

# WGS Sophomore Tutorial: Dreams of a Common Language

Studies in Women, Gender, and Sexuality (WGS) 97

Tues & Thurs 10:30-11:45

Room G07 Boylston Hall

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This course provides an introduction (in no way exhaustively) to key concepts and texts in the study of women, gender, and sexuality. Together, we will develop a shared vocabulary to help prepare for advanced study in the concentration and beyond. We will practice using foundational concepts such as **performativity, queerness, intersectionality, mestiza consciousness, homonationalism, neoliberalism, and gender as a category of analysis**. We will learn to distinguish among various forms of feminism. We will encounter queer theory and feminist approaches to decarceration. Throughout the semester, we will practice *applying* these concepts to the analysis of archival texts and to issues with which we grapple on a daily basis. Finally, this course encourages everyone to think and work collaboratively, to co-create productive conversations, and to integrate these theoretical explorations with a critical analysis of the politics of our own multiple locations.

## Texts and Policies

### Required Texts (available digitally through Hollis):

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* vol 1

[Keywords for Gender and Sexuality Studies](#). NYU Press [available as PDFs]

## Assignments:

Class attendance and informed participation	20%
In class writing exercises	10%
Archival research proposal + 2 page analysis of primary source (due October 13)	10%
Archival project outline (full credit/no credit) (due October 27)	10%
Archival project draft (5-7 pages) (due November 17)	10%
Final Archival Project (10-12 pages) (due December 15)	20%
8 Reading Response Posts	20%

All assignments unless otherwise specified should be uploaded to the relevant Discussion Board or Canvas drop box (as indicated on the Assignment instructions).

**Participation:** Beyond your participation in class, students are required to attend *two* campus events related to the topics we cover in this course. These can be lectures, community events, affinity group meetings-- anything where themes of gender and sexuality are prevalent. After you attend each event, please append your next weekly response post with a brief reflection on the event, placing it in the context of your WGS education in this class and beyond.

**Response Posts (8):** Please post a \*brief\* (no more than 300 word) response to the Canvas "Reading Response" Discussion Board each week before our Tuesday class meeting. These posts are intended to help us process and synthesize the week's readings, and to tease out possible questions for class. They needn't be elegant or exhaustive, but they should reflect on (and struggle with!) the complex issues and questions the readings pose each week. You needn't respond to each of the week's readings, but please *do* tease out some of the recurring themes, or highlight ways in which the readings depart from each other. You are expected to provide *eight* response posts over the course of the semester.

**Final Archival Project:** This multi-tiered assignment challenges you to apply the theoretical tools we've discussed in class to the materials you discover in the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, the largest archive of materials documenting women's lives and activities in the United States. Early in the semester we will make a trip to the Schlesinger Library to receive an introduction to the library, its holdings, and its practices. Following our visit, you will explore the archives on our own, crafting a Research Proposal, on which you will receive feedback before sharing a Project Outline, a Project Draft, and (during Final exams) your Final Project.

#### Important Dates

- Schlesinger Archive Visit: September 21 (Thursday)
- Visit Schlesinger Archive on your own at least twice, for one hour each: September 22-October 12
  - Use [this link](#) to schedule your visit, open M-F 10 AM-4 PM
  - Note: Siobhan will be present at Schlesinger on the following days and times if you need help or guidance: Monday October 2 from 12-2; Thursday October 5 from 12-2; Monday October 10 from 12-2; and Thursday October 12 from 12-2
- Research Proposal Due: October 13 (Friday) -- complete the following:
  - What archive or collection will you be investigating? Try to be as specific as possible, mentioning the time period as well as the person/people involved in creating the archive. Whose stories or experiences does the collection speak to?
  - What are you interested in or excited about exploring in that archive?
  - What kinds of questions might you ask of that archive?  
Some framing ideas:  
"I want to examine the archive of \_\_\_\_ in order to learn \_\_\_\_."  
"I am investigating the impact of \_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_."
  - What theories or conceptual tools might you use to illuminate or analyze this collection? (e.g. "I want to use Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of "political intersectionality" to understand the fracturing of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective.")

- Two pages applying the theory to one of the primary sources you've found in the archive.
- Project Outline Due: October 27 (Friday)
  - See [this link](#) for resources on outlining
- Project Draft (5-7 pages) Due: November 17 (Friday)
  - See [this link](#) for resources on citations
- Final Project (10-12 pages) Due: December 15 (Friday)

**In class writing exercises:** These assignments will help develop your skills in interpreting and communicating complex arguments.

### **Course Policies and Expectations:**

Among your most important responsibilities in this course is to collaborate with your classmates to craft productive, generative, and courageous discussions. Think not only about your own contributions, but about the overall classroom dynamic: who is speaking more, who less? Consider how you might contribute to an atmosphere that enables *everyone* to participate meaningfully. How do you negotiate disagreements with generosity and curiosity? What silences emerge in our discussions, and how might we think self-reflexively about those silences? Also, is silence necessarily a problem? **Most importantly, what might a conversation informed by feminist and queer analytical approaches and ethics look like?**

Given the vital importance of learning-in-community, lateness and absence from class meetings inevitably detract from the quality of our conversation and thus negatively affect participation grades. Any practices that disrespect or harm the class community (e.g. interrupting, monopolizing the conversation, responding with aggression instead of curiosity, engaging with on-line resources irrelevant to class, or answering phone calls/texts) obstruct rather than advance conversation; such practices are therefore unacceptable.

### **Extension Days = 5:**

In light of the complexities and challenges of being a college student, including malfunctioning technology, coinciding due dates, socio-political turmoil/uncertainty, and illness, everyone starts the semester with **five** extension days, with which to extend the deadline of any assignment. **Some restrictions apply:** you cannot use extension days for the weekly reading response posts, and Saturdays and Sundays count in the final tally. Please keep track of your own extension days. Once you have depleted your extension days, late assignments will be down-graded **1/3 letter grade per day (or portion of a day) late**. Please note that failure to complete any assignment can lower your final grade in excess of the stated percentage.

### **Accommodations / DAO:**

Harvard University values inclusive excellence and providing equal educational opportunities for all students. Our goal is to remove barriers related to inaccessible elements of course instruction or design. If reasonable accommodations are necessary to provide access, please contact the [Disability Access Office \(DAO\)](#). **Please note that accommodations do not alter**

**fundamental requirements of the course and are not retroactive.** Students requesting accommodations should present their Faculty DAO Letter and speak with the instructor **by September 12th**. All discussions will remain confidential, although instructors may contact the DAO to discuss appropriate implementation. Students should notify the instructor and the DAO at any time during the semester if adjustments to their communicated accommodation plan are needed.

## **Course Readings (readings may change – please check Canvas for updated list of readings)**

All readings are available free of charge via the course website

### **Week 1 (Sep 5 and 7) A Conversation Starts: Manifestos and Provocations**

*Please read before the first class meeting on Tuesday, Sep 5*

Kyla W. Tompkins, "[We Are Not Here to Learn What We Already Know](#)" (2016)  
Audre Lorde, "[The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House](#)" (1984)  
Jessie Bennet, "[I Saw Barbie with Susan Faludi](#)"  
Emily St. James, "[Barbie and Ken and Nothing in Between](#)"

*Thursday, Sep 7 readings:*

Angela Davis, [Women, Race, and Class](#), Chapter One

Combahee River Collective [Statement](#) (1977)

Keaanga Yamaha-Taylor, Introduction to *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (2017) on [Hollis](#)

### **Week 2 (Sep 12 and 14) Erotics of Power**

*Tuesday, Sep 12 readings:*

Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" from [Sister Outsider](#) (1978)

Adrienne Rich, "[Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence](#)" (1981)

Emily Owens, "Consent" in *Keywords* (2021) --Look under "Files" page on Canvas

*Thursday, Sep 14 readings:*

Andrea Long Chu, "[On Liking Women](#)"

Sandy Stone, "[The Empire Strikes Back: A PostTranssexual Manifesto](#)"

### **Week 3 – (Sep 19 and 21) Archives and Authority**

*Tuesday, Sep 12 readings:*

Saidiya Hartman, “[Venus in Two Acts](#),” (2008)

Donna Haraway, “[Teddy Bear Patriarchy](#)”

Carmen Maria Machado, “[Dream House as Overture](#)”

Patricia J. Williams, “The Death of the Profane” in [The Alchemy of Race and Rights](#) (1991)

*Thursday, September 21:*

Visit Schlesinger Library: Exploring the Persephone Press Archives with Tamar Brown

### **Week 4 – (Sep 26 and 28) Intersections and Identities**

*Tues Sep 26 readings:*

Mitsuye Yamada, “[Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster](#)”

Dorothy Allison, “[A Question of Class](#)”

*Thurs Sep 28 readings:*

Jennifer C. Nash, “Intersectionality” in *Keywords* (2021) --Look under "Files" page on Canvas

Kimberlé Crenshaw, “[Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color](#)”

Jin Haritaworn and C. Riley Snorton, “[Trans Necropolitics](#)”

**NOTE: Students should visit Schlesinger Archives on their own to select/view specific collections/sources between Week 3 and Week 6 (9/22-10/12)**

### **Week 5 - (Oct 3 and 5) Decolonizing Feminism**

*Tuesday, Oct 3 readings:*

Rosemary Garland Thompson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory"

Alison Kafer, chapter 3, "Slippery Slopes, Cultural Anxiety, and the Case of the Deaf Lesbians" in [Feminist, Queer, Crip](#)

Sami Shalk, “Disability” in *Keywords*

*Thursday, Oct 5 readings:*

Lila Abu-Lughod, "[Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?](#)"

Jasbir Puar, "[Rethinking Homonationalism](#)" (2013)

Geeta Patel, "Colonialism" in *Keywords*

### **Week 6 - (Oct 10 and 12) Performing and Constituting Gender**

*Tuesday, Oct 10 readings:*

Hortense Spillers, "[Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book](#)" (1987)

Judith Butler, "[Performative Acts and Gender Constitution](#)" (1988)

*Thursday, Oct 12 readings:*

A.Finn Enke, "[The Education of Little Cis](#)" (2012)

Jules Gilles-Peterson, "Gender" in *Keywords*

***Assignment: Research Proposal due October 13 (Friday)-- see directions above***

*Recommended Talk: [Thea Quiray Tagle](#) (Brown University), "Curating with Care: The Praxis of Relational Curation with Asian Diasporic and Indigenous Contemporary Artists" Thurs, Oct 12 5:00pm Barker 133*

### **Week 7 – (Oct 17 and 19) Borders of the Imagination**

Gloria Anzaldúa, [Borderlands/La Frontera](#) (1987)

Teresia Teaiwa, "[Bikinis and Other S/pacific N/oceans](#)" (1994)

Mark Rifkin, Introduction to [When Did Indians Become Straight?](#)

### **Week 8 – (Oct 24 and 26) Foundations of Power**

**\*\*\*Note:** *History of Sexuality Vol 1* is a very complex text. This week, we ask that students meet outside of class in groups of three prior to our meeting on October 26, with each student responsible for one of the three middle sections of *History of Sexuality Vol 1* ("Part Two: The Repressive Hypothesis;" "Part Three: Scientia Sexualis;" and "Part Four: The Deployment of Sexuality). Work together to ascertain the book's overarching argument and the work each individual part is doing for that argument, think about the rhetorical and stylistic moves Foucault makes, and find key quotes from each part you hope to discuss further in class.\*\*\*

Michel Foucault, interview trans.by Geoff Bennington, "The History of Sexuality: Interview" (1977)

Michel Foucault, [\*History of Sexuality Vol 1\*](#) (1976)

Durba Mitra, “Sexuality” in *Keywords*

Kyla W. Tompkins, “Biopower” in *Keywords*

**Assignment: Project Outline due October 27 (Friday)**

*Recommended Talk:* [Jewel Pereyra](#) (Harvard University) Thurs Oct 26, 5:00pm Barker 133

### **Week 9 – (Oct 31 and Nov 2) Bridges and Boundaries**

Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., [\*This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color\*](#) (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1981) (selections TBA)

Natalie Diaz, [How to Love a Woman with No Legs](#) (2011)

### **Week 10 – (Nov 7 and 9) Queer(ing) Theory**

Cathy Cohen, [“Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?”](#)

Susan Stryker, [“Transgender Studies: Queer Theory’s Evil Twin”](#)

David Getsy, [“Capacity”](#)

[Queer Nation Manifesto](#)

### **Week 11 – (Nov 14 and 16) Science (Fictions)**

Evelynn Hammonds, [“Black \(W\)Holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality”](#)

Martin, Emily, [“The Egg and the Sperm: How Science has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles,”](#) *Signs* 16.3 (1991)

Martha Kinsella and Julia Boland, [“The ‘Invent-Your-Own-Facts Approach’: Many Abortion Laws Use Medically Incorrect Language”](#) for *Brennan Center for Justice* (2021)

Dorothy Roberts, “Racial Identity on Trial (w/r/t the Rhinelander trial),” “The Instability of Race,” & “Making Race Seem Biological” in [Fatal Invention](#) (2011)

Michele Goodwin, “Pregnancy and State Power” in [Policing the Womb](#) (2020)

Riley Snorton, [“A Nightmarish Silhouette: Racialization and the Long Exposure of Transition”](#) in *Black on Both Sides*

Emmett Harsin Drager, “[Early Gender Clinics, Transsexual Etiology, and the Racialized Family](#)”

***Assignment: Project Draft due November 17 (Friday)***

### **Week 12 – (Nov 21) Countering Carcerality**

Dean Spade, Ch 1 of [Normal Life](#) (2015)

Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erica Meiners, and Beth Richie, “[Introduction: Abolition. Feminism. Now.](#)” in *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* (2022)

View Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “On COVID 19, Racial Capitalism, and Decarceration,” [interview](#)  
View Ava DuVernay’s “[13th](#)” (free on Netflix)

Beth E. Richie, “Carcerality” in *Keywords*

### **Week 13 (Nov 28 and 30) Resistance and Critique**

Cathy Park Hong [Minor Feelings](#) (selections)

Sara Ahmed, "[A Killjoy Survival Kit](#)" and "[A Killjoy Manifesto](#)"

Imani Perry, Ch 3 “In The Ether,” in [Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation](#) (2018)

### **Week 14 (Dec 5) Conclusion**

***Final Assignment: Archival Project due December 15 (Friday)***