

**San José State University**  
**Sociology and Interdisciplinary Social Science**  
**Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program**  
**WGSS 101: Sex, Power, and Politics (25874), Spring '23**

**Course and Contact Information**

Instructor: Angela Castillo

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Office Hours: Monday from 4:15-5:15pm, and by appointment

Class Days/Time: Asynchronous

Classroom: Online via Canvas

GE/SJSU Studies Category: Area S: Self, Society, and Equality in the U.S.

**Course Description**

This course offers a multidisciplinary introduction to traditional and new images, roles, experiences, ethnic similarities and differences, and contemporary problems of American women. Sex, Power and Politics, is an investigation into social, economic, and political factors that shape the politics of women's bodies and sexuality. Because mainstream (non-feminist) approaches to sex politics are well represented in the media and in other courses, this class focuses on feminist approaches and critiques. The readings, assignments, and subsequent discussion for this course are designed to cultivate a broad understanding of feminist perspectives and participation in gender and sex politics.

**Course Format**

This class will only meet online and will be facilitated through the Canvas the colleges Learning Management System. You will not be required to attend class at specific times, as you would in a traditional face-to-face class. Instead of an in-person lecture, you will access course materials on the "Modules" section of Canvas. Instead of in-person class discussions, you will participate in online discussion boards and complete online activities.

**Faculty/Class Web Page and Canvas**

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#). You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through [Canvas](#) to learn of any updates. For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources page](#).

**Course Learning Outcomes (CLO):**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theoretical concepts, research methodologies and their application to current issues.
2. Describe how identities (i.e. religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual, orientation, disability, and/or age) are shaped by cultural and societal influences in contexts of equality and inequality.
3. Identify historical, social, political, and economic processes producing diversity, equality, and structured inequalities in the U.S.

4. Summarize social movements which have led to greater equality and social justice in the United States (i.e. religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age).
5. Recognize and appreciate constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups in the U.S.

### Required Textbook/Readings

1. Bornstein, Kate. (2013). *My New Gender Workbook: A Step-by-Step Guide to Achieving World Peace through Gender Anarchy and Sex Positivity*. New York: Routledge. **(E-book available at zero cost via SJSU library)**
2. Edut, O. and Walker, R. (2004). *Body Outlaws: Rewriting the Rules of Beauty and Body Image*. Seal Press. (BO)
3. Hooks, B. (2014). *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. SECOND EDITION. New York: South End Press. **(E-book available at zero cost via SJSU library)**
4. Weitz, R. (Ed.) (2014). *The Politics of Women's Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance, and Behavior*. FOURTH EDITION. New York: Oxford University Press. (POWB)

### Course Requirements and Assignments

#### Discussion Questions: 15x 20 = 300 points

15 times throughout the course you will be asked post a response to a discussion question based on either the readings for that week, a short film, or current event. You must post an original response and respond to a classmate's comment. Each response should be about 50 words in length. Guidelines for online discussion as well as the rubric that will be used for grading are posted on Canvas. These online discussions are my way of assessing that you are completing the reading as well as participating in the class.

#### Essays 3 x 200 = 600 points

Three times in the term I will give you a set of questions to respond to regarding readings assigned for the class. You will be assessed on your ability answer the prompt fully, provide your own stance in relation to the reading response prompt, and draw connections to the assigned reading. Each short write essay should be about 1000 words (3-4 pages). Due dates for these assignments are on Canvas under "Syllabus"

#### End of Course Reflection 1 x 100 = 100 points

At the end of the course you will be asked to write a short reflection about your experience. The essay should be 500 words (about 2 pages).

### Grading Information

I grade using a point system. Your final grade is an accumulation of points you have earned throughout the semester. The grading scale is as follows:

A+ = 970-1000	A = 940-969	A- = 900-939
B+ = 870-899	B = 840-869	B- = 800-839
C+ = 770-799	C = 740-769	C- = 700-739
D+ = 660-669	D = 630-659	D- = 600-629

## **Classroom Protocol**

1. Understand that a web-based course such as this requires a fair amount of self-direction and independence. You are responsible for accessing and understanding the course materials and completing the assignments.
2. Discussion assignments may be informally worded, similar to how you would speak in class. While I will not grade you on spelling and grammar, your posts must be intelligible. Discussions are not the same things as texting; you must use complete spelling of words. Proofread what you write prior to clicking the 'submit' button.
3. You are expected to turn in work on time. Having computer problems is NOT a valid excuse for not completing your work. Make sure that you do not wait until the last minute to access materials, complete online assignments, etc. in case you encounter any technological issues. You can enter and work on the class Canvas page anytime during the day or night that you would like but please know that the discussions, essays, and assignments have certain due dates and times. It is your responsibility to keep track of assignment due dates.
4. Please reach out to me if you are struggling or having problems at any point in the semester. You can send me an email on Canvas or come by my office hours.

## **Late Policy**

Please notify me as soon as possible if an emergency interferes with your class performance and ability to turn in an assignment on time. I will accept assignments turned within two weeks past the due date. If you turn in the assignment within two weeks, you will receive up to one half of the full credit for the assignment.

## **A Climate of Mutual Respect**

A climate of mutual respect requires free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. All of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment or personal attack. This means opening ourselves to the lived experiences of others, which may not be our own, and treating those experiences as valid. No one is entitled to harass, discriminate, or belittle another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. On the other hand, we cannot permit ourselves to be silenced because we feel awkward discussing politically sensitive issues.

Participating as a good listener while your peers are speaking is also critical. This is your role as members of the audience. Good listening requires effort and energy; "audience member" is not a passive role. Good listening entails offering attentive, supportive nonverbal feedback, and asking questions or offering comments.

When you are involved in a class discussion reflect on the following: Do you lead? Do you follow? Do you dominate the conversation? Are you hesitant to speak up? Are you aware of other people's desire to join in the conversation? Do you make sure everyone has a chance to contribute? When you have an emotional reaction to something someone says, how do you handle it?

## **A Note about Women's Studies Classes**

**This class will be a challenge because:**

**The Workload-** Officially, a three-unit course entails six hours of work outside the classroom. Each week you will be expected to read between 30-60 pages and class assignments will require a substantial amount of work outside of class.

**Topic Matter-** There will be frequent instances throughout the semester in which sensitive and difficult issues will be discussed. Many of these issues will require an open mind. Feminist readings of topics may go against moral or religious teachings with which you have grown up. Frequently, students in this course find that they begin to see almost everything in a new light. This experience can be both exciting and disturbing.

**R-rating-** As you will come to find, we may be using several texts that involve “profane” language. Some of the films that we will use in class also contain nudity and/or violence. Please be forewarned.

### **University Policies**

Per [University Policy S16-9](#), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page \(https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php\)](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

# WGSS 101: Sex, Power, and Politics, Spring '23, Course Schedule

*This schedule is subject to change with fair notice.*

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	Jan 25/Jan 30	<b>MODULE 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO FEMINISM</b> <b>Introduction to the Course</b> <b>Feminism is for Everybody</b> <i>Feminism is for Everybody</i> – Hooks pgs. 1-60
2	Feb 6	<b>Feminism is for Everybody</b> <i>Feminism is for Everybody</i> – Hooks pgs. 61-End
3	Feb 13	<b>MODULE 2: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUALITY AND THE BODY</b> POWB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A History of Women's Bodies, Rose Weitz</li> <li>• Believing is Seeing: Biology as Ideology, Judith Lorber</li> <li>• Becoming a Gendered Body: Practices of Preschools, Karin A. Martin</li> </ul>
4	Feb 20	POWB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medicalization, Natural Childbirth and Birthing Experiences, Sarah Jane Brubaker and Heather E. Dillaway</li> <li>• Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power, Sandra Lee Bartky</li> <li>• Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson</li> </ul> BO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intimate Enemies, Jennifer Berger</li> </ul> <i>Film: Passion and Power</i>
5	Feb 27	<b>MODULE 3: THE POLITICS OF SEXUALITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence - Rich</li> <li>• Thinking Sex –Ruben (Both articles can be found on Canvas)</li> </ul> BO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appraising God's Property, Keesa Schreane</li> <li>• Strip!, Diana Courvant</li> </ul> <i>Essay 1 Due</i>
6	Mar 6	POWB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breasted Experience: The Look and the Feeling –Young</li> <li>• Daring to Desire: Culture and the Bodies of Adolescent Girls, Deborah L. Tolman</li> <li>• A Tale of Two Technologies: HPV Vaccination, Male Circumcision, and Sexual Health, Laura M. Carpenter and Monica J. Casper</li> </ul> BO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Klaus Barbie, and Other Dolls I'd Like to See, Susan Jane Gilman</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Butt: Its Politics, Its Profanity, Its Power, Erin J. Aubry</li> <li>• Beauty Secrets, Lee Damsky</li> </ul>
7	Mar 13	<p><i>My New Gender Workbook</i>- Bornstein Chapter 1-3</p> <p><i>Film: Before Stonewall</i></p>
8	Mar 20	<p><i>My New Gender Workbook</i>- Bornstein Chapter 6</p> <p>Spring Break is March 27<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup></p>
9	Apr 3	<p>POWB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get Your Freak On’: Sex, Babies, and Images of Black Femininity– Collins</li> <li>• Brain, Brow, and Booty: Latina Iconicity in U.S. Popular Culture – Guzman and Valdivia</li> </ul> <p>BO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My Brown Face, Mira Jacob</li> <li>• Becoming La Mujer, Marisa Navarro</li> <li>• Lucy, I’m Home, Jill Corral</li> </ul>
10	Apr 10	<p><b>MODULE 4: THE POLITICS OF APPEARANCE</b></p> <p>POWB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branded with Infamy: Inscriptions of Poverty and Class in the United States – Adair</li> <li>• Letting Ourselves Go: Making Room for the Fat Body in Feminist Scholarship –Hartley (Canvas)</li> <li>• Navigating Public Spaces: Gender, Race, and Body Privilege in Everyday Life, Samantha Kwan</li> </ul> <p>BO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination 120, Debbie Feit</li> <li>• Food for Our Souls, Dyann Logwood</li> <li>• Conquering the Fear of Fat, The Journey Toward Myself, Regina Williams</li> </ul> <p><i>Essay 2 Due</i></p>
11	Apr 17	<p>POWB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing Women: Cultural Hegemony and the Exercise of Power Among Women Who Have Undergone Elective Mammoplasty, Patricia Gagné and Deanna McGaughey</li> <li>• Reclaiming the Female Body: Women Body Modifiers and Feminist Debates –Pitts</li> </ul> <p>BO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marked for Life: Tattoos and the Redefinition of Self, Silja J.A. Talvi</li> <li>• Parisian Peel, Joyce Dyer</li> </ul>

12	Apr 24	<p>POWB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women and Their Hair: Seeking Power Through Resistance and Accommodation, Rose Weitz</li> <li>• The Moral Underpinnings of Beauty: A Meaning-Based Explanation for Light and Dark Complexions in Advertising, Shyon Baumann</li> </ul> <p>BO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memoirs of a (Sort Of) Ex-Shaver, Carolyn Mackler</li> <li>• The Art of the Ponytail, Akkida McDowell</li> <li>• Body Image: 3<sup>rd</sup> Wave Feminism's Issue?, Amy Richards</li> </ul>
13	May 1	<p><b>MODULE 5: THE POLITICS OF BEHAVIOR</b></p> <p>POWB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the 'Muscle Moll' to the 'Butch' Ballplayer –Cahn</li> <li>• 'Holding Back': Negotiating a Glass Ceiling on Women's Strength – Dworkin (Canvas)</li> </ul> <p>BO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All-American Girls: Jock Chic, Body Image and Sports, Leslie Heywood</li> <li>• At Home in My Body, Allison Torres</li> </ul>
14	May 8	<p>POWB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hijab and American Muslim Women: Creating the Space for Autonomous Selves, Rhys H. Williams and Gira Vashi</li> <li>• Compulsive Heterosexuality: Masculinity and Dominance, C.J. Pascoe</li> <li>• Being Undocumented and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV): Multiple Vulnerabilities Through the Lens of Feminist Intersectionality, Margaret E. Adams and Jacquelyn Campbell</li> </ul> <p>BO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veiled Intentions: Don't Judge a Muslim Girl By Her Covering, Maysan Haydar</li> </ul> <p><i>Essay 3 Due</i></p>
15	May 22	<p><b>FINAL</b></p>