

WS 202: Introduction to Contemporary Feminisms & Gender Theories

Jessica Travers | Summer Session | CRN: XXX

CONTACT INFORMATION

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OFFICE HOURS & LOCATIONS

Office Hours: By appointment
Note: In-person and Skype office hours available
Office Location: Wells Hall, room C707
Skype Address: [jessica.travers](https://www.skype.com/people/jessica.travers).

COURSE MATERIALS

- Texts & Films:
 - Feinberg, Leslie. *Stone Butch Blues: A Novel*. 1993. Alyson Books, 2003.
 - hooks, bell. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. South End Press, 2000.
 - Jagose, Annamarie. *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York UP, 1996.
 - Lopez, Erika. *Flaming Iguanas: An Illustrated All-Girl Road Novel Thing*. Simon & Schuster, 1997.
 - Lorde, Audre. *Zami, a New Spelling of My Name*. Trumansburg: Crossing Press, 1982. Print.
 - Morris, Jan. *Conundrum*. New York: Harcourt, 1974. Print.
 - *Paris is Burning*. Dir. Jenny Livingston. Miramax, 1990. Netflix or Amazon Instant
 - Walters, Margaret. *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2005.
- All other materials are provided in the form of PDFs on HYPERLINK "<https://d2l.msu.edu>" Desire to Learn.
- Reliable access to a computer or tablet with Internet capabilities
- A functioning email account & D2L account

PREREQUISITES

- WS 201
- Not open to freshmen

COURSE DESCRIPTION

WS 202 approaches theories of feminism and gender from a variety of intellectual, political, cultural, religious, sexual, racial, ethnic, national, and global perspectives. This course pays particular attention to feminism through theoretical lenses that study gender and sexuality. In order to contextualize the theoretical work, theory is paired with memoir. In other words, each week students will read feminist or queer theoretical texts along side a book of memoir. This pairing of theory and memoir works to help students put scholarly and theoretical ideas in conversation with lived experiences. Each main unit offers a new pairing. Rather than building on each other, each unit is in conversation with the prior and subsequent units. This course is not set up linearly or chronologically; it is set up conversationally. This structure serves to mirror how genders and sexualities are not hierarchical in nature, but rather how genders and sexualities exist as back and forth, messy, muddy, imbricated experiences.

COURSE TRAJECTORY & LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Once successfully completing WS 202 students will have a deeper understanding of foundational feminist, gender, and queer theories. Because this online section is compressed, the course focuses primarily on Western feminism -- this, of course, does not mean to discount or delegitimize feminist thought from global contexts outside of the Western context. With that said, students will first study and wonder about introductory Western feminist concepts and history in order to ensure everyone has a shared working vocabulary. From there, each week students will read and/or view texts that introduce a specific feminist perspective, theory, and/or lived experience, these include intersectionality, raced bodies, queerness, drag, and gender non-conformity. In order to tease-out and work through the texts and theories, students are expected to use inquiry as a means toward discovery. This inquiry-discovery process is guided by course assignments. Students are assigned discussion posts, analytical vlog responses, a paper first draft, and the final critical paper. For all assignments students should aim to put their own questions and discoveries in conversation with the theories and authors presented by course texts. Students should consider how class materials both confirm and complicate how gender, race, sexuality, ability, social class, citizenship, and other lived experiences overlap, inform, and complicate each other.

ASSIGNMENTS *NOTE: ALL ASSIGNMENTS SUBMITTED VIA D2L

• **Discussion Posts -- 6 total, 25 points each**

- For each Discussion Post (DP) students will write a well-developed formal original post (OP) of approximately 2-3 paragraphs in length that responds to a question posted by the instructor. Then, students will be expected to engage with questions/ issues raised by 1 or more of their peers' original responses via a Peer Post (PP).
- These are graded on effort, critical analysis, and completion.
- Each OP will be worth 50% of that DP grade. Each PP is worth 50% of that DP grade.
- Please do not wait until the last possible hour/minute to submit your work. Discussion Posts will close promptly at 11:45 pm, so please check the due *BY* dates and plan ahead. Also, remember that technology tends to fail us. Take precautions. Always save a copy of your work (ie in a Word document and then cut and paste it into the post box).
- These DPs are designed with the intention of creating a discussion environment whereby students take an active role in each other's learning process. *You will be graded on how much you contribute to the learning environment of the discussion threads* If you do not add anything to the class via your discussion posts then you will not earn credit.
- Peer Posts: Simply posting a "Yes, I agree" or "I disagree" in response to another student's post does NOT constitute a discussion; nor do statements such as "This is a very good post. I have nothing to add to it," "I really like the way you write, I would not change a thing" or "This is great! I hadn't thought about it that way." Do not respond to the first peer post you see. Read through peer posts and find one that grabs your attention.
- When you find a point you agree with, provide *further evidence from class materials* supporting it. When you come across a point you disagree with, introduce *evidence from class materials* to the contrary. Explain your reasoning and back it up with concrete evidence from a *variety* of course materials. Feel free to also suggest different angles from which a point can be viewed and pose questions that will stimulate further discussion. In everything that you do, remember to provide proper citations.
- And please, expand! Be part of the conversation. Ask each other questions and inquire about your own assumptions. Writing fully developed paragraphs is very important. You are expected to present your informed ideas (i.e. to refer to required readings/videos/web links provided by the instructor).
- Please do not cut and paste directly from your original response to the prompt when you respond to peers' posts. Needless to say, do not cut and paste from peers' work
- **Lastly, but importantly: I expect that we treat each other with respect, we will not denigrate or dismiss the opinions of others (although, respectfully disagreeing is okay, even encouraged). In our discussions and online classroom we tolerate all identity expressions -- including all race, religious, gender, and sexual orientation.**

• **Vlogs -- 6 total, 50 points each**

- Each week students will record and submit a vlog (video blog) to the appropriate D2L dropbox. Each vlog should be approximately 5 minutes long -- feel free to write your vlog out and then read from it or speak without notes; in either case, students are expected to prepare before recording in order to illustrate clear ideas and critical analysis.
- For each vlog students are expected to analyze NOT summarize two of the week's texts.
- These vlogs will prepare students to write the critical, analytical final paper. In other words, consider the vlogs as mini-final papers. Note: the last (#6) vlog should analyze two of the texts the student plans on incorporating into their final paper.
- To prepare for vlogs, ask yourself questions like: How do these texts complicate each other? How do the texts overlap and why? How do they diverge and why? How might the texts speak to other ideas from the course? Does the theory help shed light on the memoir or vice versa? What are the texts' claims? Who is the audience? What is the central purpose of each text? Do you agree, disagree, or both? Why?

- **First Draft of Final Paper: Putting Yourself in Conversation with our Foremothers, 150 points**
 - Do not wait until the last week of the session to start thinking or writing this paper. Start thinking about it and drafting early. Refer below for paper guidelines. Once you have a claim or central insight and a complete first draft, email it to me or visit office hours (in-person or via Skype) to discuss the direction of your thinking. Students may submit this draft to me anytime during the semester, but NO LATER than the end of week 5.
 - Students will receive feedback from me on this draft.
- **Final Draft of Final Paper: Putting Yourself in Conversation with our Foremothers, 400 points**
 - For the final paper students are asked to be in conversation with four sources from the course in via a clear argumentative insight. This insight should be the student's and not a re-statement of a source's claims. In other words, the paper should have a clear, original thesis that drives the paper forward and uses sources from the course to help support, contextualize, and historicize that claim.
 - This paper is analytical in nature. Please note: analysis begins with questions.
 - This last paper (5-6 double spaced pages) MUST HAVE A CLEAR AND ORIGINAL ARGUMENT that is central to the paper. Do NOT summarize the course in this final paper. Suggestions: Read the Final Project prompt VERY carefully and thoroughly (the "Guidelines" & "Pitfalls" are especially important). I also suggest revisiting the feedback and comments you have received for your vlogs and first draft. This last essay should reflect your best work.
 - I will NOT be looking for summaries of all the course material. I WILL be looking for inquiry, interpretation, and critical analysis. Show me you understand all the material from the class not by regurgitating it but instead by questioning it, interpreting, and analyzing it – this should be done by way of introducing and proving a debatable thesis statement. Earning a 4.0 on this essay will not be possible if an arguable/debatable claim is not included. Remember scholars and historians give us educated and supported interpretations and opinions, and this is what I will look for from you.
 - A minimum of 4 sources from the course is required (and correct works cited and in-text citations. MLA or APA formatting are both expectable, just be consistent).
 - If you have not yet taken advantage of MSU's writing center (or even if you have) – this is a good time to do so. The writing center provides distance learning help too, should you not be in the area.
 - Do not wait until the last week of the session to start thinking or writing this paper. Start thinking about it and drafting early. Once you have a claim or central insight, I encourage you to email it to me or visit office hours (in-person or via Skype) to discuss the direction of your thinking.
 - Review all material from the term. All the materials and sources from the term build on each other – think about each source as one puzzle piece to a larger picture.

COURSE GRADING

Work graded using five central criteria:

- Quality and Depth of Thinking via critical analysis, discovery, and inquiry
- Persuasiveness and Originality -- including thesis/claim, "so what?" (aka why your claim matters), and evidence to support and prove your claim.
- Organization, Coherence, & Clarity of Communication
- Style and Technique
- All parts of assignment are completed

Point Value Overview & Breakdown (1,000 possible earned points):

- Discussion Posts – 6 total DP posts, 25 points each – 150 points or 15% of final grade
- Vlogs – 6 Vlogs, 50 points each – 300 points or 30% of final grade
- Final Paper First Draft – 150 points or 15% of final grade
- Final Paper Final Draft – 400 points or 40% of final grade

FINAL GRADING SCALE

4.0 = 920 - 1000

3.5 = 850 - 919

3.0 = 800 - 849

2.5 = 750 - 799

2.0 = 700 - 749

1.5 = 650 - 699

1.0 = 600 - 649

0.0 = 00 - 599

WS 202 -- TIPS AND SUCH...

- This course demands a great deal of reading, writing, and critical thinking skills that students will use for the rest of their lives. WS 202 counts for 3 credit hours, and students in a regular summer semester spend 8 hours in class weekly and an additional (approximately) 7-8 hours outside the classroom in preparation and finishing required assignments. The online WS 202 will be little different from an on-campus class in this respect. Be prepared to spend about 15-25 hours a week for this class. If your summer schedule will not permit you to do this, then be advised to take this course at another time.
- Plan ahead, especially for readings. SELF-DISCIPLINE is crucial for your success in this class. This class requires **consistent** and conscientious attention; falling behind in readings and/ or assignments can be detrimental to your learning and grade. Most importantly this class depends on student preparation.
- Student preparation includes not only reading assignments but also participating in discussion posts having thought about the material and ready to question, explore and share your ideas with others. Critical thinking also means having and sharing independent views. Your views will be respected and, NO, you will not be penalized for disagreeing with your classmates or me. However, you will be expected to defend your opinions (using specific evidence from the course material and citing it properly). The idea is to keep an open mind and a willingness to try looking at things from different points of view, and to be respectful and prepared to listen to others' opinions even when you don't agree with them. So please disagree with a view and not the person presenting the view.
- This is not a writing course; however, college level writing/ composition and critical analysis is expected and should be reflected in all assignments.
- Cite properly. Cite direct quotes and paraphrases. You may use MLA or APA style formatting – just be consistent. If you are unfamiliar with how to use in-text citations or create a works cited page, use the Purdue OWL website. You are expected to cite properly for ALL assignments.
- Students who are concerned about their grade should set up individual online conferences with me during office hours throughout the semester—NOT at the very end of the semester. Talking with me at the end of the semester does not afford you the opportunity to improve your grade.
- Be sure to keep up with D2L announcements.

DEADLINE POLICY

NO LATE WORK IS EXCEPTED, unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor.

ACADEMIC FRAUD

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses. Forms of academic dishonesty, including using portions or copies of another person's work or recycling essays from past courses, will not be tolerated. *Any intellectual property (ideas, quotes, graphics, etc.) "borrowed" from outside sources must be properly cited.*

"Plagiarism (from the Latin *plagiarius*, an abductor, and *plagiare*, to steal) is defined by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy on Misconduct in Research as '... the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results or words without giving appropriate credit.' ... At MSU, General Student Regulation 1.00 states in part that 'no student shall claim or submit the academic work of another as one's own.' (For the complete

regulation, see Protection of Scholarship and Grades.) ... Plagiarism may be accidental or blatant and there is even self-plagiarism. However, students are held to the same standards whether or not they knew they were plagiarizing or whether or not they were plagiarizing themselves or someone else" (<https://d2l.msu.edu/d2l/le/content/443874/viewContent/3878807/View> and read MSU's academic fraud/ plagiarism policy)".

Of course, a certain amount of collaboration on writing assignments is allowed and even encouraged. This collaboration can take the form of discussion of ideas, general and specific revision suggestions, and even minor help with editing. However, students who use someone else's work, give someone else work to use, or allow someone else to complete writing or revising work that should be doing themselves are cheating. Students who have questions in this area should see their instructor.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

- **The Writing Center** is for all students interested in receiving additional feedback on writing assignments for any course. For information about Writing Center location, hours, and appointment scheduling, please visit: <http://writing.msu.edu>.
- Student Affairs & Services: <http://studentaffairs.msu.edu/>
- Neighborhood Services: <http://neighborhoods.msu.edu>
- English Language Center: <http://elc.msu.edu/>
- **Please report technology problems to:**
MSU Distance Learning Services
Local: (517) 355 2345
Toll Free: (800) 500 1554 (North America and Hawaii)
Web: D2L Contact form on D2L Help Site

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Students who wish to request disability-related accommodations should contact the **Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities** by visiting the website (www.rcpd.msu.edu), visiting the office (Bessey Hall, room 120), or calling (517-884-7273).

A NOTE REGARDING MANDATORY REPORTING

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. It is my goal that you feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, in your written work, and in our one-on-one meetings. In most cases, I will keep information you share in essays, journals, and other materials submitted for this class private and confidential. However, it is important that you understand that I have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as an instructor/TA which imposes limits to the confidentiality I can extend to students. If, in my capacity as an instructor or TA, I hear from a student that they experienced any form of sexual misconduct, the endangerment of a child, or harm to oneself or others, either on or off campus, during their tenure here at MSU, irrespective of who was involved in the incident(s), I will have to inform the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) as well as the MSU Police Department. The reason we do this is to ensure that you get all the support and information you need to make an informed decision on whether or not you would like to take further steps. This may prompt contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a completely confidential setting, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center (517-355-2870) or the MSU Sexual Assault Program (517-355-3551), call the 24-hour crisis line (517-372-6666), and for support services/shelter for relationship violence and stalking, MSU Safe Place (517-355-1100). More information can be found at <http://endrape.msu.edu/> and <http://safeplace.msu.edu/>. All of these professionals and advocates can help a student without having to report information pertaining to sexual misconduct or relationship violence that students share to any university or law enforcement units. However, they may still be bound by a duty to report child endangerment or risk of self-harm. Ask your counselor or advocate what their reporting responsibilities are and what the limits to their confidentiality are. On the other hand, if you would like to report any sexual misconduct in a non-confidential manner, you may call the Office for Institutional Equity (OIE) at 517-353-3922 or the MSU law enforcement (Police) at 517-355-2221.

**WS 202 Course Calendar:
Introduction to Contemporary Feminisms & Gender Theories
Summer Online Schedule**

Date & Units	Themes & Learning Goals	Readings/ Viewings/ Assignment Due Dates
<p>Week 1 7/5-7/9</p> <p><u>Unit 1:</u> Foundational Feminist Theory & History</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Course Introductions -Carefully read syllabus and course calendar -Getting grounded in feminist theory -Core vocabulary, histories, and politics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Readings/ Viewings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Margaret Walter's <i>Feminism: A Very Short Introduction</i>, due Thursday * bell hook's <i>Feminism is for Everybody</i>, due Friday -Assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *OP #1 (Introduce yourself), due Wednesday *PP #1, due Thursday *Vlog #1, due Friday
<p>Week 2 7/10-7/16</p> <p><u>Unit 2:</u> Intro. to both Memoir & Intersectionality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What is memoir? And why memoir? -Memoir as a feminist practice -Narrative making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Readings/ Viewings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * PDF selections from Leigh Gilmore's <i>Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation</i>, due Monday * Erika Lopez's <i>Flaming Iguanas</i>, due Wednesday -Assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *OP #2, due Monday *PP #2, due Wednesday *Vlog #2, due Friday
<p>Week 3 7/17-7/23</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What is intersectionality? -Intersectionality and feminists of color -Intersectionality and politics -Is lesbian feminism different from straight feminism? -Thinking about power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Readings/ Viewings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * PDF selections from Vivian May's <i>Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries</i>, due Monday * Audre Lorde's <i>Zami</i>, due Wednesday -Assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * OP #3, due Monday * PP #3, due Wednesday * Vlog #3, due Friday
<p>Week 4 7/24-7/30</p> <p><u>Unit 3:</u> Queer Theory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What is queer theory? -Aims of queer theory -Sexuality -Queer theory's connection to Feminist theory -Drag herstory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Readings/ Viewings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Annamarie Jagose's <i>Queer Theory</i>, due Monday * <i>Paris is Burning</i> (documentary film), due Wednesday -Assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * OP #4, due Monday * PP #4, due Wednesday * Vlog #4, due Friday

<p>Week 5 7/31-8/6</p>	<p>-Gender non-conformity -Gender non-binary -More on sexuality</p>	<p>-Readings/ Viewings: * PDF of Gayle Rubin's "Thinking Sex," due Monday * Leslie Feinberg's <i>Stone Butch Blues</i>, due Wednesday</p> <p>-Assignments: * OP #5, due Monday * PP #5, due Wednesday * Vlog #5 * First Draft of Final Paper, due Friday</p>
<p>Week 6 8/7-8/13</p>	<p>-Transgender theory -Transgender experiences and politics</p>	<p>-Readings/ Viewings: * Julia L. Nagoshi's "Transgender Theory: Embodying Research and Practice," due Monday * Jan Morris's <i>Conundrum</i>, due Wednesday</p> <p>-Assignments: * OP #6, due Monday * PP #6, due Wednesday * Vlog #6, due Friday</p>
<p>Week 7 8/14-1/16</p> <p><u>Unit 4:</u> Final Paper</p>	<p>-Revise, edit, polish Final Paper</p>	<p>-Assignments: *Final Paper, due Wednesday</p>

***Note:**

OP = original discussion post

PP = peer discussion post

Jessica Travers
Syllabus Narrative

In designing this WS 202 syllabus and the corresponding course I used the reverse engineering method by considering first the student learning goals and secondly thinking about how those goals can be met through various means like readings, exercises, assignments, and assessments. My most broad learning goal for the students is that they complete the course with a deeper understanding of foundational feminist, gender, and queer theories. Other than the reverse engineering method to class design, I was also inspired by a Freirean approach; however, I tweak his method a bit by focusing less on the personal experiences of student learners and more so on their personal questions and subsequent discoveries. In other words, another central goal is for students to be guided by their own personal inquiries and thus be inspired to find a path toward discovery. My hope is that students find answers (and more questions!) rather than simply be given answers by me or the course materials. Underscoring the importance of conversation and analysis is one mean I use to meet this goal of learning via inquiry and discovery. In assignments, I ask students to analyze rather than summarize. For instance, the final paper prompts learners to use inquiry as their way into analysis. In the vlog assignments students are expected to ask themselves questions in order to find their vlog's focus.

WS 202 is designed to be more of a feminist and gender theory class rather than an introductory course of feminism. Theory is tough, and I think theory should be tough because the process of working through it is important for intellectual growth. That said, I do not think theory should be inaccessible, so my second central student learning goal is to make feminist, gender, and queer theory more accessible for undergraduates. The means I use to facilitate this goal is pairing theory with memoir. The aim here is that students will better understand the complex ideas different theories hold by reading them in tandem with real life experiences told by women with various social and class backgrounds, with various sexual desires, and with various kinds of bodies. Pairing together theory and memoir also underscores the concept that ideas do not exist in a vacuum. The course is designed to put theory and lived experiences in conversation with each other, just as I hope my students will put themselves in conversation with the theorists and memoirists. The importance of the students being in conversation with each other and the course materials is put to practice via discussion boards and a final paper that prompts students to engage their ideas with four class sources. Aside from contextualizing the theory, the feminist memoirs assigned also address how race is always tethered to sexuality, how gender is never simple, and how class and feminism need to be considered together.

With regard to assessment, I include both low and high stakes assignments, and the lower stakes work gives students an opportunity to practice for the higher stakes work; students will also receive feedback from me (and each other) on lower stakes work in order to reflect and prepare for higher stakes assignments. When grading I will reward student work that employs the inquiry-discovery process, and when giving feedback I will model for students how to ask questions as a means of finding knowledges. The course is structured into four units, each approximately two weeks long. Rather than building on each other, each unit is in conversation with the prior and subsequent units. This course is not set up linearly or chronologically; it is set up conversationally. This structure serves to mirror how genders and sexualities are not hierarchical in nature, but rather how genders and sexualities exist as back and forth, messy, muddy, woven experiences.