

Gender and Society

GSWS 0002 ENGL 0159

Fall 2025

TTH 12:00 PM – 12:59 PM

Professor Javier Samper Vendrell [he/him]

samperja@sas.upenn.edu

Office: Williams Hall 753

Office Hours: T 3:30–4:30 PM and TH 10:30-11:30 AM, and by appointment

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the ways in which sex, gender, and sexuality mark our bodies, influence our perceptions of self and others, organize families and work life, delimit opportunities for individuals and groups of people, as well as impact the terms of local and transnational economic exchange. We will explore the ways in which sex, gender, and sexuality work with other markers of difference and social status such as race, age, nationality, and ability to further demarcate possibilities, freedoms, choices, and opportunities available to people.

This course is cross-listed with the GSWS Program. If you liked this course, consider adding a GSWS minor. The minor is 6 CUs and very flexible in terms of requirements. To learn more, contact Gwendolyn Beetham (gbeetham@sas.upenn.edu) or visit: <https://gsws.sas.upenn.edu/>

All materials will be available through Canvas.

Assessments and Grading

- **Attendance and Participation (20%):** Attendance will be taken in recitation sections; in lectures I will not necessarily take attendance, but you will receive credit for in-class discussions, quizzes, and other short in-class writing assignments. If you must miss a lecture or recitation, you should get notes for that day from a classmate and, after reviewing them, meet with me or your recitation instructor to go over any questions you have about that day's reading, lecture, or discussion.

Participation is more than just being there. It requires student engagement and active learning before class. Classroom behavior must reflect a spirit of generosity and respect. Classroom etiquette requires that we pay attention to people speaking and avoid side conversations, for example on cell phones, distracting or disrespectful gestures, and unrelated reading and writing.

- **Oral Presentation (15%):** Working in groups of 2–3, you will prepare a 15-minute in-class (recitation) presentation on a topic related to the course content. You will discuss the topic with the instructor in advance during office hours. Your presentation will be evaluated on the quality of its content and delivery.

- **Essays (10-15%):** You will write **two essays** ranging from 1,000 to 1,500 words (4-6 double-spaced pages). These essays will provide an opportunity for you to demonstrate in-depth understanding of the class materials, to take a stand on what you have read, and to refine an argument. I will circulate prompts in advance.
- A **Midterm (15%)** and a **Final Exam (25%)** will assess your understanding of the course materials (readings, videos, and lectures). Assessments might include multiple-choice answers, short essays, analysis, and an oral component.
- **Extra Credit:** You can earn extra credit (up to 2 times towards participation) for the course by attending a GSWS/FQT events and writing a 250-word reflection on your impressions. You can find the calendar of events, which will be updated throughout the semester, at <https://gsws.sas.upenn.edu/events>

Communication with the instructor

I will hold office hours twice a week (T 3:30–4:30 PM and TH 10:30-11:30 AM). We can meet in person or on zoom. I'd like to encourage you drop by my office or to make an appointment during these times, but you can always schedule an appointment at another time convenient for both of us. You should contact me if you have specific questions or if you would like to learn more about the themes covered in this course. You don't need to have a "reason" to come to office hours, though. We can talk about everything. Office hours are a great opportunity for us to get to know each other.

If you can't make it to office hours but need assistance, you may contact me by email. If it is an urgent matter, it is important that you leave a realistic amount of time for me to respond. I may not be able to respond to your e-mail immediately, but I will try. If you send me an email the right before an assignment is due, you may not receive a response in time for it to be helpful for you. Remember to follow the basic rules of [email etiquette](#).

Accessibility

I strive to create a fully inclusive classroom. I welcome individual students to approach me about distinctive learning needs. In particular, I encourage students with disabilities to have a conversation with me and disclose how our classroom or course activities could impact the disability and what accommodations would be essential to you. You should register with Disability Services at the [Weingarten Center](#).

Academic Honesty and Guidelines for Generative AI

According to the Policies and Procedures Handbook of the University of Pennsylvania, using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific and proper acknowledgement constitutes plagiarism. If you are at all unsure about the appropriate form of acknowledgement in a particular situation, it is your responsibility, as stated in [Penn's Code of Academic Integrity](#), to consult with the instructor to clarify any ambiguities. Plagiarism in any assignment will result in a failing grade for that assignment, and may result in further disciplinary action, which may include receiving a failing grade for the course.

A central goal of this course is to develop critical and analytical thinking. Generative AI cannot replace the development of these skills. Written work created using generative AI

tools is not original work. You may not submit written work generated by an AI program as your own work. All assignments should be your own original work created for this course. Keep in mind that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or problematic. Nevertheless, you can use generative AI programs for preparation, i.e. to generate topics or brainstorm. Be aware, however, that using these programs may limit your independent thinking and creativity and make it more difficult to engage with the topics developed in class.

If you use generative AI programs in the preparation of an assignment, you must indicate where and how you used these programs in a note before the bibliography of the assignment.

Take care of yourself

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester. Taking care of yourself will actually help you achieve your academic goals more than spending too much time studying.

All of us experience difficulty for various reasons at some point or another. We all benefit from support and guidance during times of struggle. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or difficult feelings like anxiety or depression, I strongly encourage you to seek support. An important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. There are many helpful resources available on and off campus. Take the time to learn about all that's available and take advantage of it. You can also reach out to a friend, faculty member, or family member you trust for assistance connecting to the support that can help. Ask for help sooner rather than later.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for assistance connecting to the support that can help.

Resources

[Penn Women's Center](#)

[LGBT Center](#)

[Penn Violence Prevention](#)

[Weingarten Learning Resources Center](#)

[Student Health and Counseling](#)

[First Generation, Low-Income \(FLGI\) Program](#)

[The Office of the Chaplain & SPARC – The Spiritual and Religious Life Center](#)

Class Schedule [ALL READINGS AND FILMS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE]

Week 1	What is Gender? What is Sex?
Tuesday, 8/26.	Introduction
Thursday 8/28	Anne Fausto-Sterling, <i>Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World</i> (“Of Spirals and Layers”) (2012) No recitations this week!
Week 2	
Tuesday, 9/2	Kathryn Bond Stockton, <i>Gender(s)</i> , (“When Was Gender?” 93–132; “Who’s My Opposite?” 135–66) (MIT Press 2021)
Thursday, 9/4	Judith Lorber, “A World Without Gender” (2005) Heath Fogg Davis, <i>Beyond Trans: Does Gender Matter?</i> (2017): “Introduction: Sex Stickers”
Week 3	History of Feminism
Tuesday, 9/9	The First Wave Seneca Falls Convention, "Declaration of Sentiments" and "Resolutions" (1848) Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" (1851) Meet the Brave but Overlooked Women of Color who Fought for the Vote - NYT
Thursday, 9/11	The Second Wave Excerpt from the "Feminine Mystique" by Betty Friedan (1963) Redstockings Manifesto (1969) Carol Hanish, "The Personal is Political" (1969) Radicalesbians, "The Woman-Identified Woman" (1969) The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement" (1978) Essay 1 Due on Monday, 9/15
Week 4	
Tuesday, 9/16	The Third Wave: Kathleen Hanna/Bikini Kill, "Riot Grrrl Manifesto" (1991) Rebecca Walker, “Becoming the Third Wave” (1992)
Thursday, 9/18	The Fourth Wave? Feminism: The Fourth Wave (National Women’s Museum) Roxane Gay, "Confessions of a Bad Feminist" (2015)

	Jyni Verma, "What is Pop Feminism?: Unpacking the Layers of 'Girl Power' Feminism" (2021) Gayle Salomon, "Transfeminism and the Future of Gender" (2008)
Week 5	Health and Reproductive Justice
Tuesday, 9/23	Kathy E. Ferguson, "Whose Freedom? Birth Control and the Enduring Fight over Our Bodies." Sarah Combellick-Bidney, "Reproductive Rights as Human Rights" (2017) Jennifer Gerson, "How Indigenous Women Repealed New Mexico's Longstanding Abortion Ban" (2021) Jessica Weisberg, "Can Surrogacy Remake the World?" (<i>The New Yorker</i>) (2019)
Thursday, 9/25	No Class
Week 6	The Family
Tuesday, 10/30	Dorothy Roberts, <i>Killing the Black Body</i> "The Dark Side of Birth Control" (1997) Linda Villarosa, "Why America's Black Mothers and Babies are in a Life or Death Crisis" (2018)
Thursday, 10/2	Emma Goldman, "Marriage and Love" (1910) Katherine Goldstein, "Where are the Mothers?" (2017) Nicole Mason, "A Black, Queer Single Mother on Why I Am Proud to Use the Term Single Mother by Choice" (2017) Emma John, "Why are increasing numbers of women choosing to be single?" (2021) Sarah Mirk, "Popaganda: Queering Family Values" (2017) Stephanie Coontz, "How to Make Your Marriage Gay" (2020)
Week 7	
Tuesday, 10/7	Midterm
Thursday, 10/9	Fall Break
Week 8	Intersectional and Transnational Feminism
Tuesday, 10/14	Audre Lorde, "There Is No Hierarchy of Oppressions" Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" Kimberlé Crenshaw, "The Urgency of Intersectionality" (2016)
Thursday, 10/16	Elizabeth R. Cole and Zakiya T. Luna, "Making Coalitions Work: Solidarity across Difference within US Feminism" (2010) Saba Mahmood, "Feminism, Democracy, and Empire" (2008)

	Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others" (2002)
Week 9	Labor
Tuesday, 10/21	Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Gregg Lee Carter, "A Brief History of Working Women" Pat Mainardi, " The Politics of Housework " (1970) Marlene Kim, "Policies to End the Gender Wage Gap in the United States" (2013)
Thursday, 10/23	Dean Spade, "Compliance Is Gendered: Struggling for Gendered Self-Determination in a Hostile Economy" (2006) Catherine Rottenberg, "The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism" (2013) Christopher Carpenter and Gilbert Gonzales, " Transgender Americans are more likely to be unemployed and poor " (2020) Film: <i>On the Basis of Sex</i> (2018)
Week 10	Gender-based Violence
Tuesday, 10/28	Chelsea Spencer, et al, "Why Sexual Assault Survivors Do Not Report to Universities" (2017) Jackson Katz, " Violence Against Women – It's a Men's Issue " (Ted Talk) Homa Khaleeli, " #SayHerName " (2016)
Thursday, 10/30	Film: <i>The Hunting Ground</i> (Kirby Dick, USA, 2015, 103 min.), OR Film: <i>She Said</i> (2022)
Week 11	Masculinities
Tuesday, 11/4	R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept" (2005) Brendan Gough, "Theorising Masculinities" (2018)
Thursday, 11/6	Zoë Heller, " How Toxic is Masculinity? " (2022) bell hooks, "Feminist Manhood," 107–24 and "Popular Culture: Media Masculinity," 125–34. In <i>The Will to Change</i> (2004). " 9 Ways Men Can Become Allies For Equal Rights " (HeForShe) Essay 2 due on Monday 11/11
Week 12	Gender Performativity
Tuesday, 11/11	Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" (1988) Film: <i>Paris Is Burning</i> (Jennie Livingston, 1990, 78 min.)
Thursday, 11/13	bell hooks, <i>Black Looks: Race and Representation</i> ("Is Paris Burning?") (1992), 145–56. Judith Butler, <i>Bodies that Matter</i> ("Gender is Burning") (1993)

Week 13	Media and Representation
Tuesday, 11/18	Alison Bechdel, "The Test" Sarah Banet-Weiser, <i>Empowered: Popular Media and Popular Misogyny</i> ("Introduction") (2022), 1–39. Sarah Banet-Weiser and Kathryn Claire Higgins, "Television and the 'Honest' Woman: Mediating the Labor of Believability" (2022)
Thursday, 11/20	GLAAD: Where We Are on TV Report 2024–25
Week 14	
Tuesday, 11/25	Thanksgiving Break
Thursday, 11/27	Thanksgiving Break
Week 15	Takeaways
Tuesday, 12/2	Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, <u>We should all be Feminists</u> (Ted Talk) (2012)
Thursday, 12/4	Final Exam