This course is an attempt to introduce new graduate students to the breadth of scholarship in gender and women’s studies, focusing particularly on the strengths of the University of Wisconsin department. The course is organized around three objects of study: feminism, bodies, and work. I urge you to consider the material covered here as a sampler of topics, approaches, and methodologies rather than a comprehensive overview of the field. It is meant to raise and to suggest responses to the following questions: What does research in gender and women’s studies look like? Does gender and women’s studies constitute a field? Does gender and women’s studies rely upon a particular methodology? What is the place of traditional disciplines within gender and women’s studies departments, programs, and scholarship? What changes in women’s studies when it adds gender and sexuality as objects of analysis? Does all feminist scholarship belong to gender and women’s studies? Must gender and women’s studies scholarship be feminist?

This course is also meant to help new graduate students find their own way in this vast and diverse field and figure out what sort of scholar they hope to be. Consequently, the course assignments will introduce students to some basic research methods in gender and women’s studies, culminating in a project proposal for a project that should be relevant to students’ future work in the M.A. program or in their home departments.

**COURSE TEXTS**

(For sale at A Room of One’s Own Feminist Bookstore: 307 W. Johnson, 608 257-7888)

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (1929)

(Copies of these texts are also on reserve at the Social Science Reference Library, 8432 Social Sciences; other readings are on e-reserve at the Social Science Reference Library.)
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

Seminar Participation: 30%
Reading Responses: 20%
Research Assignments: 25%
Grant Proposal: 25%

Seminar Participation:
Participation in the seminar is important to the teaching and learning process and to your grade. It is not that I want you to speak for the sake of speaking, but I want you to accept some responsibility for teaching others by sharing your thoughts, questions, and ideas and for the direction and energy of the seminar. Students should have read and engaged both the assigned materials and the reading responses before class.

Reading Responses:
Every week students will write and post a “think piece” that somehow engages with the day’s reading. These will vary in form. On some occasions, I will pose an issue or a question and ask you to respond, while on other occasions, I will ask you to engage the readings in any way that you see fit. These exercises are designed to serve several purposes. They should 1) help focus your thinking about the readings, both as you write your own piece and as you read the works of your classmates; 2) give you practice in identifying and articulating the thesis of a book or an article and in describing briefly how that argument is developed; 3) encourage you to examine and analyze different forms of scholarly evidence; 4) ask you to identify and explore the larger conversation that these articles and books contribute to; and 5) enable you to engage and critique feminist scholarship in a variety of fields and disciplines.

These are not graded on an A-F scale, but I will provide an assessment of the responses’ accuracy, clarity, and depth of engagement.

Students will post their responses to the class discussion (see address above) list by 10 PM the evening before class. These responses should not be longer than one single-spaced page of prose. (Every student can have one skip.)

Research Assignments:

Several times over the course of the semester, students will be expected to complete a very brief “research” assignment as a way to gain a deeper appreciation of the terrain that is gender and women’s studies, to identify basic research resources here at the University of Wisconsin, and to build the skills necessary to complete the research proposal, the culminating project for this course.

Week 2, September 9
Pick two journals dedicated to inter/multi/transdisciplinary women’s (and or gender) studies. (Signs, Feminist Studies, Journal of Gender Studies, Feminist Theory, NWSA Journal are a few examples.) Look at their websites to get sense of their mission and how they position themselves
in the field. Then look at one year’s worth of scholarship in each journal. In no more than three
double-spaced pages, characterize the scholarship in these journals. What approaches do they
promote? What range of topics do they cover? How do they differ from each other? How are
they similar? How well does the scholarship in these journals match their advertised missions?

Week 4, September 23
Published scholarship is organized and bundled in various overlapping ways—by discipline
(history, anthropology, psychology), by subject (environmental studies, material culture,
women’s studies), by theoretical or political commitments (feminist studies, Marxist studies,
postmodernism). Scholarship that might be considered part of the field of gender and women’s
studies is spread throughout this intellectual terrain. To get a taste for the variety of gender and
women’s studies scholarship and some practice finding it, create a bibliography.

Using three different subject (ethnic studies, e.g.) or discipline (geography, e.g.) databases, find
10 articles reflecting at least three different disciplinary approaches to the same general, women-
and-gender-studies-relevant topic (eating disorders, suffrage, adoption, circumcision, hate-
crimes, sex trafficking, e.g.). Turn in your bibliography (organized however you see
appropriate) and a short description of how you found your sources.

Week 6, October 7
Starting with the articles generated for week 4, rank the articles according to their influence.
(Use Web of Knowledge and Google Scholar.) Explain how you reached your ranking. Choose
three of the articles and describe how the knowledge and ideas contained in them have traveled.

Week 8, October 21
Either starting with sources from your original bibliography or beginning anew, compare three
scholarly articles representing three different disciplinary/interdisciplinary approaches on the
same general topic. In no more than three double-spaced pages, a) summarize the articles; b)
characterize their methods and approaches; c) discuss the following questions: Is there any
common ground among these articles? Are they speaking to each other? Are they speaking the
same language? What do your conclusions tell you/us about the promise and pitfalls of
transdisciplinarity?

Week 10, November 4
In no more than two single-spaced pages, present the main outlines for a research project large
enough to become an M.A. thesis. This should include a discussion of the topic, a presentation
of the themes and questions you hope to explore, and a description of the disciplinary or
theoretical approach you intend to pursue. Also discuss what kind of research (field work,
experimental, archival, for example) you will need to perform to complete this project.

Week 12, November 18
Create an annotated critical bibliography on your topic. A critical bibliography should not
include all the sources for your project, but it should include the major publications on your
topic. Your annotations should both summarize AND evaluate the works. They should also
describe why they are on your list (i.e. how they have contributed to and/or influenced the field
and how you intend to use them).
**Project Proposal:**
Your project proposal should consist of two parts, a narrative and a bibliography. The narrative should a) describe in general terms the scope of the project; b) explain the basic ideas, problems, or questions of the study; c) situate the project within the extant relevant literature; d) explain how the project rightly belongs within the field of gender and women’s studies; e) describe how the project is significant and to whom; f) describe the methodology for the project.

The narrative portion of the proposal should be no longer than eight double-spaced pages; the bibliography should be no longer than two.

**The first draft of the grant proposal is due December 3; the final draft is due December 17.**

**GRADING SCALE**

93-100  A  
88-92   AB  
83-87   B  
78-82   BC  
70-77   C  
60-69   D  
0-59    F

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

September 2  Gender and Women’s Studies: The Academic Branch of a Social Movement?  
September 9  Feminism and Theories of Knowledge  
September 16 Feminism, Reading, and Writing  
September 23 Feminism and Theories of Seeing  
September 30 Feminism as a Social Movement: The Case of the United States  
October 7   Feminism as a Social Movement: A Global Perspective  
October 14  Approaching Bodies  
October 21  Sexed and Gendered Bodies  
October 28  Bodies Beautiful  
November 4  Gender, Race, and Colonial Bodies  
November 11 Sexualized Bodies  
November 18 Theorizing Women’s Labor and the Sexual Division of Labor  
November 25 Gender, Women, and Work: Historical Approaches  
December 2  Gender, Race, and Cultures of Work  
December 9  Sex Work
UNIT I: Feminism

September 2

Gender and Women’s Studies: The Academic Branch of a Social Movement?

Joan Wallach Scott, ed., Women’s Studies on the Edge (Duke University Press, 2008)
All except the Martin piece


Based upon your readings for the session, please write a “think piece” that describes some of the current tensions within the field (if it can be called that) of Gender and Women’s Studies. After reading these pieces, how do you justify Gender and Women’s Studies’ continued presence in the academy? Or do you?

September 9

Feminism and Theories of Knowledge


For today’s reading response, please choose one of the articles above, and 1) identity its thesis, and 2) describe how the thesis is developed and supported over the course of the article.

September 16  **Feminism, Reading, and Writing**

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* [1929].
Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: La Frontera* (San Francisco: Spinsters, 1999), excerpts.

Choose one of more of the readings for today and relate it (them) to one or more of the readings for a previous week. For example, do any of these readings contribute to the discussion of standpoint theory? Does Virginia Woolf have anything to tell us about the continued need (or not) for Gender and Women’s Studies?

September 23  **Feminism and Theories of Seeing**


Choose two of the articles above (I would recommend that you not use van Zoonen for this) and describe how the two pieces relate to each other. Are they interested in similar issues? Are they exploring similar or different themes?
Are they making similar or different sorts of arguments? Are the approaches similar or different? How so? Are they responding to each other?

September 30  **Feminism as a Social Movement: The Case of the United States**


**Summarize Enke’s book and relate her main point. Summarize each chapter of the book and explain how it contributes to and develops her argument. Identify any theoretical or methodological commitments at play in the text.**

October 7  **Feminism as a Social Movement: A Global Perspective**


**Choose two of the articles above and pay close attention to the evidence the authors use to make and support their claims. Write a reaction paper engaging the following: What kinds of evidence do the authors present to substantiate their cases? Is the evidence sufficient to support their arguments? Where is the evidence particularly persuasive; where is the evidence weak? Is there enough detail? Is the evidence relevant? Current?**
UNIT II: Bodies

October 14  Approaching Bodies


Identify, describe, and examine at least three themes raised by these readings.

October 21  Sexed and Gendered Bodies


These readings all explore how bodies acquire sex and gender. Engaging with ALL of the readings, examine and analyze how the authors are part of a larger conversation about the nature and construction of sex and gender.

October 28  Bodies Beautiful


Choose one of the readings and provide a critical reaction to it. This should include a summary of the article and its argument, an identification of the author’s theoretical or methodological commitments, and an evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses.

November 4  **Gender, Race, and Colonial Bodies**


Respond as you see fit to any or all of these readings.

November 11  **Sexualized Bodies**

Prepare three discussion questions based upon these readings. Explain why these questions are especially appropriate to further our understanding of the material.

**UNIT III: Work**

November 18  **Theorizing Women’s Labor and the Sexual Division of Labor**


**Describe and examine how some of the themes, issues, and/or approaches raised in these readings overlap with some of the themes, issues, and/or approaches raised in earlier readings.**

November 25  **Gender, Women, and Work: Historical Approaches**


Described and analyzed how these works are part of a larger conversation about women and work. Where are they making similar claims and engaging similar issues? Are there ways in which they are quite different, either in approach, analysis, or conclusion?

December 9  Sex Work


Explain how and in what ways these readings have influenced your personal opinion of the “best” feminist position on sex work.