

**WGST 222: Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary American Society  
Spring 2016**

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**Instructor:** Jennifer Musto, Ph.D.

**Unit:** 1.0

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**Course Description:**

Drawing upon feminist, queer, and social science theories of gender and sexuality, this course will examine transformations in the lives of cisgender and transgender people in contemporary U.S. context. Particular emphasis will be placed on social and cultural disruptions facilitated by technology, broadly construed. Questions we will examine include: To what extent are categories of gender, sexuality, race and class socially constructed? How have our understandings of these categories shifted across time and space and as a result of technology? How do information, networked and mobile technologies shape identities and alter individuals' understanding and performance of gender, sexuality, race and class? Finally, how have recent scientific, technological, and legal changes reconstituted the boundaries between self and other? On and offline space?

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**Course Objectives:**

1. Gain familiarity with key concepts and different interdisciplinary approaches to the study of gender, sexuality, race, and technology
  2. Develop critical thinking skills by analyzing how ideas about gender and sexuality differ across time and space and across racial and class differences
  3. Cultivate critical media literacy skills of gender, sexuality, and race as it emerges in "old" and "new" media
  4. Hone digital curatorial skills by combining original content with digital ephemera such as texts, tweets, and still and moving images
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## COURSE TOPICS AND WEEKLY READING SCHEDULE

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*Note: This reading schedule is a roadmap and is subject to change*

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### Week 1

#### ***Introductory Primer on Social Construction and Intersectionality Theory and Key Terms in the Study of Sex, Gender, and Technology***

##### **Read**

- ★ “Rethinking Foundations: Theorizing Sex, Gender, and Sexuality” – Abby Ferber et al. pages 1-3
  - ★ Excerpts from *Intersectionality* reader
  - ★ “Social Construction of Gender” – Christie Launius and Holly Hassel
  - ★ “Gendered Bodies and Identities in a Technological Age” – Eve Shapiro
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### Week 2

#### ***Many Genders Past and Present***

##### **Read**

- ★ ““Strange Country This:” An Introduction to North American Gender Diversity”- Will Roscoe
- ★ “A Social History of Gender and Technology” – Eve Shapiro
- ★ “When Women Become Men at Wellesley” – Ruth Padawer

#### ***Bodies In Transformation, Part 1: Hair***

##### **Read**

- ★ “Unshaven: Armpit Feminists and Women’s Liberation” – Rebecca Herzig
  - ★ “Specter of Excess” –Breanne Fahs and Denise Delgado
  - ★ “Women Who Dye Their Armpit Hair” – Andrew Adam Newman
  - ★ Check Out Instagram, Tumblr or other sites dedicated to hair and its removal/maintenance
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### Week 3

#### ***Bodies In Transformation, Part 2: Surgery***

## Read

- ★ “Biomedical Technologies, Scripts, Genders” –Eve Shapiro
- ★ “Trans-ing Gender: The Surgical Option” – Mercedes Allen
- ★ “Mutilating Gender” – Dean Spade

## ***Bathroom Politics and Gender Policing***

### Read

- ★ “Bathroom Battlegrounds and Penis Panics” – Kristen Schilt and Laurel Westbrook
  - ★ “Making Bathrooms More ‘Accommodating’” – Emily Bazelon
  - ★ “In All Gender Restrooms, the Signs Reflect the Times” –Aimee Lee Ball
  - ★ “Boston City Hall Now Has Gender Neutral Bathrooms” - Kristin Toussaint
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## Week 4

### ***Sex and Sexuality, Part 1: Sexual Identity and its Limits***

#### Read

- ★ “Anthropology Rediscovered Sexuality: A Theoretical Comment” –Carole Vance

#### **Choose At Least One Of The Following Readings to Read:**

- “The Perils and Pleasures of Sex for Trans People” – Harper Jean Tobin
  - “Bisexuality and Bi Identity” – PJ McGann
  - “Straight Dude Seeks Same: Mapping the Relationship Between Sexual Identities, Practices, and Cultures” –Jane Ward
  - “How Much Sex Is Healthy? The Pleasures of Asexuality” –Eunjung Kim
  - “Geisha of a Different Kind: Gay Asian Men and the Gendering of Sexual Identity” – Chong-suk Han
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## Week 5

### ***Race and Racialization***

#### Read

- ★ “The Theory of Racial Formation” – Michael Omi and Howard Winant
- ★ *Excerpt from The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation After the Genome* – Alondra Nelson
- ★ “Multiracial Asian Americans in Visual Culture” –Lelani Nishime
- ★ “From Multiracial to Transgender?” –Kristen Schilt and Jenifer Bratter (**recommended, especially pages 77-83**)
- ★ 2015 Pew Report – “Multiracial in America: Proud, Diverse, and Growing in Numbers” (**recommended**)
  - Also **recommended** Pew YouTube Clips:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBaYzAx3Ymw>

## ***Race, Identity, and Passing***

### **Read**

- ★ “Rachel Dolezal a Lesson in How Racism Works” - Michael Jeffries
  - ★ “Cyberrace” – Lisa Nakamura
  - ★ Excerpt from “Inequality: Can Social Media Resolve Social Divisions” – danah boyd
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## **Week 6**

### ***Sex and Sexuality, Part 2: Critiques of ‘Born This Way’***

#### **Read**

- ★ “What’s Wrong With Be(Com)ing Queer? Biological Determinism as Discursive Queer Hegemony” –Shannon Weber
- ★ “Critically Queer” –Judith Butler (**recommended**)

### ***Online Identity***

#### **Read**

- ★ “Online Identity” - Alice Marwick
  - ★ Excerpt from *It’s Complicated* – “Identity: Why Do Teens Seem Strange Online” – danah boyd
  - ★ “Information Technologies and Gendered Identity Work” – Eve Shapiro
  - ★ Case Study: Focus on \*Trans Organizing” –Eve Shapiro
  - ★ “I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience” –Alice Marwick and danah boyd (**recommended**)
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## **Week 7**

### ***Neoliberalism, Postfeminism, and Gendered Labor***

#### **Read**

- ★ “Neoliberalising Feminism” - Elisabeth Prügl
- ★ “Female Labor and Digital Media: Pattie Maes, Postfeminism, and the Birth of Social Networking Technologies – Jonathan Cohn
- ★ “Why Are Women Leaving the Tech Industry in Doves” –Tracey Lien
- ★ “When Women Were Computers” – Jennifer Light (**recommended**)
- ★ “MIT Computer Scientists Demonstrate the Hard Way That Gender Still Matters” –Elena Glassman, Neha Narula, and Jean Yang (**recommended**)
- ★ “C is Manly, Python is for n00bs” : How False Stereotypes Turn Into Technical “Truths” – Jean Yang and Ari Rabkin (**recommended**)

### ***Surveillance, Capital, Privacy, and Labor***

#### **Read**

- ★ Forward to *Feminist Surveillance Studies* – Mark Andrejevic
- ★ “The Public Domain: Social Surveillance in Everyday Life” – Alice Marwick

- ★ “The Internet’s Unholy Marriage to Capitalism” –John Bellamy Foster and Robert McChesney
  - ★ “The Laborers Who Keep Dick Picks and Beheadings out of Your Facebook Feed” – Adrian Chen
  - ★ “What Life For a Bangladeshi Click Farmer Looks Like” – Clinton Nguyen
  - ★ “How Companies Learn Your Secrets” – Charles Duhigg
  - ★ “Face to Anti-Face” – Adam Harvey
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## Week 8

### ***Microcelebrity and Authenticity***

#### **Read**

- ★ “Microcelebrity and the Branded Self” –Theresa Senft
- ★ “Posting Racism and Sexism: Authenticity, Agency, and Self-Reflexivity in Social Media” –Rachel Dubrofsky and Megan Wood
- ★ Short Excerpt from *Status Update* – Alice Marwick

### ***Fashion and Consumption***

#### **Read**

- ★ Excerpts from *Muslim Fashion: Contemporary Style Cultures* – Reina Lewis
  - ★ “Case Study: Focus on Social Networking and the Self” –Eve Shapiro
  - ★ “Blog Ambition: Fashion, Feelings, and the Political Economy of the Digital Raced Body” – Minh-Ha Pham
  - ★ In *Fashion, Gender Lines Are Blurring* – Ruth La Ferla
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## Week 9

### ***Mediations of Sex via Tech***

#### **Read**

- ★ “Intimate Surviellance” –Karen Levy
  - ★ Excerpts From *Sexting Panic: Rethinking Criminalization, Privacy, and Consent* – Amy Hasinoff
  - ★ Excerpt “Moral Panics, Sexual Rights, and Cultural Anger” – Gilbert Herdt
  - ★ “The Women! They’re Using Gadgets and Having Sex!” – Amanda Hess
  - ★ “In Online Dating, ‘Sextortion’ and Scams” – Kate Murphy
  - ★ “Hundreds of Nude Photos Jolt Colorado School” – Kassondra Cloos and Julie Turkewitz
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## Week 10

## ***Technologies of Pleasure: A Condensed Overview of Vibrators, Orgasm, And App Facilitated Dating***

### **Read**

- ★ “Socially Camouflaged Technologies: The Case of the Electromechanical Vibrator” – Rachel Maines
  - ★ “Getting, Giving, Having, Faking: Orgasm and the Performance of Pleasure” – Brianne Fahs
  - ★ Short Excerpts from
    - *Girls and Sex: Navigating the Complicated New Landscape* – Peggy Orenstein
    - *Labor of Love: The Invention of Dating* – Moira Weigl
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## **Week 11**

### ***Contracts and Family-Making***

#### **Read**

- ★ Excerpt from *Love’s Promises: How Formal & Informal Contracts Shape All Kinds of Families*
- ★ Excerpt from *The Argonauts* – Maggie Nelson
- ★ “Queer Feelings” – Sara Ahmed

### ***Disrupting Reproduction***

#### **Read**

- ★ “FTM in the Fertility Clinic: Troubling the Gendered Boundaries of Reproduction” – K. Surkan
  - ★ “The Industrial Womb” – France Widdance Twine
  - ★ “Sperm Donor Offspring Use Powerful Information Technology to Seek Parents and Siblings” – Mara Williams
  - ★ “Cold Comfort: Tech Jobs and Egg Freezing” – Rebecca Mead
  - ★ “The High Tech Future of the Uterus” – Katherine Don
  - ★ “Why I Froze My Eggs (And You Should Too)” – Sarah Elizabeth Richards
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## **Week 12**

### ***Tracking (...and Sharing and Searching) Our Way Into Algorithmic, Quantified, and Big Data Being***

#### **Read**

- ★ “Self-Reflection: I Tweet Therefore I Am” – Sherry Turkle
- ★ “Google Search: Hypervisibility as a Means of Rendering Black Women and Girls Invisible” - Safiya Umoja Noble

- ★ “Quantified Selves” – Jill Walker Rettberg
- ★ “The Relevance of Algorithms” – Tarleton Gillespie
- ★ “Searching for Sex” –Seth Stephens-Davidowitz
- ★ “How Period Trackers Have Changed Girl Culture” – Roni Caryn Rabin
- ★ “Think Again: Big Data” – Kate Crawford

### ***Data, Ethics, Hacking, and Harm***

#### **Read**

- ★ “Solving All the Wrong Problems” – Allison Arieff
  - ★ Excerpts from “Data and Discrimination: Collected Essays”
    - “The Networked Nature of Algorithmic Discrimination” –danah boyd, Karen Levy, and Alice Marwick
    - “Big Data and Human Rights” –Virginia Eubanks
  - ★ “Can An Algorithm Be Unethical?” – Christian Sandvig, Kevin Hamilton, Karrie Karahalios, and Cedric Langbort
  - ★ “Hacking” – Gabriella Coleman
  - ★ “Big Data and Due Process: Toward a Framework to Redress Predictive Privacy Harms” – Kate Crawford and Jason Schultz
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## **Week 13**

### ***Gender, Race, Sex, Surveillance, and Citizenship***

#### **Read**

- ★ “Legally Sexed: Birth Certificates and Transgender Citizens” –Lisa Jean Moore and Paisley Currah
- ★ “Citizenship Denied: The Racialization of Men and Women Post 9/11” – Saher Selod

### ***Networked Vulnerability***

#### **Read**

- ★ “The Internet is Full of Jerks, Because the World is Full of Jerks: What Feminist Theory Teaches Us About the Internet” – Adrienne Shaw
  - ★ “Why Women Aren’t Welcome on the Internet” – Amanda Hess
  - ★ “The Serial Swatter” – Jason Fagone
  - ★ “Why Do We Tolerate Revenge Porn?” – Emily Bazelon
  - ★ “Who Spewed That Abuse? Anonymous YikYak App Isn’t Telling” – Jonathan Mahler
  - ★ Online Harassment Report from Pew (**recommended**)
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## **Week 14**

### ***What Barbie Can Teach Us About Gender, Race, and Remix Culture***

#### **Read**

- ★ “Tools and Toys: Communicating Gendered Positions Towards Technology” - Elisabeth Kelan
- ★ “From Women and Technology to Gendered Technoscience” - Judith Wacjman
- ★ “Barbie Really Is A Computer Engineer: How I Remixed That Terrible Mattel Book” – Casey Fiesler
- ★ Visit Feminist Hacker Barbie
- ★ “Barbie Has Some Royal Competition in Nigeria”

***Life Hack: Health, Happiness & Technologies of the Self***

**Read**

- ★ “Web 2.0 Technologies of the Self” - Maria Bakardjieva and Georgia Gaden
  - ★ “Treat Us Right!” – Olivia Banner
  - ★ Check Out: [Track Your Happiness App](#)
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