well as discuss critics' reviews. Many of these provocative directors have been imprisoned, banned from their countries, are a major influence in their country's New Wave cinema, and/or stirred an international debate because of their films.

**\*Education 165: Educating Women and Girls** (Weiler)

Block: J+

This course will explore issues of education for women and girls both globally and locally. Questions addressed in the course will include: How does the social/cultural location of women and girls shape their educational experiences? How do women and girls negotiate societal expectations and discursive constructions of "woman" as they engage with academic knowledge? What are the contradictions entailed in the identity of the knowing woman?

**English 54: Conrad, Forster, Woolf** (*Rosenthal*)

Block: 5+

In this class we will read three authors - Conrad, Woolf, and Forster - whose work has come to represent some of the exemplary moments of literary modernism. Because each author has a distinct and internally complex style, we will try to build our questions from the texts themselves, working towards a consideration of how style works, what it is, and how we understand its distinguishing marks. At the same time, we will follow crucial threads that run throughout the works: contested constructions of masculinity and femininity; the framing of power, authority and the possibilities for social change; the place of art, the

artist and the artist-hero within modernity; representations of belonging and alienation, home and exile, metropolitan and colonial space.

**English 86-01: Jane Austen: Novels & Film (Genster)**

Block: H+

Reading & discussion of Austen's 6 published novels, & of some recent films derived from her works, including *Sense and Sensibility*, *Persuasion*, & *Clueless*. We'll ask how this most resolutely verbal of authors translates to the screen, & what our current fascination with her work tells us about ourselves.

**English 107: Chaucer (Fyler)**

Block: E+ MW

This course explores the works of one of the three or four greatest poets in English. We'll read Chaucer in Middle English, but he is in almost every respect easier to understand than Shakespeare, who lived two centuries later. We will spend roughly half of the semester on the *Canterbury Tales*, the other half on Chaucer's most extraordinary poem, *Troilus and Criseyde*. Chaucer is primarily a narrative rather than a lyric poet: though the analogy is an imperfect one, the *Canterbury Tales* are like a collection of short stories, and *Troilus* like a novel in verse. We will talk about Chaucer's literary sources and contexts, the interpretation of his poetry, and his treatment of a number of issues, especially gender issues, that are of perennial interest.

**English 113: Renaissance Drama: Over-the-Top Performance & Radical Play (Haber)**

Block: MW 1:30-3:00

The Renaissance is generally thought of as the greatest age of the drama in England: Shakespeare's plays are the most well-known examples of the outpouring of theatrical activity that occurred during this period. In this course, we will read the always fascinating (and sometimes gruesome) plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries and successors, many of whom adopted more radical stances toward the major issues of their time. As we examine their presentations of various forms of power, their constructions of gender and sexuality, and their attitudes towards language and the theater, we will discover why many of these plays have been termed "oppositional drama" and "radical tragedy." We will begin by examining Christopher Marlowe's frontal assaults on contemporary orthodoxies, and we will consider the construction of sodomy in his plays. We will go on to explore the development of the drama of blood and revenge, which was introduced in *The Spanish Tragedy*, and which exploded in what has been called the "parody and black camp" of *The Revenger's Tragedy*. We will then explore the tensions which tear apart Ben Jonson's more conservative comedies. Finally, we will look at a selection of 17-century plays about women--*The White Devil*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Roaring Girl*, *The Changeling*, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, and *The Convent of Pleasure*; we will discuss their varying attitudes toward female autonomy and desire, and consider why women became such central figures in the drama at this time. Throughout the course, we will think about these plays' investment in their own (sometimes quite extreme) theatricality, and we will attempt to do justice to their pervasive sense of play.

**English 160: Environmental Justice & U.S. Literature (Ammons)**

Block: D+

1% of the U.S. population owns 38% of the nation's wealth. The U.S. consumes over 40% of the world's gasoline and more paper, steel, aluminum, energy, water, and meat per capita than any other society. Four additional planets would be needed if each of the Earth's inhabitants consumed at the level of the average American.

We will study how contemporary U.S. literature contributes to the environmental justice movement, examining writers' treatment of environmental racism, ecofeminism, homophobia and the social construction of nature, U.S. environmental imperialism, and urban ecological concerns. What analyses and insights can we gain? What is the role of art in the struggle for social change? Our study will be multicultural, foregrounding authors from diverse racial locations--Asian American, African American, Native American, white American, and Latino/a; and an anti-racist analytical framework will be central. Literary texts will include Helena Maria Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*; Annie Proulx, "Brokeback Mountain"; Gloria Naylor, *Mama Day*; Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange*; Awiakta, *Selu*; and Simon Ortiz, *Fight Back: For the Sake of the People, For the Sake of the Land*. Also we will view several videos, discuss selected essays in environmental justice theory, and read poems by Audre Lorde, Janice

Mirikitani, Robert Frost, and Adrienne Rich. The goal of this course is empowerment for social change. How can each of us participate as a change agent in the struggle for environmental justice, locally and globally? How can our understanding of literature contribute? Group work, a field trip, one research paper, and active class discussion will be important parts of the course. Nonmajors as well as majors are welcome.

**FAH/GER/CR 129: *Gender in Medieval Art & Lit.*** (Caviness/Nelson) Block: 10+  
Representations of medieval sex/gender arrangements in art and literature ca. 1000-1300 CE. Constructions of gender through religious and scientific teaching and images; its impact on roles as authors/makers and patrons played by men and especially women such as Hrotsvit, Hildegard, Jeanne d'Evreux. Secular and religious works, such as the Bayeux Embroidery and the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Hortus Deliciarum*, and the writings of the "mystics," in light of medieval and present-day gender theories.

**French 92: *Women's Voices from the French Diaspora*** (Smith) Block: N+  
An introduction to modern best-sellers by contemporary women writers from Vietnam, Quebec/Acadia, Haiti, Guadeloupe, Cameroon, Algeria. Discussions of cultural history will help define the political, psychological, and aesthetic issues involved in women's writing. Conducted in English. One oral presentation, three reaction papers (2 pages each), and a final research paper (12-14 pages). No prerequisites.

Texts:

Edwidge Danticat: *Krik Krak* (Soho Press)

Duong Thu Huong: *Paradise of the Blind* (Houston Book)

Maryse Conde: *Crossing of the Mangrove* (Anchor Double Day)

Calixthe Beyala, *Loukoum, The Little Prince of Belleville* (Heinemann)

Antonine Maillet: *Pélagie, The Return to a Homeland, Acadie* (Vintage)

Films: *The Women of Mount Chenuah* (Djebar), *Scent of Green Papayas* (Tran Anh Hung)

**French 192 A: *Balzac Seminar: "La Comédie Feminine"*** (Naginski) Block: L+  
This course will be devoted to a study of Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*. Our focus will be the remarkable cast of women character-types and the sustained exploration of the feminine condition in 19<sup>th</sup>-century France that his vast fictional universe offers. We will concentrate on this "Comédie feminine" as deployed in the "Scènes de la vie privée," "Scènes de la vie de province" and the "Etudes philosophiques."

**History 99.03: *History of Sexuality in America*** (Lekus) Block: G+  
We will examine the history of sexuality in America from the colonial era to the present, paying particular attention to the changing definitions and practices of what Americans have considered "normal" and "deviant." Topics covered include birth control, abortion, and eugenics; race, ethnicity, and sex; sexually transmitted diseases; capitalism, migration, and urbanization; economics and geography; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender identities and communities. In doing so, we will explore the centrality of sexuality to U.S. history as a whole.

**Italian 121: *Adv Ital Lang I: Italian Women's Images & Voices*** (Baffoni-Licata) Block: E+ MW  
In-depth analysis of written and spoken Italian. Readings will explore women's images and voices in Italian culture and society. Review of grammatical difficulties through translation exercises. Intensive exercises aimed at building vocabulary. Three short papers, two exams and a final project. Prerequisites: Italian 21 and 22, or consent. Conducted in Italian.

**Jewish Studies/CR 78: *Jewish Women*** (Ascher) Block: L+  
Images, experiences, & accomplishments of Jewish women in life, literature, & tradition from Biblical times to the present. Focus on individual women from various times & cultures; discussion of basic issues, present conditions, & prospects.

**PHIL 192-02: Legacy of Simone de Beauvoir** (*Bauer*)

Block: 7

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) is the founding text of modern feminism, but it is also a serious, original work of philosophy. In this course we will undertake a detailed study of *The Second Sex* and will use this study as a jumping-off point for thinking about both the nature of sex and gender and the nature of philosophy itself. We will look at contemporary philosophizing about sex difference, particularly as it has been refracted through the lens of Judith Butler's very influential work, and explore the extent to which "feminist theory" represses important philosophical features of Beauvoir's views. We will simultaneously trace the roots of *The Second Sex* in the writings of some of the philosophers who most heavily influenced Beauvoir's thinking, including Descartes, Hegel, Freud, and Sartre, and explore the question of whether and how feminist philosophers can appropriate non-feminist—and sometimes even misogynistic—philosophical work.

**Sociology 20: Family & Intimate Relations** (*Aymer*)

Block: L+

This course examines various arrangements defined as family in the U.S. and cross culturally. Diverse family arrangements and the socioeconomic conditions that support them will be studied and compared with ideal nuclear family forms that still dominate images of family life in the U.S. Concepts and accompanying relations of cohabitation, motherhood, fatherhood, marriage, and the pros and cons of various family forms for specific groups such as poor and immigrant families and gay partners will be studied. The class will examine family distress caused by divorce, death, and family violence.

**\*\*Women's Studies 72: Introduction to Women's Studies** (*Johnson*)

Block: L+

This course is a multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary examination of how cultural meanings given to gender in specific historical moments have shaped female existence across racial, class, ethnic and sexual lines. The readings that form this overview of the field for the most part discuss western women and are broad in scope. Perspectives and methodologies are drawn from a variety of disciplines within the humanities, social and natural sciences, including economics and sociology (the position and status of women in society), biology (the gendered construction of scientific knowledge), psychology (gender construction and development), and literary studies (images and narratives, critical discourses of difference.) The course will cover some of the critiques made by Women's Studies scholars of the traditional academic disciplines and some of the new work now being produced, with a view to understanding that knowledge is constructed, contextual, and mutable. A central goal of the course is to dramatize the way gender is implicated in every category of cultural and intellectual discourse --race, class, sexuality, psychology, sociology, biology, et al.-- and to indicate the artificiality of these categories, even as they form the headings for this syllabus. The course will consider an important dilemma of modern feminist thinking: the imperative to make gender both matter and not matter at the same time. Our study of discourses of difference will engage in contemporary feminist debates on equality versus difference in political, social, and intellectual strategies for change.

**Women's Studies 92: Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence: Crisis Intervention & Advocacy** (*Brown*)

Block: 8+

We will examine issues surrounding rape and domestic violence in the U.S. from a multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural perspective. We will address myths and facts: societal attitudes, including victim-blaming patterns; post-traumatic syndrome, and the impact of rape and domestic violence on the survivor, their loved ones, and the community at large. We will discuss crisis intervention theory and examine the stages of trauma that victims of violence experience, as well as their experience of MA medical and legal systems. The course material will cover campus and community resources for survivors and where to look for help when faced with past, present and/or future sexual violence. Students may elect to receive the MA State Certification for Rape Crisis Counseling through the completion of this course with perfect attendance.

**Women's Studies 99: *Women's Studies Internship*** (Director)

Block: Arr

**\*\*Women's Studies 193: *Senior Project*** (Roy)

Block: Arr

Independent project. A substantial interdisciplinary research paper or other creative project, such as film, presentation or performance (with written component) developed from elective cluster topic area on women or gender.

**\*WS 195 / ANTH 185-05: *Global Feminisms*** (Burtner)

Block: M 4:30-7:00

For full description see above under ANTH 185-05.

## **GRADUATE & CONSORTIUM COURSES**

### **CRWS 292 A Transsexuality, Transgenderism, and the Rest...**

Thursdays, 4 – 7 PM / 1.31.08 – 5.8.08

Meets at Harvard University, Location TBA

This course will cover narrative, anthropological, historical, and theoretical texts (including films) about transsexuality and transgenderism. We begin with transsexuality before and beyond identity politics and its transformation in the light/shadow of identity politics and theories of gender. While the course will remain located in the Americas and Europe, we will consider how trans-subjectivities produced in other socio-cultural formations inform histories and politics of transsexuality and transgenderism in so-called western contexts.

#### **Faculty:**

**Claudia Castañeda** teaches feminist science and technology studies in Boston area universities, and works as a writing coach for academics at all stages of the research/writing process. She is the author of *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds* (Duke University Press, 2002), and other articles that focus on scientific and technological materialization of bodily differences including race, class, gender, and sexuality in broader circuits of power and exchange.

**Afsaneh Najmabadi** teaches History and Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Harvard University. Her last book, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), received the 2005 Joan Kelly Memorial Prize from the American Historical Association. She is an associate editor of the six-volume *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures* (Leiden: Brill, 2004-2008), and is currently working on *Sex in Change: Configurations of Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Iran*.

**Jyoti Puri** writes and teaches in the areas of sexualities, states, nationalisms, and transnational feminisms. Her book, *Woman, Body, Desire in Post-colonial India* (Routledge 1999), addresses how constructs of gender and sexuality are shaped across national and transnational contexts. *Encountering Nationalism*, (Blackwell Publishers 2004), is a feminist sociological exploration of nationalism and the state. A number of related articles and chapters are published in journals and edited volumes on sexuality and gender. She is the recipient of fellowships and grants, including a Rockefeller Research Fellowship and a Fulbright Senior Research award. She is currently working on a book manuscript, *Sexualizing the State: Biopolitics and Sodomy Law in India*.

### **CRWS 292 B Feminist inquiry: Strategies for Effective Scholarship**

Day and Time TBA

Meets at MIT, building and room TBA

This course investigates theories and practices of feminist inquiry across a range of disciplines. Doing feminist research involves rethinking disciplinary assumptions and

methodologies, developing new understandings of what counts as knowledge, seeking alternative ways of understanding the origins of problems/issues, formulating new ways of asking questions and redefining the relationship between subjects and objects of study. The course will focus on methodology, i.e., the theory and analysis of how research should proceed. We shall be especially attentive to epistemological issues--pre-suppositions about the nature of knowledge. What makes research distinctively feminist lies in the complex connections between epistemologies, methodologies and research methods? We shall explore how these connections are formed in the traditional disciplines and raise questions about why they are inadequate and/or problematic for feminist inquiry and what, specifically, are the feminist critiques of these intersections.

### **Faculty**

**Instructor TBA.** This course is led by a teaching team.

Applications for all GCWS seminars are available online at <http://web.mit.edu/gcws>

Fall application deadline: August 27, 2007

Spring application deadline: January 11, 2008

After deadlines have passed, applications will be accepted as space allows.

Seminars offer MIT graduate credit for students enrolled at participating institutions. Cross-registration and credit arrangements vary by institution. Students should consult with GCWS staff and their academic advisors. Full participation in the seminar is expected of all students, regardless of credit status.

Each consortium seminar is limited to 15. Auditors are admitted at the permission of the faculty.