Introduction to Gender and Sexuality Studies
WGS 100—Fall 2026
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:00pm-5:15pm, Hunter North C110



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> "This problematizing of gender places her, in my view, out of the traditional symbolics of female gender and it is our task to make a place for this different social subject. In doing so, we are less interested in joining the ranks of female genderedness than gaining the *insurgent* ground as a female social subject. Actually claiming the monstrosity (as a female with the potential to 'name'), which her culture imposes in blindness, 'Sapphire' might rewrite after all a radically different text for female empowerment." –Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book"

> "You are all fabulous creatures, each and every one."—Prior, *Angels in America*

This course is a critical introduction to the study of gender and sexuality in cross-cultural, historical, and contemporary perspectives. It will help us to understand the social construction of sex, gender, and sexuality. In addition, the course will deal with structural and institutional forms of disenfranchisement by examining the relationship between gender and the state, colonialism, law and

capital. Students will cultivate a critical lens for ways in which sex, gender and sexuality intersect with race, class, embodiment, and age, and how these confluences shape systems of power and privilege.

Our bodies fail us as they give us pleasure. As we're joyfully and painfully aware, the body, with all of its complexities and contradictions, is formed out of the power dynamics of the social, economic, political, historical and cultural. What do others call you? What do you call yourself? What do others *think* they see when they see you, with all of baggage that we all carry around about identity? How have you chosen to self-fashion? Do you live up to the normative standards of gender and sexuality? Hint: none of us do but this failure is spectacular.

This semester we're going to engage with how one becomes a subject with a gender and sexuality and the forms of intimacy (e.g. marriage) and the spaces (e.g. the home) that prop up these identities. More importantly, we'll focus on the inventive ways in which identities are undone, hyper-embraced and lived out, querying how remediations of gender and sexuality are results of interlocking forms of oppression. Rather than demand inclusion into normative identity categories, what might it mean to reimagine other ways of being and belonging? We'll specifically consider, given the U.S.'s history of slavery and colonialization, the ways in which certain bodies are not entitled to subjectivity. The slave, for instance, is rendered an object, a process that undoes gender. Gender, then, becomes a province of whiteness as the white woman's femininity exists only as it is defined in opposition to the black object, meaning that identity categories are part of a larger racialized hierarchy. Gender is an effect of race. This is our ground zero. However, as Hortense Spillers' above quotation lays bare, rather than aspire to proper femininity upon Emancipation, what might it mean for black women to reimagine alternative forms of being beyond normative gender identities predicated on fictions of white supremacy?

Learning Goals: (1) **Describe** the contributions of disenfranchised groups across historical and social locations. (2) **Use** gender, class, race, dis/ability, sexuality, and nationality as central and intersecting categories of analysis. (3) **Conduct** interdisciplinary research using critical gender, class, race, and sexuality theories and intersectional modes of inquiry. (4) **Access, critically evaluate, and communicate** information – including media sources – effectively through writing and oral presentations. (5) **Connect** academic work with social and political realities outside the university. (6) **Apply** social justice principles and ethics to their own lives and their engagement with surrounding communities.

Course Requirements

Brightspace: Use OF BRIGHTSPACE IS REQUIRED for this course. You MUST have a CUNY email to use Brightspace. If you have more than one CUNY email find out which one the system has attached to Brightspace, that is the one you will need to check for class emails related to the course. If you need help accessing the site or have technical questions, contact the IT help desk at http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/icit/help-support/student-help-desk. The class syllabus, announcements and other materials will be posted on the Brightspace site and should be checked regularly for updates. You are advised to enable email notifications for new announcements in your personal notification settings in Brightspace.

Attendance Policy: You are expected to attend all in person classes and to be on time. You are allowed **two** absences without penalty. On the third absence, your participation grade will be reduced by one letter grade for each additional absence. Absences that exhaust the participation grade or if you do not participate in class, will then extend to the final course grade, by one letter grade for each additional absence.

Mental Health Day: You are allowed **one** mental health day over the course of the semester. It is your responsibility to ask your classmates about any missed class discussions.

Assignments

Assignment Policy: All written assignments for this course must have a zerochatgpt (https://www.zerogpt.com) report attached to the assignment, photo of the AI percentage is sufficient. No AI source, including Grammarly, can be used in this course. All written assignments for this course ***will only be accepted electronically*** **and are expected by 11:59pm on the due date**. These electronic submissions must be attached in **WORD only**. Do not send a link via Office 365. You must download and save your paper in 365 to attach it as a word document. **No Google Docs, No PDFs, No Pages, no Cut and Paste** to the body of the email. You are responsible for making sure you send an uncorrupted, readable document. Assignments received after midnight on the due date will not be accepted for **ANY** reason. Your assignments should be saved as: Last name, RP1, RP2, RP3 or RP4 for response papers, Last name, Research for the Research paper.

Response Papers: No outside sources are allowed whatsoever for these papers—no references to other works, dictionaries, no websites—you may only use the text(s) you select. Each student must complete **single page, single-spaced critical** written responses to the readings that correspond to the Group Presentations. For example, the first response paper should be a response to the readings that come before it. The second response paper can only be on the readings that come after the first response paper. *These should not be personal responses*, but responses that offer some critical discussion of the works that can be built upon for a longer paper. You will submit a total of four responses over the course of the semester, so missing one response can have an adverse effect on your grade. If you are unable to submit your response when it is due, simply put your effort into turning the next one in on time. There are three things to remember about the form and content of this response: it **must meet one page requirement, no more, no less (otherwise it is an automatic zero)**; it **must go beyond summary** or description of the text in question; it **must express a *critical* (not personal) opinion or idea** about the text(s), implementing correct grammar, the use of direct textual quotation, and correct citation. Response papers should be emailed to me, not posted on Brightspace (20% of final grade).

Participation: Each student will be responsible for *actively* (speaking at least once per class) participating in all in class discussions and assignments. Class attendance is NOT participation. You MUST bring all readings scheduled for the day to each class meeting. Attendance and participation are critical components of this course. **If you are not in class, you are not participating in class discussions. Therefore, regardless of your reasons for missing the class, more than two absences will affect your final grade.** Therefore, please do not email me your reasons for missing class or bring me a note. Failure to participate will get you a final grade in the B range, if you have an A on everything else! (**20% of final grade**).

Presentations: Each student will teach some aspect of an assigned topic to the class in a group format. This may involve dramatic readings, critical commentary, and the presentation of online materials. This presentation should not be a summary of the assigned reading, but an interpretation that offers the audience a deeper understanding of the work itself from a historical, biographical and literary perspective. If you are absent **FOR ANY REASON on the day that you are scheduled to present, you must find someone from another group to switch days with you or receive a zero for the assignment** (20% of final grade).

Formal Essay: No outside sources are allowed whatsoever for these papers—no references to other works, dictionaries, no websites—you may only use the two texts you select. Rather than simply presenting a narrative or factual summary, this essay should forward a focused claim on two works and develop a well-supported argument *with specific reference to the text(s)* read in this class, via

quotations. This essay must be five to seven ***full,* double-spaced,** pages in length. Failure to meet the expected page length requirement will result in a grade of zero (20% of final grade).

Final Essay: TBA. (20% of final grade).

Course Policies

As instructor I reserve the right to alter the syllabus throughout the semester to meet the needs of the class.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious academic violation that results in an **automatic F** in this course, as well as a record of the violation on the student's transcript, and possible suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are expected to be familiar with the accepted academic principles regarding plagiarism. Written assignments from a previous or concurrent course cannot be used without prior permission of the instructor. Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures." CUNY's Academic Integrity Policy with Revisions about Gen-AI: Academic Integrity Policy – The City University of New York *(https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-resources/academic-integrity-policy/).*

With the emergence of ChatGPT, it is now possible to have AI text generators produce written work that you can pass off as your own. However, this writing is generally mediocre, lacks insight, and is frequently misguided**. Copying from text generators remains plagiarism**, as does **copying from another person or from a generative AI system or allowing others to copy work submitted for credit or a grade. This includes uploading work or submitting class assignments or exams to third party platforms and websites beyond those assigned for the class, such as commercial homework aggregators, without the proper authorization of a professor. Any use of generative AI tools must be in line with the usage policy for specific assignments as defined in the syllabus and/or communicated by the course instructor. Submitting content generated by another person or an AI tool or any other source as solely your own work as your own, including, but not limited to, material obtained in whole or in part from commercial study or homework help websites, or content generated or altered by AI or digital paraphrasing tools without proper citation. Using artificial intelligence tools to generate content for assignments or exams, including but not limited to language models or code generators, without written authorization from the instructor.** The College is committed to enforcing CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures, see **https://hunter.cuny.edu/center-for-online-learning/online-learning-resources/academic-integrity-policy/**

Hunter College Policy on Disabilities: "In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and providing appropriate accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. Students with documented disabilities (including Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning disabilities) are encouraged to consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. To begin the process of requesting services and submitting documentation, students should register through the Accommodate Platform, which is accessible via the AccessABILITY page on the Hunter College website. The platform allows students to manage their accommodation requests and communicate directly with the
office. For further information or assistance, please call: (212) 772-4857 or accessab@hunter.cuny.edu."

Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct: "In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships.

Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).

b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the Director of the Office of Student Conduct *(https://hunter.cuny.edu/students/student-affairs/office-of-student-conduct/contact/)* CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link: Sexual-misconduct-8.30.18-PSM-2018- 005.pdf (*https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/ovsa/policies/Sexual-misconduct-8.30.18-PSM-2018-005.pdf*

CUNY Verification of Student Enrollment Policy: Federal Title IV regulations require that a student begin attendance to qualify for Title IV aid. The College must be able to document verification of enrollment in each course or participation in an academically related event connected to that course. A student is considered to have begun attendance if the student attends at least one day of class or is otherwise active and participating in the course or academically related activity (e.g. by submitting assignments, attending a required study group, academic conference or tutorial) for each course used to determine Title IV eligibility. CUNY Verification of Student Enrollment Policy: *(https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/registrar/resources/VerificationofStudentEnrollmentPolicy10.20.17-1.pdf)*

Gender Pronoun and Name: The Department of Women and Gender Studies affirms all forms of gender expression and identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to correct me on your gender pronoun. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Learning Goals: (1) **Describe** the contributions of disenfranchised groups across historical and social locations. (2) **Use** gender, class, race, dis/ability, sexuality, and nationality as central and intersecting categories of analysis. (3) **Conduct** interdisciplinary research using critical gender, class, race, and sexuality theories and intersectional modes of inquiry. (4) **Access, critically evaluate, and communicate** information – including media sources – effectively through writing and oral presentations. (5) **Connect** academic work with social and political realities outside the university. (6) **Apply** social justice principles and ethics to their own lives and their engagement with surrounding communities.

Guidelines for Success

Guidelines for Formal Papers (1) All papers must have a clear and concise thesis statement. **(2)** All papers must focus two texts by two different authors. **(3)** All papers must be five to seven **FULL** double-spaced pages in length. If you submit a paper less than the required number of pages, you will receive an automatic zero, regardless of content **(4)** All papers must be written in MLA style and include a Works Cited page. **(5)** All papers must have a well thought out title and page numbers. **(6)** All papers must be written in Times New Roman, 12 pt. font **(7)** There must be no extra spaces between paragraphs and your name, date, etc. should be single spaced in the top left-hand corner. **(8)** All papers must use textual evidence to support claims (you must quote the texts) and you may not use more than two (2) offset/block quotes in your paper. **(9)** There must never be the familiar "you" in any

paper, ever. **(10) All papers must be on texts we have read in class; no outside texts can be used in your papers.**

Guidelines for Response Papers: There are three things to remember about the form and content of this response: it **must be one full page and not exceed one (typed and single-spaced) page**; it **must go beyond summary** or description of the text in question; it **must express a *critical* (not merely personal) opinion or idea** about the text(s). Your response must address (at least one of) the readings *listed on the syllabus for the week that the response is due*—please do not skip more than a day ahead or write about works we've already covered in earlier weeks.

Guidelines for Participation: Attendance is not participation. Engaged participation involves coming to class ready for discussion and actively speaking and asking questions. Be prepared to speak in every class. An **A** grade for class participation is awarded when students regularly *initiate* discussion. This means coming to class thoroughly familiar with the assigned reading and, therefore, prepared to raise questions, to open discussion, to identify topics of interest in the reading, and to actively engage other students in the discussion. (Obviously, this does not mean monopolizing a discussion, or shutting others out, or talking for its own sake rather than to make a point about the topic under discussion.) A **B** grade for class participation is awarded to students who participate regularly and productively in class discussion, who are prepared, and who are willing to engage. **B** discussants differ from **A** students in that the latter are self-starters who do not rely on the instructor's questions to set the agenda for discussion. A **C** grade for class participation is awarded to those who participate on a regular basis, though less frequently than the **B** student. **C** discussants' participation may be indicative that they are not well-prepared for class or have not given thought to assigned materials. A **D** grade for class participation is given to those who contribute only infrequently to the discussion. An **F** grade results from non-participation in class discussion. Of course, participation is impossible if the putative participant is not in class. Frequent absences mandate **F** grades.

Reading Schedule

9-01-26: Introduction and Course Overview. Ice-breaker activity: How do you self-identify? How do identity markers play into your self-presentation and what others *think* they see when they see you? What inspires how your self-fashion given your various identities?

9-03-26: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and **Susan B. Anthony**, "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions: Women's Rights Conventions, Seneca Falls;" **Sojourner Truth**, Akron Speech: "Ain't I a Woman?;"

9-08-26: Goldman, "Women's Suffrage," https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/goldman/works/1911/woman-suffrage.htm (Brightspace).

9-10-26: Davis, *Women, Race and Class,* chapters 1-3.

9-15-26: Davis, *Women, Race and Class,* chapters 4-7.

9-17-26: Davis, *Women, Race and Class,* chapters 8, 9 and 11.

9-22-26: Wells-Barnett, *The Red Record.* **James Baldwin**, "Everybody's Protest Novel" (Brightspace).

9-24-26: *Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice* on https://youtu.be/nXZFdGhhMnk **NO in class meeting**

9-29-26: GROUP PRESENTATION 1. RESPONSE PAPER 1.

10-01-26: Michel Foucault, "We Victorians" from *The History of Sexuality, Volume I.* (Brightspace).

10-06-26: **Siobhan Somerville**, "Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in the United States" (Brightspace).

10-08-26: Stevens and Hall, "The Medical Construction of Lesbianism" (Brightspace).

10-15-26: Robert Reid-Pharr, "The Shock of Gary Fisher" (Brightspace). **Kara Walker**, Silhouette series and "A Subtlety, or The Marvelous Sugar Baby" (in-class viewing).

10-20-26: GROUP PRESENTATION 2. RESPONSE PAPER 2 DUE.

10-22-26: Hortense Spillers, Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe (Brightspace).

10-27-26: Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color"; interview, "Kimberle Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More Than Two Decades Later" **(**Brightspace).

10-29-26: Dorothy Allison, "A Question of Class;" **Mcintosh,** "White Privilege" (Brightspace).

11-03-26: No class meeting. Watch:
https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality#t-4148

11-05-26: GROUP PRESENTATION 3. MIDTERM DUE.

11-10-26: Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class and Sex" https://www.roosevelthouse.hunter.cuny.edu/devdev/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/AudreLorde-Writings3.pdf; **Robin Hustle**, "What Prostitutes, Nurses and Nannies Have in Common: On Emotional Labor" **(**Brightspace).

11-12-26: Julia Serano, from *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*;

11-17-26: Feinberg, "We Are All Works in Progress;" **Patrick Califia**, from *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex;* (Brightspace).

11-19-26: GROUP PRESENTATION 4. **RESPONSE PAPER 3 DUE.**

11-24-26: Zora Neale Hurston, "The Characteristics of Negro Expression;" **Gloria Anzaldua**, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue**"** (Brightspace).

12-01-26: A.M. Homes, "Adults Alone;" **Sandra Cisneros**, "Never Marry a Mexican" (Brightspace).

12-03-26: Sherman Alexie, "The Toughest Indian in the World" (Brightspace).

12-08-26: Junot Diaz, "Miss Lora" and "Drown" (Brightspace).

12-10-26: Last day of classes. **GROUP PRESENTATION 5. RESPONSE PAPER 4 DUE.**

12-15-26: FINAL PAPER DUE.