

Women's and Gender Studies 11  
The Construction of Gender  
Fall, 2008  
Amherst College

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Office hours: Chapin 13  
Mon. 2-4 / Wed. 2-3

This course looks at debates about women, gender and sexuality in the U.S. and globally in the past and present. This year the central topics are as follows:

I. Male and Female Bodies

Bodies in relation to technologies of self-disgust, self-love, discipline and destruction.

II. Race, Gender and the Burden of History

How social hierarchies are formed, replicated and sustained over time, with particular attention to the intersection of race and gender.

III. Men, Women and War

Feminists and others thinking about war; Soldiers on the experience of war;  
Gender and the Iraq War

IV. Children and Their Families

What do families do for (and to) children? What is parental love? How do gender theorists think about families? Can we do better?

V. Religion, Gender and Sexuality

Why are so many new (or relatively new) religious movements so concerned about women and sexuality? Why are women drawn to them? How do gender concerns work in different faiths?

VI Feminisms

What are some of the major "fronts" nationally and internationally with respect to women? What are the issues? Where are the biggest challenges? What are the alliances? What about men?

Two other running sub-themes of the course will be: 1) comparisons and convergences between women in the Muslim World and the predominantly Christian United States; and 2) appropriations and adaptations of classic feminist theories and critiques by political conservatives, fundamentalists and other anti-feminist or post-feminist movements and theorists.

WAGS 11 is one of the required courses for the Women's and Gender Studies major.

A course packet may be picked up in the Women's and Gender Studies Office, 14 Grosvenor House. Please wait for an announcements as to when (probably beginning of the THIRD week of classes). The required books are also on reserve in Frost Library for those who prefer not to purchase them.

Required Books (Available from the Jeffrey Amherst College Store):

Roger N. Lancaster and Micaela di Leonardo, eds, *The Gender/Sexuality Reader*, New York: Routledge) 1997.

Brian Turner, *Here, Bullet*. Farmington, Maine: Alice James Books, 2005.

Valerie Martin, *Property*, New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 2003.

Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L. Esposito, eds, *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. New York: Mariner Books, 2007

Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*. New York, Pantheon Books, 2003.

### Course Protocol

1. You are required to attend every class, and I *do* notice if you fail to turn up. This is a discussion course. It depends on everyone pulling their weight. Your ability to grasp the material will be compromised if you do not attend classes, and your grade will suffer. I make it to class every day; so can you.

2. Read the readings *before* class, *not* after class or right before the papers are due.

3. There will be three 5-page papers. *Approximate* weighting is as follows:

Paper 1: 25%

Paper 2: 25%

Paper 3: 30%

Commitment to the Class 20% (this is obviously a fairly subjective measure, but it includes such factors as a) attendance b) evidence of having read the readings (or perused websites or other assignments) with care; c) contribution to class discussion.

4. There is no one “party line” in this class. Expect to encounter views with which you vehemently disagree, from other students, from the readings, and from the professor. This class is *not* a “safe space” and it is not intended to make you feel good or comfortable. It *is* intended to challenge your assumptions and to present multiple points of view on some very complex subjects. On the other hand, it behooves you to listen to people and try to find common ground before jumping on them. At the very least respect others’ right to say what they believe even if, in your view, they are wrong. Try to be aware of your own hot-button issues, and cultivate a mature style of discussion around them.

If you are feeling unhappy about things that go on in or around the class, please talk to me about it earlier rather than later, either in person or via e-mail. I can’t promise to fix it, but if I can I will.

## Order of Class Discussions

### Week 1

Tues. Sept. 2 Introduction

### **BODIES**

Thurs. Sept. 4 Emily Martin, "The End of the Body" in Lancaster and di Leonardo, *Gender/Sexuality Reader* (1997), *only read 543-top of 548 (Buy).*

Susan McClary, "Living to Tell: Madonna's Resurrection of the Fleeshy" *Genders* 7 (1990):1-21 (TO BE PASSED OUT IN CLASS ON TUESDAY, SEPT. 2)

Susan Bordo, "'Material Girl': The Effacements of Postmodern Culture" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 335-358.

Alessandra Stanley, "Plus-Size Sideshow," *New York Times*, August 24, 2008 (2008):1-7 (TO BE PASSED OUT IN CLASS ON TUESDAY, SEPT. 2)

### Week 2

Tues. Sept. 9

Elizabeth A. Sheehan "Victorian Clitoridectomy: Isaac Baker Brown and his Harmless Operative Procedure" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 325-334.

Janice Boddy "Womb as Oasis: The symbolic context of Pharaonic Circumcision in Rural Northern Sudan" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 309-324.

Thurs. Sept. 11

What Every Soldier Should Know, 9-10; The Hurt Locker, 11; Here, Bullet, 13; AB Negative (the Surgeon's Poem), 15-16; Eulogy, 20; This Is War Then (by Fahdil Al-Azzawi), 21; Iraqi Policemen, 30; 2000 Lbs. 42-45, in Brian Turner, *Here, Bullet* (2005) (Buy).

Please search <http://www.nytimes.com> using the search terms "woman suicide bomber" and be prepared to discuss what you find.

## RACE, GENDER AND THE BURDEN OF HISTORY

### Week 3

Tues. Sept. 16 Valerie Miller, *Property* (2003) Entire (Buy)

Thurs. Sept. 18 Catherine A Lutz and Jane L. Collins "Postwar Photographic History of Race and Gender in National Geographic Magazine" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 291-306.

Siobhan Somerville "Scientific Racism and the Invention of the Homosexual Body" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 37-52.

### Week 4

Tues. Sept. 23 Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 434-39.

Micaela di Leonardo, "White Lies, Black Myths: Rape, Race, and the Black 'Underclass'" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 53-68.

Amnesty International USA, *Maze of Injustice: The Failure to Protect Indigenous Women from Sexual Violence in the USA* (2007); this is a rather long report (100 pages), so I have not put it in the packet. Please read it online at the course website.

Thurs. Sept. 25 Ann Laura Stoler "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender, Race and Morality in Colonial Asia" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 13-36.

Geraldine Heng and Janadas Devan, "The Politics of Nationalism, Sexuality and Race in Singapore" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 107-21.

## WARS

### Week 5

Tues. Sept. 30 Mary Ann Tetréault, "Accountability or Justice? Rape as a War Crime," in Laurel Richardson, Verta A. Taylor and Nancy Whittier, eds, *Feminist Frontiers IV* (1997), 427-39 (Packet).

Miranda Alison, "Wartime Sexual Violence: Women's Human Rights and the Questions of Masculinity," *Review of International Studies* 33 (2007), 75-90 (Packet)

Margot Badran "Gender, Islam and the State: Kuwaiti Women in Struggle, Pre-Invasion to Post-liberation" in *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*, 190-208 (Buy)

Thurs. Oct. 2

Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (1994), xiii-xxiii, 3-21, 32-35 (Packet)

Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Warfare* (1999), 159-229 (Packet)

Week 6

Tues. Oct. 7

Brian Turner, *Here, Bullet* (2005), read remainder of poems. In addition choose one or two that seem to you to speak to the complexities of this war (or all wars), gender, and perhaps America's relationship to Islam, and be prepared to say why.

Thurs. Oct. 9

Cynthia Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (1993), 142-160 (Packet)

Lauren Sandler, "Iraq's Women: Occupied Territory" *Amnesty Now* (Winter, 2003), 22-26 (Packet)

Elizabeth Rubin, "Fern Holland's War" *New York Times Magazine*, September 19, 2004 (Packet)

Please also Google "sexual harassment, women, Iraq" (all three words together) and "prostitution, Iraq" (two words together) and be prepared to discuss what you find.

\*\*\*Midsemester Break Oct. 11-14\*\*\*

Week 7

Thurs. Oct. 16

Special Topic: Gender and Islam

Ingrid Mattson, *The Story of the Qur'an: Its History and Place in Muslim Life* (2008), 1-4, 10-12 (Packet)

Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (1994), 67-82, 85-103, 127-134 (Packet)

## CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

### Week 8

Tues. Oct. 21

Jane Collier, Michelle Z. Rosaldo, et al., "Is There a Family? New Anthropological Views" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 71-81

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Lifeboat Ethics: Mother Love and Child Death in Northeast Brazil" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 82-88

Avner Giladi, "Some Observations on Infanticide in Medieval Muslim Society," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22 (1990):185-200 (Packet)

Thurs. Oct. 23

Rickie Solinger, "Race and 'Value': Black and White Illegitimate Babies, 1945-1965" in *Feminist Frontiers*, 282-295 (Packet)

Dorothy E. Roberts, *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare* (2002), 7-46 (Packet)

### Week 9

Tues. Oct. 28

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (2006) (Buy)

## RELIGION

Thurs. Oct. 30

Margaret Talbot (2000), "A Mighty Fortress" *New York Times Magazine* (Packet)

Kelly H. Chong, "Agony in Prosperity: Conversion and the Negotiation of Patriarchy Among South Korean Evangelical Women" *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* (Summer, 2004), 11-15 (Packet)

### Week 10

Tues. Nov. 4

Rosalind Pollack Petchesky "Fetal Images: The Power of Visual Culture in the Politics of Reproduction" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 134-150.

Film: *Unborn in the USA* (2007), dir. Stephen Fell and Will Thompson (First Run Features, USA), 105 mins. [Watch BEFORE class]

Noemie Emery "Angry White Women: The Backlash against

Feminism," *Weekly Standard*, July-August 1999, 1-4 (Packet)

Serrin M. Foster, "Women Deserve Better than Abortion," *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (2007), 1-8 (Packet)

Family Research Council website:

<http://www.frc.org/> Search issues of interest to you on their excellent search engine.

Thurs. Nov. 6

\*\*\*CLASS CANCELLED\*\*\*

Week 11

Tues. Nov. 11

Nadia Hajib, "Islam, Social Change, and the Reality of Arab Women's Lives" in *Islam, Gender, and Social Change* (1998), 45-55.

May Seikaly, "Women and Religion in Bahrain: An Emerging Identity," in Haddad and Esposito, eds, *Islam, Gender and Social Change* (1998), 169-89.

(Packet).  
Mufti Zubair Bayat, "Islamic Morality" *Al-Jamiat* 3 (1999):1-3

Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood, "Thoughts on Modesty" *Islam for Today* (2003) (4 pages) (Packet)

Lila Abu-Lughod, "Movie Stars and Islamic Moralism in Egypt." In *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 502-12

Thurs. Nov. 13:

Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis* (2003) (Buy)

**FEMINISMS**

Week 12

Tues. Nov. 18

Afsaneh Najmabadi (1998) "Feminism in an Islamic Republic: 'Years of Hardship, Years of Growth'" in *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*, 59-84

Please google the following: Hana Abdi; Shirin Ebadi; Persian Women Bloggers, *Zanan* women's magazine; The Million Campaign at <http://www.4equality.info/english/spip.php?rubrique2>; and Iran women Olympians. Try to get a sense of the dimensions of the current Iranian feminist movement, as well as the very active and heavily promoted anti-feminist (conservative) women's movement.

What are the issues, and what is the strategy of the Iranian government?

Thurs. Nov. 20

Lori L. Heise, "Violence, Sexuality and Women's Lives" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 411-33.

Terisa E. Turner and Leigh S. Brownhill, "Why Women are at War with Chevron: Nigerian Subsistence Struggles Against the International Oil Industry," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 39 (2004):63-93 (Packet).

Development and Peace: Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, "Class or Consensus? Gender and Human Security in a Globalized World" (2003), 1-4. (See also their website at <http://www.learningpartnership.org/en/about>) (Packet)

\*\*\*Nov. 22 - Nov. 30: Thanksgiving Break\*\*\*

Week 13

Tues. Dec. 2

Judith Stacey, "The Neo-Family-Values Campaign" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 453-70.

Roger N. Lancaster, "Guto's Performance: Notes on the Transvestism of Everyday Life" in *Gender/Sexuality Reader*, 559-74.

Dorothy E. Roberts, *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare* (2002), 267-76 (Packet).

And look at the following websites:

<http://www.fostercaremonth.org/Pages/default.aspx>

The Children's Bureau lesbian adoption site.

[http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/cultural/adoption/gay\\_lesbian.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/cultural/adoption/gay_lesbian.cfm)

Thurs. Dec. 4

Violence Against Women Online Site  
<http://www.vawnet.org/>

There are a number of YouTube videos on the rape of indigenous women. See if you can find some activist organizations.

A good list of body/fat acceptance blogs and sites:

<http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art42580.asp>

Please read some of them, and be prepared to comment on them.



There are many sites having to do with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Iraq war. See e.g.,  
<http://www.ptsdmanual.com/>

<http://www.iraqwarveterans.org/ptsd.htm>

In addition to the above, please find some activist sites dealing with issues that interest you, and be prepared to talk about and/or show them in class.

Week 14

Tues. Dec. 9 Conclusion.