Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies — WGS 210 -002 (CRN 19657)
Fall 2026, MWF 10:00-10:50 am — Burkhardt Building 300

Instructor: Dr. Shiau-Yun Chen (Dept. of History & Dept. of WGAA)
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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in class to examine gender norms and ideologies that are reified in various forms, ranging from newspapers, novels, and historical documents to interviews, films and, cultural criticism.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.

Cardinal Core rationale

This course fulfills a UCC requirement. If you are taking this course as part of the Cardinal Core, this course fulfills the [Foundations/Ways of Knowing/Beneficence Theme X & Y] requirement. It also fulfills a [Tier 1/Tier 2] requirement in UCC-21.

The UCC enables students to:

- realize their intellectual potential
- add breadth and depth to their educational experience
- increase their personal well-being
- participate actively in their communities

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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.	* 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.	* 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.	* Communication * Critical Thinking * Equity and Inclusion * Leadership * Professionalism * Teamwork
4. ask their own critical and engaging questions as active learners.	* 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.

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 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 70%.**

Late work will only be accepted with permission of the professor and only in the event of extraordinary and documented circumstances that are reported before the assignment deadline. If you cannot attend class because of illness or for other pressing reasons, let me know, if possible in advance. If you miss a class, be sure to get copies of notes from a classmate and check Canvas for the posting of lecture outlines, slides, and suggested readings.

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 readings and feel empowered after class lectures and 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 70%.**

You are expected to follow directions, meet deadlines, and especially talk to the professor about concerns over assignment grades before they are posted!

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

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

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 Sep 3 to Nov 22.** Students with a semester attendance rate below 70% 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)

Reading Assignments: Weekly Social Annotation (40%)

- Social annotation assignments are designed for students to read, comment on, and discuss course material collaboratively with their classmates through an online annotation platform. Each assignment is due by 6:00 a.m. on the day of class — Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

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 Fall Break (Unit 3 deadline).**
- Reflections are due by Sunday 11:59 PM on the dates listed above.

Unit	**Reflection Due Date (by Sunday 11:59 PM)**	**Notes**
Unit 1	End of Unit 1 (Sunday, **9/20**)	You may choose this unit to count toward your 3 required reflections.
Unit 2	End of Unit 2 (Sunday, **10/04)**	Same as above.
Unit 3	End of Unit 3 (Sunday, **10/18**)	**At least 1 reflection due by this date**
Unit 4	End of Unit 4 (Sunday, **11/01)**	You may also count this toward your required 3 reflections.
Unit 5	End of Unit 5 (Sunday, **11/22)**	Same as above.

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:
        - Reported within 1 week: 10% deduction
        - Reported within 2 weeks: 25% deduction
        - Reported 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 November 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 five portions: (1) participating in the final project in-class workshop (2) class presentation (3) participating in all your classmates' project presentations (4) giving constructive comments/questions/suggestions to at least 3

different projects your classmates presented (5) submitting your project and a reflection form.

- (1) will be arranged in the class time between 11/16 – 11/20.
- (2) (3) and (4) will be arranged in the class time between 11/30 – 12/7.
- (5) is due by 11:59 pm, December 11th.

- Late submission of (5) will result in a reduction of one-third of the letter grade each day (or part of the day) the assignment is late. The final project won't be accepted after the end of December 14th.

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

At Ball State, we use GenAI to elevate human potential, not replace it. To succeed in an AI-infused world, students must balance technical skills with durable skills, lifelong abilities such as critical thinking, ethical judgment, communication, accountability, and responsible decision-making that define a Ball State graduate. Developing these durable skills requires you as students to think carefully about:

- when AI should and should not be used;
- how to use AI responsibly;
- how to verify AI-generated information; and
- and how to remain accountable for final work.

You may use GenAI tools for some work submitted in this course. You will be informed as to when, where, and how these tools are permitted to be used, along with guidance for attribution. Any use outside of this permission constitutes a violation of Ball State University's Student Academic Ethics Policy.

When in doubt, please ask me before using GenAI. You, the student, are always responsible for the content you submit, publish, share, or act upon, regardless of whether GenAI tools assisted in the process. For data security reasons, please use BSU-approved GenAI tools (e.g., BSU Gemini, NotebookLM), which support single sign-on (SSO) with BSU ID and password. Commonly used public GenAI tools carry a higher risk of data being shared externally. In contrast, when using BSU-approved GenAI tools, any data you input is protected within the BSU system. Instructors do not have access to BSU IT Center logs of AI tool usage, so student data shared through BSU-approved GenAI tools remain private.

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

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

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 accommodations due to a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services office coordinates services for students with disabilities. Documentation must be on file with Disability Services before accommodations can be provided. Contact Disability Services 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/Sex Discrimination

Ball State University is committed to maintaining an educational environment free from sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, and stalking. Students who experience or witness conduct that may violate University policy are encouraged to seek support and assistance. The Title IX Office can provide information about reporting options, supportive measures, and available resources. Contact the Title IX Office at 765-285-1545 or titleix@bsu.edu.

Please Note: As your instructor, I am a mandatory reporter. If you disclose information to me about conduct that may constitute sex discrimination or sexual misconduct, I am required to notify the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Office will reach out to discuss available resources, supportive measures, and reporting options. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, you may contact the Counseling Center or the Center for Survivor Support.

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 a generative AI system or a person to complete academic assignments such as response papers, discussion posts, essays, or any other assignment when such use is not explicitly permitted by the assignment instructions or the instructor.
- Utilizing another person or a generative AI system to take a quiz, examination, or similar evaluation in place of oneself.
- Using a generative AI system for research, creative work, theses/dissertations, grant proposals, IRB-regulated work, or publication-bound work in violation of university AI policies, funder/publisher rules, IRB requirements, or discipline-specific standards.
- Using generative AI systems to analyze data, conduct research, or generate content that is included in an assignment (images, graphs, charts, tables, etc.) without proper documentation, citation, and attribution of this AI use.
- 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.

- 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
- The Speaking Center

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 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 Aug 24 – Aug 30

- Syllabus and Basic Tools

Week 2 Aug 31 – Sep 6

Textbook

- Critical Introduction to the Field
- Theorizing Lived Experiences
- Identity Terms
- Intersectionality

Assigned Reading

- 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 Sep 7 – Sep 13

Note: No class on Sep 7, Labor Day

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 Sep 14 – Sep 20

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 Sep 21 – Sep 27

Textbook

- Masculinities
- Race
- Class
- Alternatives to Binary Systems

Assigned Reading

- Aulette, Judy Root, Judith Wittner, and Kristen Barber eds, "Sports and Masculinity" in *Gendered Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 418-422.
- Aurora Levins Morales "What Race Isn't: Teaching about Racism." 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.

Unit III: Institutions, Culture, and Structures

Week 6 Sep 28 – Oct 4

Textbook

- Introduction: Institutions, Cultures, and Structures
- The Family
- Media

Week 7 Oct 5 – Oct 11

- 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 Oct 12 – Oct 18 (no class on Oct 12, Fall Break)

Film Analysis (TBA)
Review Section on Oct 16

Unit IV: Gender and Work

Week 9 Oct 19 – Oct 25

- Introduction: Gender and Work in the Global Economy
- Gender and Work in the US
- Gender and the US Welfare State

Assigned Reading

- Lyman Stone. "The Motherhood Wage Penalty Is Declining—but Only for Some Women." Institute for Family Studies, April 29, 2021.
- https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-motherhood-wage-penalty-is-declining-but-only-for-some-women.

- 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 10 Oct 26 – Nov 1

Film Analysis: *The True Cost*

Unit V: Historical and Contemporary Feminist Social Movements

Week 11 Nov 2 – Nov 8

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 12 Nov 9 – Nov 15

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 13 Nov 16 – Nov 22

Final Project Workshop

Semester Project: Share and Feedback

Week 14 Nov 23 – Nov 29 (no class on Nov 25 & Nov 27, Thanksgiving)

Nov 23, Review Section

Week 15	Nov 30 – Dec 6	*Project Presentation*
Week 16	Dec 7	*Project Presentation*

December 11 Final Project Submission