Course Description and Goals

Welcome to what I hope will be an enlightening and invigorating learning experience for us all. Please keep in mind that due to the collaborative spirit of this class, certain elements of this syllabus are tentative and you will be notified of any changes to well in advance.

This course is an introduction to the basic concepts that guide our study of women and gender. We will examine historical connections, contemporary topics and debates, as well as future issues and concerns. Because the issue of women’s rights has never existed in a vacuum, we will explore how equality intersects with class, gender identity, race, and nationality. More pointedly, we will investigate how gender, along with other features of an individual’s identity, works as a target for discrimination and as a vehicle to privilege. Our readings will guide us through such conflicts via issues that include but are not limited to racism, classism, ageism, ableism, workplace discrimination and harassment, sexual orientation, gender identity, masculinities, international women’s rights, and reproductive rights!

The range and variety of issues we will encounter in this class ensures you will have the opportunity to practice critical thinking and to engage in a way that is relevant to your own field of study. What this means is that while you will be able to enrich our class by contributing your own specific knowledge and expertise, you will also develop new knowledge from readings and class discussion.

Our course materials this semester will explore subjects you may find controversial. You are not obligated to agree with the material, but I will expect that you will actively engage in course readings and discussions, demonstrating comprehension and thoughtful/respectful consideration of materials. Please exhibit similar thought/respect for classmates’ responses and maintain confidentiality of group discussion. This course at its best is an interaction of individuals with various perspectives which can enrich our understanding, as well as our writing and collaborative skills. You will be required to work with others on a daily basis in this course.

The UNL Women’s and Gender Studies Department
If you haven’t already gone to the UNL WGS website, please do soon. It offers information on many events relevant to our course and opportunities for interested students like yourself. To further frame this course, here is a brief excerpt from the WGS Department’s mission:

> From its inception, our program has been committed to promoting a diverse faculty and student body and to offering a curriculum that examines inequities and injustices that have worked against an inclusive and egalitarian society. Central to our program is the study of women, in all their diversity and through a variety of disciplinary lenses. We study women's contributions as writers and scholars, artists and activists, public figures and private citizens, in the past and the present.

This course fulfills ACE Student Learning Outcome 9: Exhibit global awareness or knowledge of human diversity through analysis of an issue.

**Required Materials**

- *The Essential Feminist Reader* by Estelle Freedman
- *Gender Outlaw* by Kate Bornstein
- *Bad Feminist* by Roxane Gay
- *A Little F'd Up: Why Feminism Is Not a Dirty Word* by Julie Zeilinger
- Other readings available on Blackboard
- Reliable Internet Access for readings and assignments
- Access to Blackboard
- Access to a printer
- Access to an unabridged dictionary (use it while you’re reading)
- A notebook or section devoted to notes for this class
  
  *while you may use a laptop to take notes, I would advise against it if you know you will become distracted and use it for non-class-related activities (see *Course Policies and Professional Conduct* for more details)*

- Loose leaf paper for quizzes
- Writing utensils (dark colors preferred for legibility)
- A dropbox.com account to save assignments online (This prevents the loss of your only copy. If you do not already have an account, I will “invite” you to create one.)

**Assignments**

Daily Participation, 200 points, 20%
Discussion Leading (1 day), 100 points, 10%
Quizzes 100 points (5 quizzes worth 20 pts each), 10%
Two WGS Event Response Papers (2 papers worth 75 points each, 150 points total), 15%
Midterm Paper, 150 points, 15%
Final Paper (full-fledged extension of Midterm) 300 points, 30%
**Total possible 1000 points, 100%**

*Daily Participation*

As with any college course, I expect you to do the readings prior to class. What makes reading for this class even more necessary is that the nature of our readings will often require a slow, thoughtful reading style with note-taking. As mentioned before, the controversial nature of some of our material may also require more time with the readings than you might expect. Having read will ensure you are prepared to engage with class and secure your participation points for the day.

Your contributions to class will reveal the level of effort you put into the readings. An easy way to ensure you’ll be able to participate is to write down a question you have about the reading, an idea about the author’s intentions, an idea it gave you for your own writing, etc. and then share aloud what you wrote with the class by bringing it up in discussion. As expected, your contributions will vary depending on what you read. **Always contribute in a manner that is respectful and conducive to discussion.** (Of course!)

Please **always bring a copy** of the assigned readings, either by **saving them onto your computer** (in-case internet goes out) **or by printing them** for class.

*Discussion Leading*

Each of you will lead a discussion on one of our readings for class. You will pick the reading in advance to ensure you know when you’ll be leading class discussion. On the day of class when we engage with that reading, your job will be to raise at least three questions to guide the class in a 20 minute dialog about our reading. Your questions should focus on critical thinking. This could mean a variety of things, like challenging us to take a new angle on the reading, to imagine what the text has left out and why, to examine how the text interacts with our other readings, and to analyze how issues from the reading are handled in popular media.

You will choose a number during the first week of class. Each number corresponds to a certain week in our schedule. Please consult the schedule as this will give you a sense of the topics you’ll be expected to discuss during the week you choose.

*Quizzes*
The occasional quizzes I give you will ask for a combination of brief fact-based answers and some open-ended critical thinking answers.

_WGS Event Response Papers_

Reading and discussing in a classroom can only go so far, especially with high-stake issues like those we will explore in this class. But good news! There are a variety of events on campus every semester that revolve around what we read about. I’ll keep you informed of the events I know of and you can certainly ask me for approval if you know of one I don’t. The WGS department keeps an updated calendar of such events at [http://www.unl.edu/wgs/events](http://www.unl.edu/wgs/events).

Your job will be to go to the event and attend it in full. After, you will write a 3-4 page response analysis, in which you briefly summarize the event (1-2 paragraphs), discuss how the event relates to our class, and to at least one of our readings. Also, make sure to discuss how you engaged with the event coming from your specific field of study (major) and the importance of this.

Please make sure it is double spaced in 12pt Times New Roman with 1” margins.

_Midterm Paper_

The midterm paper will serve as the initial draft for your final paper. The entire project will involve an accumulation of research from your initial inquiry question. Because your project is inquiry based, you should NOT set out to ARGUE or PROVE a certain standpoint or thesis. This means you may have to change the angle you are used to when deciding how to approach your project. My most basic advice is to choose a thread that you are genuinely curious about that you can explore and feel you can discuss critically.

This means choosing a topic in which you can sustain inquiry rather than champion only one side of the issue. Choose something that is interesting, inspiring, infuriating, but know that you will be expected to exercise rationale and implement research within your individual framework. In other words, if your opinion begins to interfere with writing a balanced paper, conference with me on how we can create balance or redirect your efforts. We will engage with a variety of issues and subjects over this semester so you will have much to choose from. You must have a prospectus approved by me prior to writing the paper.

This project will require a good deal of research on your own, however, I am glad to collaborate with you in order to find a topic as well as a way to enter it.
More specifics of the assignment including research resources will become available as we move forward.

**Final Paper**

The final paper will be a more in-depth version of your midterm paper. You will push your exploration beyond the inquiry asked for in your midterm. You will also tie the entirety of the project to our course goals in a reflexive fashion. After the research you gather from your midterm inquiry, you will have a better sense of where you stand on the issue along with the critical analysis to support that stance. From this, you will write a critically constructive text. Like the concept of constructive criticism, you will use your research to examine the current state of an issue of your choice in order to create a solution or suggestion for conflict-resolution.

In your examination, you will identify

1) how gender operates within the issue you’ve chosen (what events cause you to define this situation as discrimination based on gender?)

2) the consequences of the discrimination and privilege that results from gender and who experiences these consequences (Who is discriminating against who? What form does this discrimination take? What were the consequences of these actions? Who was involved?)

3) other features of identity that cause this issue (What other identity politics were involved? What history did these groups share with each other? Who was in the position of power?)

4) how this issue could be remedied (Legal action, social awareness, cultural change)

5) practical measures to implement your suggestion (tangible solutions)

6) what obstacles you anticipate might prevent your suggestion from taking place or remaining effective?

7) what role you as an individual take in implementing your suggestion?

Because this assignment asks for your original perspective and suggestions, remember this: writing in first person is a useful tool unless it leads to writing that is no longer objective. In other words, you may use first person but you should **anchor your writing in the facts** you have to support your critically constructive take on the issue. You are bringing your interpretation of and reaction to this issue to your suggestion so you must be a responsible writer rather than sharing an informal opinion.

More specifics of this assignment will be given as we move forward.

If you must change your topic from the one used in your midterm, you must meet with me to discuss why so that I can help you manage such a shift as it will require more time and effort.
Course Policies and Professional Conduct

Do not text during class—we can all see it. Texting during class will earn you a 0 in participation for the day. Doing work for any other class will also earn you a 0 for the day. Surfing the web, Facebooking, or other unfocused behavior will (surprise!) earn you a 0 for the day.

To make the most of your learning opportunity we expect you to:
1). Come to class with reading and writing assignments completed.
2). Actively participate in class discussions and engage in the ideas presented.
3). Listen and share with an open mind.
4). Respect the confidentiality of your classmates in class contributions.
5). Be present and attentive in the class and undistracted by technology, other materials, or other students.
6). Communicate any needs or concerns to me in a timely manner.
7). Come on time and stay for the entire class.
8). Take responsibility for your own learning.
9). Be honest in your work.

Policy: Academic Honesty

Cheating and plagiarizing are very serious academic offenses. Please be academically honest in this and every course. We have the following academic honesty policies in this class.
· Anyone who cheats or plagiarizes on any assignment or exam will automatically receive a “0” on the assignment or exam.
· The incident will be reported to Women’s and Gender Studies Director Dr. Chantal Kalisa.
· The incident will be reported in writing to UNL’s Judicial Affairs.
· If you are not familiar with the definitions and consequences of cheating, or with your student rights, please refer to your UNL Student Handbook or see an academic advisor.

Attendance

Each class builds upon previous ones. When you are absent, you hamper your ability to participate fully in subsequent classes. You also hinder your peers’ ability to learn from the contributions you would have made to class. So, please attend and participate. We need you!

I realize that some absences are unavoidable. In the event of an emergency or illness you may miss three classes with no formal penalties to your final grade. Beyond that, each class you miss
will automatically deduct half a letter grade from your overall grade (5% or 50 points). After five absences, you will automatically fail this course.

If you do miss class, for any reason, you are responsible for the content of that class period, as well as any assignments given for the next class. You can always contact us for information or turn in assignments by e-mail if you must be absent on the day something is due. Missed in-class activities cannot be made up. Email us if you must miss class before you miss the class. It is your responsibility to get notes and updates from classmates.

Make-up work and alternative accommodations for full credit will only be allowed for students who seek permission prior to the absence and/or provide documentation of extenuating circumstances.

**Late and Missing Work**

Late assignments will receive a 5% grade deduction for every day they are overdue. An assignment is considered late if it is not presented in class on the due date. Assignments will be accepted in hard copy form only. Because the schedule for the course is strenuous, there is no possibility to make up a class period when you are involved in leading a class discussion except in extenuating circumstances. This means you will receive a zero for failing to lead the class on your assigned day.

Missing work includes writing less than what is required. Your grade will be deducted by the ratio of what is missing to what is required. So, in an easy example, if you turned in a 1 page essay when a 2 page essay was required, your grade would be multiplied by ½. Work that is simply not turned in will earn you a zero.

**A Note on Grades**

I will work hard to be fair and responsible when it comes to your grades. You will receive detailed comments on your performances and written assignments. Your grades are not a public matter. If you have a concern about a grade: a) wait 24 hours before doing anything, b) submit to me via email a detailed explanation of your issue, c) schedule a meeting with me to discuss your performance. Grade disputes must be handled within 7 days of your receipt of the graded assignment—do not wait until the end of the semester.

**Contact**

I am glad to supply extra assistance to you if needed. Because it is best to contact me by email, please remember to sign your name and include a reference to our class. I receive many emails
from many people about many things and while you are important, I can’t remember it all. Also, please respect my time by exercising patience and foresight when emailing me—i.e. don’t email me at the last minute and don’t expect an immediate response.

Further Resources

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact us for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability fully to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.
Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Reading Legend
Our texts are listed in the schedule by their abbreviated, parenthetical names: Gay’s Bad Feminist (BF), A Little F’d Up by Zeilinger (F’d), The Essential Feminist Reader by Freedman (EFR), and Gender Outlaw by Bornstein (Outlaw).

Week 1 Women’s Rights & Historical Gaps
August 26: Syllabus Review, Introduction Letter, Why have a course on women’s studies?
HW: Read BF “Introduction”, F’d Intro and Part 1, EFR #49 Lorde’s “The Master’s Tools will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”, Write a response
August 28: Class Discussion: What Feminism Means to You
HW: Read F’d Part 6, EFR #59 Walker “Becoming the Third Wave”

Week 2 Women’s Rights & Historical Gaps Continued
September 2: Discussion Speakers #1, #2, and #3
HW: Read F’d Part 3, EFR #40 Friedan “The Feminine Mystique,” #58 Hanna “Riot Grrl Manifesto”
September 4: How far has equality come?
HW: Read BF “Gender & Sexuality”, read online Kinsey Scale

Week 3 Sexual Orientation
September 9: Discussion Speakers #4, #5, and #6
HW: Read Outlaw Parts 1-3
September 11: Stonewall, DOMA, Employment Law
HW: Read online Butler: Chapter from Gender Trouble

Week 4 Gender performance and identity
September 16: Discussion Speakers #7, #8, and #9
HW: Read Outlaw Parts 4 & 5 (Parts 6 & 7 optional)
September 18: “Gender: It’s what you do.”, NE Public Schools “Purple Penguins,” and #WeJustNeedToPee
HW: EFR #420, Read online bell hooks’s “Feminism is for everybody,” & Gamergate and MRA materials

Week 5 Masculinities
September 23: Discussion Speakers #10, #11, and #12 Midterm Proposal Due
September 25: Male Feminists and Activism
HW: Read online Chapters from Half the Sky
Week 6 International
September 30: Discussion Speakers #13, #14, and #15
HW: Read *F’d* Part 5
October 2: Feminism in a Global Context: Comparing Activism
HW: *BF* “Race and Entertainment”, *EFR* #41 Murray “Testimony, House Committee on Education and Labor,” *EFR* #45

Week 7 Race
October 7: Discussion Speakers #16, #17, and #18
HW: Read online Peggy McIntosh “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” and Afaa Michael Weaver’s “My Walking Shoes” [http://www.poetryfoundation.org/article/245930](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/article/245930)
October 9: Sites of Discrimination, Sites of Privilege
HW: Read online Linda Tirado “Why Poor People’s Decisions Make Perfect Sense”

Week 8 Classism
October 14: Discussion Speakers #19, #20, and #21
HW: read online Veronica Chambers, "Betrayal Feminism," and Cherise Charleswell’s "Feminism is Not Just for Academics: Overcoming Disconnect and Division"
October 16: Second Wave Shortcomings: Divided Feminisms

Week 9 Essay Work
October 21: FALL BREAK
October 23: In-Class workshop of midterm drafts
**Midterm Due Friday**
HW: Read *EFR* #43 “Our bodies, Ourselves”, *EFR* #31 Sanger, *EFR* #53 Anonymous

Week 10 Reproductive Rights
October 28: Discussion Speakers #22, #23, and #24
HW: Read *BF* “When Twitter Does What Journalism Cannot” & “The Alienable Rights of Women”
October 30: Newsroom Activity: Analysis and Activism
HW: Read *EFR* #33 Woolf “Three Guineas” and read online excerpt from Sandra Harding’s *The Science Question in Feminism*

Week 11 Education, Title IX, and Activism
November 4: The right to learn and women in STEM
November 6: Review of Title IX Violations and Solution Exercise
HW: read online Nomy Lamm’s zine I’m so fucking beautiful at https://ia600807.us.archive.org/25/items/ImSoFuckingBeautiful212/ImSoFuckingBeautiful2.5.pdf, Excerpt from Beauty is a Verb (2 poems) at http://www.beautyisaverbbook.com/?p=6, And Harilyn Rousso’s “Who’s Harilyn?” from Don’t Call Me Inspirational: A Disabled Feminist Talks Back

Week 12 Body Image & Ability
November 11: Review of Readings and Field Trip: Campus Access Survey

November 13: Body image Activism
HW: Read online Sandra Cisneros “Barbie Q”, selections from Hyperbole and a Half, and chapter from Sara Marcus’s Girls to the Front

Week 13 Age
November 18: Girls and Women: Expectations, Standards, Agency and Infantilization
HW: Read online Barnett’s “Ageism and Sexism in the Workplace” http://www.brandeis.edu/barnett/docs/ageism.pdf and Olenka Frenkiel’s tell-all on BBC policy http://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/nov/07/bbc-journalist-olenka-frenkiel-reject-gagging-clause

November 20: Girls and Women continued

Week 14 Workplace
November 25: Equality or just Opportunity?: Double Standards and Professionalism
November 27: Thanksgiving Break
HW: Read F’d Part 2

Week 15
December 2:   Class Workshop of Final drafts
HW: Read BF “Back to Me”
December 4:   Review of Semester

December 9:   Dead Week.
Personal Conferences will be scheduled. Use this time to work on your final paper.

December 11:  Paper #2 due. Last day Celebration. Student Evaluations.