

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies
Spring 2026, MWF 10:00-10:50 am

WGS 210 -005 (CRN 46291)
Burkhardt Building 221

Instructor: Dr. Shiau-Yun Chen (Dept. of History & Dept. of WGAA)
Office: BB 219F
Email: schen5@bsu.edu

Ways to see Professor Chen:

- Office Hours: Wednesday, 3:00-3:50 pm at BB219F
- If the above time does not work for you, email your available times to make an appointment.

Course Description

This course will offer an introduction to Women's and Gender Studies (WGS), providing an overview of key concepts and the ways in which these concepts are powerful analytical tools for examining gender norms and ideologies. During the semester, we will grapple with historical as well as contemporary concerns regarding women, gender, and sexuality. In each class section, we will introduce a concept and practice how to use it to examine and analyze different social or cultural phenomena. Class lectures and assigned readings will introduce each week's key concepts; canvas assignments will help students (1) reinforce their understanding of the class content and synthesize the class materials. We will use analytical tools introduced in class to examine gender norms and ideologies that are reified in various forms, ranging from newspapers, novels, and historical documents to interviews, films and, cultural criticism.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to

- distinguish the differences between sex, gender, and sexuality.
- understand key concepts developed in women's and gender studies
- consider the ways in which race, class, gender, sexuality, age, able body, and other social factors are linked and how such intersections have been articulated in various contexts and cultures.
- Identify oppression and privilege embedded in different social institutions and ideologies.

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

Skill Infusion

By achieving the course learning outcomes, you will simultaneously develop numerous career readiness competencies recommended by NACE (the National Association of Colleges and Employers)

Course Outcomes	NACE Workplace Competencies
1. distinguish the differences between sex, gender, and sexuality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Critical Thinking * Equity & Inclusion
2. recognize and analyze the ways in which race, status, gender, and sexuality are linked and how such intersections have been articulated in various social, cultural, and historical contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Career & Self Development * Critical Thinking * Equity and Inclusion * Leadership * Professionalism * Teamwork
3. articulate their thoughts and communicate concisely and analytically through in-class group discussions and group-oriented assignments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Communication * Critical Thinking * Equity and Inclusion * Leadership * Professionalism * Teamwork
4. ask their own critical and engaging questions as active learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Career and Self Development * Communication * Critical Thinking * Equity and Inclusion

NACE Recommends that Students Develop These Competencies.

Career & Self Development

Proactively develop oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one's organization.

Communication

Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.

Critical Thinking

Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.

Equity & Inclusion

Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures. Engage in anti-racist practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism.

Leadership

Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.

Professionalism

Knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace.

Teamwork

Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.

Technology

Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

Workload and Expectations

This is a three-credit hour course, delivered over 15 weeks. Students are expected to spend quality time online and in-class working collectively with their classmates and instructor. You will need to log in to Canvas and read assigned readings through Perusall regularly, keep track of assignments and deadlines, and inform the professor immediately if you have questions or issues that you need help resolving.

Weekly Assignments and class activities are designed to create a collective and group learning experience. Therefore, you are expected to listen attentively and contribute to the dialogue during in-class discussions. **Consistently sitting aside and refusing to join the discussion will result in 0% for the entire attendance and participation grade.**

This is not an online class. Attending class lectures and discussions is essential to students' learning experience in this class. Students will receive a grade of **F if the semester attendance rate is less than 65%.**

Evaluation

Please be aware that the pedagogical philosophy behind the course design **emphasizes the importance of constant practices instead of last-minute effort.** Your grade is based on the weekly effort you put into this class. Every week spend some quality time studying the course reading and feel empowered after class lectures discussions.

This is an in-person class, and attendance is essential. You will receive an **FN** if you never attend, an **FS** if you stop attending, and an **F if your semester attendance rate falls below 65%.**

You are expected to follow instructions, meet deadlines, and—most importantly—communicate with the professor about any concerns regarding assignment grades *before* grades are posted. Your final grade will be based on points earned from attendance, participation, and completed assignments.

Grades will be based on points you earn from class attendance and participation, and each assignment you complete

- Attendance and Participation (20%)
- Perusall Assignments (40%)
- Unit Reflections (Finish One by the End of Every Unit) (5%*3 =15 %)
- Semester Project (25%)

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

Attendance and participation (20 %)

- Students are required to attend Monday, Wednesday, and Friday classes every week. Students are expected to finish the weekly assigned readings before attending Wednesday and Friday discussions, review their notes before the class, and actively participate in class discussions.
- Weekly Assignments and class activities are designed to create a collective and group learning experience. Therefore, you are expected to listen attentively and contribute to the dialogue during in-class small-group discussions. **Consistently sitting aside and refusing to join the weekly discussion will result in 0% for the entire attendance and participation grade.**
- This is an in-person course; attendance at lectures and participation in discussions are integral to the learning experience. Attendance will be recorded from August 25 to November 7. Students with a semester attendance rate below 65% will receive a failing grade (F).
- While attendance and participation are essential, there is room for flexibility. Students can miss **four** classes without penalty. Use them for mild symptoms of discomfort or personal affairs. If you need to miss more than four classes, such an extensive absence will be accepted without penalty only in the event of extraordinary and documented circumstances. See university policy for such events.
(https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/vice-provost/student-services/attendance-policies#accordion_medicalissuesandillness)

Weekly Reading Annotation by Using Perusall (40%)

- Perusall assignments are designed for students to read the assigned material, comment on it, and ask or answer questions in collaboration with their classmates and instructor. Each Perusall assignment is due by 6:00 a.m. before the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday classes.

Unit Reflections (15%)

- Unit Reflection is designed for students to reflect on what they learn from each unit and practice WGS ways of thinking, seeing and knowing through short writing assignments.
- There are 5 Units in total
- **You must submit at least 3 reflections across the semester.**
- At least 1 reflection must be submitted **by Spring Break (Unit 3 deadline).**
- Reflections are due by Sunday 11:59 PM on the dates listed above.

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

Late Work Policy

- Late work will be accepted only with the professor's permission and only in the event of extraordinary, documented circumstances reported before the assignment deadline.
 - If circumstances are reported after the deadline, the following grade reductions will apply:
 - Within 1 week: 10% deduction
 - Within 2 weeks: 25% deduction
 - Within 4 weeks: 50% deduction
- Late work will not be accepted if reported more than one month after the deadline.
- No submission will be accepted after 11:59 pm on April 30.

Semester Project: 25%

- Your semester project is a chance for you to reflect on lectures and discussions. In any format (a poster, a poem, a research presentation, a painting, a performance, a podcast, etc.), you and/or your group partners (no more than 3 people in a group) pick one key concept from the list that instructor provides and demonstrate your understanding and/or interpretation of the concept.
- Your Unit Reflection will be your own documents to use when preparing your semester creative project.
- The semester project includes four portions: (a) workshop your ideas in class (b) class presentation (c) participating in all of your classmates' project presentations and giving constructive comments/questions/suggestions to at least 3 different projects your classmates presented (d) submit your project and a reflection form.
 - (a), (b) and (c) will be arranged in the class time between 4/17 – 4/30.
 - (d) is due by 11:59 pm, May 5th
- Late submission of (d) will result in a reduction of one-third of the letter grade each day (or part of the day) the assignment is late. **The submission won't be accepted after the end of May 8th.**

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

Each assignment will be presented with clearly defined expectations based on course objectives. Your work will be evaluated on how well you have met those expectations, not on a curve. You are expected to follow directions, meet deadlines, and especially to talk to professors about concerns over grades well before the grades have posted! Final grades will be based on the following scale (NOTE: I do not “round up”).

Letter Grade	Range
A	100% - 94%
A-	<94% - 90%
B+	<90% - 87%
B	<87% - 84%
B-	<84% - 80%
C+	<80% - 77%
C	<77% - 74%
C-	<74% - 70%
D+	<70% - 67%
D	<67% - 64%
D-	<64% - 61%
F	<61% - 0%

All classroom behavior should be characterized by civility, attentiveness, and respect. All coursework should be performed with integrity. Written assignments should structure the development of your own ideas and writing skills. You must cite your sources when you refer to or quote others' ideas, even if you arrived at similar ideas on your own. Violation of the **Academic Ethics Policy and Plagiarism Policy** (see University Policies below) will result in an F and will be reported to the dean, possibly resulting in further penalties.

AI Use Policy

The use of Generative AI tools, including ChatGPT, is encouraged/permitted in this course for students who wish to use them. You may choose to use AI tools to help brainstorm assignments or projects or to revise existing work you have written. [Indicate your expectations regarding use of applications with AI built-in features]. However, you must cite any AI-generated material that informed your work. Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution constitutes a violation of **Ball State University's Student Academic Ethics Policy**.

Note: No more than 25% of an assignment should be created with AI.

How to cite AI: <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/>

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

University Statement

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse.

Disability Statement

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's [Disability Services Office](#) coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Freedom of Expression

In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State Community, we treat each person in the Ball State community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University's [Statement on Freedom of Expression](#), the resources on Ball State's [Freedom of Expression webpage](#), and [Ball State's Beneficence Pledge](#).

Title IX

Ball State University is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment—including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, please know that you are not alone. The University offers support services and resources. For more information or to report an incident, please visit [bsu.edu/titleix](https://www.bsu.edu/titleix) or contact the Title IX Coordinator at 765-285-1545 or at titleix@bsu.edu.

As your instructor, I am a mandatory reporter under the Title IX policy and required to report any information I receive about possible sexual harassment. This includes information shared in class discussions, assignments, or private conversations.

What happens after I report? The Title IX Coordinator will email the person who experienced sexual harassment (complainant) and invite them to schedule a meeting. If the complainant **chooses** to meet with the Title IX Coordinator,

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

- Title IX Coordinator will offer supportive measures (e.g., counseling, extensions on deadlines, course-related adjustments, changes to work or class schedules, and/or referrals to campus offices), review the policy, and discuss options to move forward.
- If a complaint is filed by the complainant or the University, an investigation will begin following University policy.

University Grade Appeal Policy

If you believe you received a final course grade that does not reflect your performance due to fairness or a procedural issue, you have the right to file an appeal within 5 school days after final grades are posted by the Office of the Registrar. Review the [University Grade Appeal Policy and Process](#).

Student Academic Ethics Policy

Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the university community. Academic dishonesty and other forms of academic misconduct threaten the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and will not be tolerated. To maintain its credibility and reputation, and to equitably assign evaluations of scholastic and creative performance, Ball State University is committed to maintaining a climate that upholds and values the highest standards of academic integrity. Visit the VPAA's [academic integrity website](#) (Students tab) for resources on understanding academic integrity, citing sources properly, and avoiding inadvertent academic dishonesty. To learn about BSU's academic integrity expectations and students' rights, please read the University [Student Academic Ethics Policy](#).

Academic integrity violations include giving or receiving an unfair academic advantage (cheating), presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own (plagiarism), and falsifying academic records. Unless otherwise indicated, you must work independently by yourself. Check with me if you are unsure whether something constitutes academic dishonesty. Examples of academic integrity violations include but are not limited to:

- Using resources not authorized by the faculty member (including devices, AI tools, hidden notes, and open books)
- Using commercial study websites to find answers to graded assignments (Chegg, Course Hero, StudyPool, OneClass, etc.).
- Without the instructor's written permission, giving away, buying, or selling graded assignments class notes, exams, study guides, or other course materials to other students or to third-party vendors (Course Hero, Chegg, 24HourAnswers, etc.).
- Working with another person on any assignment other than authorized group projects.

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

- Sharing or allowing others to access your files, whether done with permission or not.
- Reusing your own work from another semester, course, or section.
- Sharing answers with others during exams (passing notes, texting, whispering, gesturing)
- Discussing exam questions and answers with students who have not taken the exam.
- Soliciting others to complete work for you.

Resources on Campus

Student Services

- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Career Center](#)
- [The Basic Needs Hub](#)

Academic Resources

- [Writing Center](#)
- [Learning Center](#)
- [The Speaking Center](#)

Communication and Etiquette

Canvas: Assignments and other information will be posted on Canvas. If you were not automatically enrolled on the site through pre-registration, contact an instructor to enroll you. All the writing assignments should be submitted through Canvas.

Email: You will receive course announcements by email through Canvas and therefore through your Ball State email account. Be sure to check your BSU email regularly.

When you post to a Canvas Discussion Board, submit an assignment, or send an email to the professor you should make sure it represents your professionalism. Be mindful not to use language that could be considered offensive. Edit your writing so that it stays on topic, is free from grammatical or typographic errors, and clearly conveys your intended message succinctly.

When you send an email to the professor, you must use your BSU email account and include the course number, a subject heading, greeting, courteous message, and complete signature. You should refer to professors according to their professional title (Dr. or Prof. Chen, for example, not Ms. or Mrs.). Emails that are overly informal may be overlooked.

I check my emails twice during the workday at 11:30 am and 3:30 pm. You can expect to receive a response to an email within 48 hours, longer if you send your email during the weekend. I encourage **reading the syllabus or Canvas information page first** before emailing the professor.

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

Course Readings

Open Access Textbook

- Miliann Kang, Donovan Lessard, and Laura Heston, *Introduction to Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies* (University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, 2017), <http://openbooks.library.umass.edu/introwgss/>.
- Every class section, we will read a portion of the textbook and/or a short article, podcast, and/or a video. All the readings are available electronically through Perusall or Canvas.

Recommended Textbook

- Paula S. Rothenberg and Christina Hsu Accomando, eds., *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*, 12th ed. (New York: Worth Publishers/Macmillan Learning, 2024).

Course Schedule and Weekly Assigned Readings

Please note that the schedule and the assigned readings are tentative and are subject to change based on students' course discussions.

Unit I: An Introduction to Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies: Grounding Theoretical Frameworks and Concepts

Week 1 Jan 5 – Jan 9

- Syllabus and Basic Tools

Week 2 Jan 12 – Jan 16

Textbook

- [Critical Introduction to the Field](#)
- [Theorizing Lived Experiences](#)
- [Identity Terms](#)
- [Intersectionality](#)

Assigned Reading

- Kimberly DeSimone, "Is the Term Mansplaining Sexist? No, Actually, and Here's Why," *Advancing Women Podcast*, September 27, 2021, podcast <https://linkcuts.org/b3wqojy7>

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. “Why Intersectionality Can’t Wait.” In *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study: An Integrated Study*, edited by Paula Rothenberg and Christina Hsu Accomando. Worth Publishers, 2024.

Week 3 Jan 19 – Jan 25

Note: No class on Jan 19, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration

Textbook

- [Conceptualizing Structures of Power](#)
- [Social Constructionism](#)

Assigned Reading

- Gloria Steinem, “If Men Could Menstruate,” in *Introduction to Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: Interdisciplinary and Intersectional Approaches*, ed. L. Ayu Saraswati, Barbara Shaw, and Heather Rellihan, 1 edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 399–400.

Unit II: Challenging Binary Systems and Constructions of Difference

Week 4 Jan 26 – Feb 1

Textbook

- [Introduction: Binary Systems](#)
- [The Sex/Gender/Sexuality System](#)
- [Gender and Sex – Transgender and Intersex](#)
- [Sexualities](#)

Assigned Reading

- Christie Launius, “the Social Construction of Gender” in *Threshold Concepts in Women's and Gender Studies: Ways of Seeing, Thinking, and Knowing* (New York, NY :Routledge, 2015), 37-43.

Week 5 Feb 2 – Feb 8

Textbook

- [Masculinities](#)
- [Race](#)

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

- [Class](#)
- [Alternatives to Binary Systems](#)

Assigned Reading

- TBA

Unit III: Institutions, Culture, and Structures

Week 6 Feb 9 – Feb 15

Textbook

- [Introduction: Institutions, Cultures, and Structures](#)
- [The Family](#)
- [Media](#)

Week 7 Feb 16 – Feb 22

- [Medicine, Health, and Reproductive Justice](#)
- [The State, Law, and the Prison System](#)
- [Intersecting Institutions Case Study: The Struggle to End Gendered Violence and Violence Against Women](#)

Week 8 Feb 23 – March 1

Film Analysis (TBA)
Review Section on Feb 27

Week 9 **March 1—March 8 Spring Break**

Unit IV: Gender and Work

Week 10 March 9– March 15

Note: The class on **March 13** is **canceled**. The instructor will be attending an academic conference.

- [Introduction: Gender and Work in the Global Economy](#)
- [Gender and Work in the US](#)

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

- [Gender and the US Welfare State](#)

Assigned Reading

- The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap, "Systematic Racism and the Gender Pay Gap," https://www.aauw.org/app/uploads/2021/09/AAUW_SimpleTruth_2021_-fall_update.pdf

Week 11 March 16 – March 22

Note: The class on **March 16** is **canceled**. The instructor will be attending an academic conference.

- [Transnational Production and Globalization](#)
- [Racialized, Gendered, and Sexualized Labor in the Global Economy](#)

Unit V: Historical and Contemporary Feminist Social Movements

Week 12 March 23—March 29

Textbook

- [Introduction: Feminist Movements](#)
- [19th Century Feminist Movements](#)

Assigned Reading

- Estelle Freedman, “The Historical Case For Feminism,” in *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*, Reprint edition (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 1–13.

Week 13 March 30 – April 5

Textbook

- [Early to Late 20th Century Feminist Movements](#)
- [Third Wave and Queer Feminist Movements](#)

Assigned Reading

- Kate Eichhorn, “The Digital Age and Beyond,” in *The Routledge Global History of Feminism* (Routledge, 2022), 136–48.

Week 14 April 6 – April 12

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

Film Analysis (TBA)

Semester Project: Share and Feedback

Week 15	April 13 – April 19	<u><i>Final Project Workshop</i></u>
Week 16	April 20 – April 26	<u><i>Project Presentation</i></u>
Week 17	April 27	<u><i>Project Presentation</i></u>

May 2 Final Project Submission