

## **Capstone Seminar (WST 4935)**

Spring 2021  
Wednesdays Period 7 - 9 (1:55 PM - 4:55 PM)  
Online Synchronous

**Instructor:** Alexandria N. Wilson McDonald

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**Office Hours via Zoom:** Wednesdays 1 pm - 1:50 pm, Thursdays 11:30 pm - 12:30 pm, and by appointment; Links to my Zoom office hours can be found under “office hours” on the home page of the course Canvas site.

**Class Meetings via Zoom:** This is a 100% online course. Links to the class meetings can be found on the homepage of the course Canvas site.

### Course Description

This course, required for all Women’s Studies majors, is the culmination of the Women’s Studies degree. Throughout the course we explore past and present scholarship in women’s, gender, and sexualities studies to reaffirm the interdisciplinary nature of the field and highlight the relationship between feminist theory, intellectual practice, and social change. The majority of the semester is devoted to a full-length independent project on a topic of the student’s choosing. This course is dedicated to exploring feminist theories, epistemologies, and methodologies in order to help students prepare their final projects. We also will be thinking about “feminist futures,” as we explore what becoming and living as a feminist means for student’s future professional and personal plans.

### Course Pre-requisites / Co-requisites

WST 3015 - Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Women’s Studies

### Learning Objectives

- Students will engage with ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions as they develop their own independent projects throughout the course.
- Students will become familiar with the ways in which feminists have used scholarship and activism to address gender injustice in society.
- Students will learn to draw on and apply core concepts of feminist theory.
- Students will position themselves and their experiences into key feminist debates through a “position paper.”

### Required Texts

Sara Ahmed, 2017. *Living a Feminist Life*. Duke University Press.

Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber. 2012. *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*.

All other required readings will be available in Canvas.

### Attendance

In this class the material that students learn is cumulative; thus, completing the readings, watching the recorded lectures and assigned videos, attending the live class meetings, and engaging with the course material is a requirement of this course. You are responsible for reading all assigned materials carefully, ahead of time in preparation for class.

Attendance for this class will be taken at the end of every live class meeting. There will be several live Zoom meetings throughout the course of the semester. Check the course schedule for the dates of the live meetings. Each student is allowed **one** unexcused absence from these live meetings. Any further unexcused absences (this includes absences without a doctor's note, excuse from the university, or another acceptable excuse) will result in a deduction of 5 points for each absence from your attendance grade. Your attendance grade makes up 5% of your overall grade.

Requirements for class attendance are consistent with the attendance policy stated in the Undergraduate Catalog Regulations found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>.

### Participation

Due to the online format of this course, I understand that participation in class discussion will be difficult; nonetheless half of your participation grade will be based on class discussion. You should think of this as an opportunity to practice discussing your ideas in a public forum and inputting yourself within relevant debates. For the other half, you will be required to meet with me within the first six weeks of the course to discuss your final project and participate in group work regarding your project during Zoom class meetings. It is up to each student to arrange a meeting with me. For credit, this meeting must be held prior to the due date of the annotated bibliography. Your participation grade makes up 5% of your overall grade.

### Evaluative Essay

In order to fulfill the BA in Women's Studies requirements, the program has designated the following three Student Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the terminology and concepts central to the interdisciplinary field of women's gender, and sexualities studies.
2. Examine and interpret material using the theory and research methods of women's, gender, and sexualities studies and apply these ideas to current social issues.
3. Present ideas concerning women's, gender, and sexualities studies in spoken and written form.

The undergraduate curriculum is designed to introduce material relevant to these learning outcomes in WST3015 (Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Women's Studies), reinforce them throughout the additional courses taken in the major, and assess students' achievement of these outcomes in WST 4935 Capstone Seminar in Women's Studies. During the Fall semester (2020), your exit assessment will take the form of a "position paper." This assignment is required for all students in the Capstone Seminar. Students will read a selected article and then write a "position paper" of 5 pages. Students will be asked to "position" themselves relative to the arguments the author lays out in the essay. Detailed instructions for the evaluative essay will be provided in class and listed on the course Canvas site under "assignments." The evaluative essay will make up 20% of a student's overall grade in this course. See the course schedule for the due date.

#### Discussion Board Activities

Activities will be assigned throughout the semester which allow students to engage with the epistemologies and methodologies we discuss in class. Discussion board activities will be assigned on weeks when there is a recorded lecture, rather than a live class meeting. These activities will be listed as discussions on the course Canvas site and students will be required to complete the activity, write up their results, and post their write-up to the discussion board by 11:59 pm on the date on which the activity is due. These discussion board activities necessitate that the student completes the readings for the week and watch the recorded lecture in order to successfully complete the activity. See the course schedule for due dates. These discussion posts and activities will make up 10% of a student's overall grade in this course.

#### Annotated Bibliography

In this course each student will complete a final project which will consist of a research design. In preparation for the final project, students will complete an annotated bibliography that outlines **five** relevant sources for their project. These sources should be relevant to the research question that the student will build their final project around. The articles/books should be listed in chronological order and students must use an established citation style. Annotated bibliographies must include a brief (one long paragraph of around 200 words) annotation that summarizes and analyzes/evaluates each of the five works. Thus, a student's annotated bibliography will include five long paragraphs, one for each text. The annotated bibliography will make up 10% of a student's overall grade in this course. Detailed instructions for the annotated bibliography will be provided in class and listed on the course Canvas site under "assignments." See the course schedule for the due date.

### Project Outline

In this course each student will complete a final project in the form of a research design. In preparation for this final project, students will complete a project outline. This project outline must include the student's research question and a brief introduction to the project and a discussion of the project's epistemological background. This should be written in 3 succinct, double-spaced pages with a rationale for why a specific research question was chosen and how it will advance feminist knowledge. This assignment will make up 10% of a student's overall grade in this course. Detailed instructions for the project outline will be provided in class and listed on the course Canvas site under "assignments." See the course schedule for the due date.

### Peer-Review

To help students improve their projects, receive a wide range of feedback, and practice critical thinking skills, students will complete a peer review. After having completed the project outline, students will peer review each other's project outline. The instructor will pair students with similar projects to maximize the effectiveness of the peer-review. Reviewers will provide a one paragraph (5-7 sentences) response to each of the following questions.

1. Is the research question clear, focused, and specific?
2. Can the research question realistically be answered? How feasible will it be to complete this research project? What will it require? Any obvious obstacles to the pursuing this question?
3. What is the unit of analysis?
4. What epistemological approach is best to follow?
5. What method can best be used to answer this question?

Students must submit their peer-review to the instructor and the classmate that they are reviewing before the due date listed in the course schedule. Detailed instructions for the peer-review assignment will be provided in class and listed on the course Canvas site under "assignments." The peer-review assignment will make up 5% of a student's overall grade. See the course schedule for the due date.

### Final Project

For the final project in this course, each student will prepare a research design of their own. The final research design must be 10-12 double-spaced pages and it should describe the necessary steps for carrying out the research project. This research design will consist of the first steps of any research project including a theoretical framework section, literature review, and methodology section. Students should also consider their own positionality in the research process and include a section on reflexivity. Through the research design, students should demonstrate knowledge of

feminist theory, feminist epistemology, and feminist methodology. Detailed instructions for the final project will be provided in class and listed on the course Canvas site under “assignments.” The final project will make up 25% of a student’s overall grade. See the course schedule for due dates.

### Project Presentations

At the end of this course students will present their final projects to the class. These presentations will take the form of a virtual academic conference presentation and students should present their research design. Each student will provide a 10-minute presentation with a 5-minute question and answer period following each presentation. In these presentations, students should focus on condensing their projects down into a 10-minute segment, making their projects clear and understandable to their audience, and anticipating questions. Even though these presentations will be held over Zoom, students should still demonstrate a professional tone and appearance. The project presentation accounts for 5% of students’ overall grade. Students who are not presenting at a particular time are still required to attend the class meeting, listen respectfully to their classmates, and engage in the discussion by asking informed questions. *Students who fail to do so will receive deductions in their participation grade.* Detailed instructions for presentations will be provided in class and listed on the course Canvas site under “assignments.”

### Grade Breakdown

Attendance 5%, Participation 5%, Discussion Board Activities 10%, Evaluative Essay 20%, Annotated Bibliography 10%, Project Outline 10%, Peer Review 5%, Final Project 25%, Project Presentations 10%

### Grading

Requirements for make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>.

Letter grades will be assigned according to the following numerical scales:

Letter Grade	Numerical Equivalent	GPA equivalent
A	94-	4.0
A-	90-93	3.67
B+	87-89	3.33
B	83-86	3.0
B-	80-82	2.67
C+	77-79	2.33
C	73-76	2.0
C-	70-72	1.67
D+	67-69	1.33

D	63-66	1.0
D-	60-62	0.67
E	<60	0.00
E1	stopped attending	0.00
I	Incomplete	0.00

Information on UF policies for grading may be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>.

### Other Policies

**Content Notice** - Some material assigned in this course describes or depicts experiences of trauma, sexual, and/or physical violence. I have assigned these works to facilitate learning about women's lives, gender, and sexuality. If you believe engagement with this material would likely cause you significant discomfort it may be in your interest to consider dropping the course.

**Netiquette Requirements** - In this course we deal with material that may be politically and emotionally charged. It is essential to discuss these issues to expand students' knowledge of women's lives, gender, and sexuality. It is also important to acknowledge that there are multiple opinions about such topics. If disagreements arise, whether it is with other students in the class, the instructor, or the authors of the texts, it is necessary that we use respectful communication to share our thoughts with others in the class. Disagreeing with classmates, the instructor, and/or the authors of texts is part of the learning process. However, *hostility, aggressive behaviors, insults, and disrespect towards the instructor or your classmates will not be tolerated in this course.* Students are expected to remain respectful of each other and the instructor at all times in the virtual classroom, through online interactions such as discussion posts and chats, and through email.

All students are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in the virtual classroom, in all email messages, and in any online discussions. *Failure to abide by these expectations can result in loss of participation points.* Additionally, you are required to follow the University of Florida's policies.

- **Be professional** at all times. You are preparing yourself to be a career professional. Remember that you are establishing your professional identity.
- **Be respectful** of other people. Everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion. While it is okay to disagree, please do so with respect to others. If you believe that someone has intentionally offended or insulted you, please contact the instructor immediately to discuss what has occurred and how to address the issue. *Insults and hate speech are not tolerated in this class.*

**Language Disclaimer** - It is important to note that language related to gender, gender identity, and affectional orientation can change rapidly. While I, as the instructor, will always do my best to use the most respectful and accurate language, there may be times when outdated or incorrect language may be used unintentionally in readings or in-class conversations. It is important to acknowledge that we are all in this course to learn together and that we may all come from different levels of knowledge and awareness related to gender. It is acceptable to have a respectful discourse about why certain language should no longer be used if the issue arises. Moreover, any intentional misgendering or misnaming of other students or public figures, or any other type of discrimination or disrespectful communication, will be viewed as a violation of the policies regarding respect and netiquette and could result in a loss of participation points. Thoughtful and respectful dialogue that takes into account different levels of knowledge, awareness, and skills is essential to this course and your overall learning. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the instructor to discuss this further.

**Academic Honesty** - All work in this class is to be your own. Please take note of the Student Honor Code, Student Conduct Code, and Standards of Ethical Conduct. The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obliged to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel.

**Late Assignments** - All assignments are to be submitted by 11:59 pm on the date in which they are due. Please check the course schedule for assignment due dates. Deadline extensions will be granted only in cases that conform to university policies. Official documentation must be provided for deadline extensions. Otherwise, 5 points will be deducted for each day that an assignment is submitted late.

**Accessibility** - I am committed to making learning in this course accessible to all. Please contact me to discuss any learning needs that you may have in the first week of the semester. You can also access the resources listed below.

UF Disability Resource Center - <https://disability.ufl.edu/>

UF Counseling and Wellness Center - <https://counseling.ufl.edu>.

**Evaluations** - Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

**Recorded Material** - As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited. Since class sessions will be live and students should both attend with their camera engaged and participate orally and in writing, the recording of class sessions is prohibited.

**Technical Issues** - If you experience technical issues throughout the course please contact me via email. This is my preferred method of communication. If your technical issues are of a general nature please contact the UF Helpdesk at 352-392-4357. You can access their website here <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu>.

This syllabus is subject to amendment during the semester. Any changes considered necessary by the instructor might be made without prior notification. However, the changes will be announced in lectures and/or via e-mail. If any changes are made, the syllabus will be updated and shared with the students via Canvas.

<b>Course Schedule</b>		
January 13	<p><u><i>Course Introduction and Syllabus Review / Formulating Research Questions</i></u></p> <p><u>Watch:</u></p> <p>Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Ted Talk “We should all be feminists”</p> <p>“What does it mean to have a feminist curiosity about international politics?” Interview with Cynthia Enloe</p> <p>“Where are the women in international politics?” Interview with Cynthia Enloe</p>	<b>Live Class Meeting</b>
January 20	<p><u><i>Writing Your Evaluative Essay</i></u></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <p>Roxanne Gay’s essay <i>Bad Feminist</i> (2012)</p>	<b>Live Class Meeting</b>
	<b><i>Theoretical Foundations</i></b>	



Course Schedule		
January 27	<p><u><i>Feminist Research Design</i></u></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <p>“How Do Feminists Do Theory and for Whom?” in Reading Feminist Theory pp. 1-6</p> <p>Jacqui True and Brooke Ackerly (2019) “A Feminist Research Ethic Explained” in Doing Feminist Research.</p> <p>Jacqui True and Brooke Ackerly (2019) “Question Driven Research, formulating a good question” in Doing Feminist Research.</p> <p><u>Watch:</u></p> <p>“A Feminist Ontology for the Twenty-first Century” interview with Jennifer McWeeny</p>	<p><b>Evaluative Essay Due</b></p> <p><b>Live Class Meeting</b></p>
February 3	<p><u><i>Intersectionality and Post-colonial Feminisms</i></u></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <p>Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (1994)</p> <p>Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” (1984)</p> <p><u>Watch:</u></p> <p>Akwugo Emejulu (2018) “Crisis Politics and the Challenge of Intersectional Solidarity”</p>	<p><b>Live Class Meeting</b></p>

Course Schedule		
February 10	<p><u>Queer Theory and Writing a Literature Review</u></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <p>Judith Halberstam, “An Introduction to Female Masculinity: Masculinity without Men” from <i>Female Masculinity</i> (1998)</p> <p>Julia Serano, “Trans Woman Manifesto” (2009)</p> <p>Jacqui True and Brooke Ackerly (2019) “Theory and Conceptualization: situating your topic, also known as....“The Literature Review” in <i>Doing Feminist Theory</i>.</p> <p><u>Watch:</u></p> <p><i>Heartland Future Talks 2019: Judith Butler</i></p>	<p><b>Live Class Meeting</b></p>
	<b><i>Feminist Epistemologies</i></b>	
February 17	<p><u>Rationalist/Positivist Epistemologies</u></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <p>Catharine E. Hundley (2012) “Feminist Empiricism.” In <i>Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis</i>. pp. 28-46</p> <p>Alyssa N Zucker and Laura J Landry (2007) “Embodied discrimination: The relation of sexism and distress to women’s drinking and smoking behaviors.” <i>Sex Roles</i>.</p> <p><u>Watch:</u></p> <p>Instructors Recorded Lecture</p>	<p><b>Discussion Activity Due</b></p> <p><b>Annotated Bib. Due</b></p>

Course Schedule		
February 24	<p><u>Standpoint Epistemology &amp; Reflexivity</u></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <p>Sandra Harding (2012) “Feminist Standpoints.” In <i>Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis</i>.</p> <p>Audre Lorde ‘Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference’ in <i>Sister/Outsider</i>.</p> <p><u>Watch:</u></p> <p>Instructors Recorded Lecture</p> <p>Kimberlé Crenshaw - Ted Talk “The urgency of Intersectionality”</p>	Discussion Activity Due
March 3	<p><u>Postmodern/poststructural Epistemology</u></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <p>Susanne Gannon and Bronwyn Davies (2012) “Postmodern, Poststructural, and Critical Theories.” In <i>Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis</i>.</p> <p>Michelle M. Lazar (2007) “Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis.” <i>Critical Discourse Studies</i>.</p> <p><u>Watch:</u> Recorded guest lecture</p>	Discussion Activity Due
	<b><i>Feminist Methodologies</i></b>	

Course Schedule		
March 10	<p><u>Conducting Interviews</u></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <p>Marjorie L. DeVault and Glenda Gross (2012) "Feminist Qualitative Interviewing: Experience, Talk, and Knowledge." In <i>Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis</i>.</p> <p>Sara L. Crawley (2014) "Autoethnography as Feminist Self-Interview. In <i>The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft</i>.</p> <p>Joe Soss (2006) "Talking Our Way Through Meaningful Explanations." In <i>Interpretation and Method</i>.</p> <p>Peregine Shwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow (2010) "Checking Researcher Sense Making Through Reflexivity" pp. 100-104 in <i>Interpretive Research Design</i></p>	<p><b>Live Class Meeting</b></p>
March 17	<p><u>Ethnography and Participant Observation</u></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <p>Wanda S. Pillow and Cris Mayo (2012) "Feminist Ethnography: Histories, Challenges, and Possibilities." In <i>Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis</i>.</p> <p>Ellen Pader (2006) "Seeing with an Ethnographic Sensibility: exploration beneath the surface of public policies." In <i>Interpretation and Method</i>.</p> <p>Carol Cohan (1987) "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals." <i>Signs</i></p> <p><u>Watch:</u> Instructor's recorded lecture</p>	<p><b>Discussion Activity Due</b></p> <p><b>Project Outline Due for Peer-review</b></p>

<b>Course Schedule</b>		
March 24	<p><u>Textual and Visual Analysis</u></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <p>Manoucheka Celeste (2015) "Black Women and U.S. Pop Culture in the Post-identity Era: the case of Beyonce Knowles" In <i>Transatlantic Feminisms: women and gender studies in Africa and the Diaspora</i>.</p> <p>Maddy Coy (2012) "I am a Person Too: Women's Accounts and Images about Body and Self in Prostitution" pp. 103-121 in <i>Prostitution, Harm and gender Inequality: Theory, Research and Policy</i></p>	<p><b>Peer-review Due</b></p> <p><b>Live Class Meeting</b></p>
	<b><i>Feminist Futures</i></b>	
March 31	<p><u>Feminist Futures</u></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <p>Jo Freeman "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" and Cathy Levine's follow-up article "The Tyranny of Tyranny"</p> <p>Sara Ahmed (2017) "Introduction: Bringing Feminist Theory Home" in <i>Living a Feminist Life</i></p> <p><u>Watch:</u></p> <p>Instructor's Recorded Lecture</p>	<p><b>Project Outline Due</b></p> <p><b>Discussion Activity Due</b></p>
April 7	Project Presentations	<b>Live Class Meeting</b>
April 14	Project Presentations	<b>Live Class Meeting</b>

Course Schedule		
April 21	<p>Project Presentations - 1/2 of class time</p> <p><u><i>Feminist Futures</i></u></p> <p><u>Read:</u></p> <p>Sara Ahmed (2017) “Part III Living the Consequences,” and “Conclusion 1: A Killjoy Survival Kit,” and “Conclusion 2: A Killjoy Manifesto” in <i>Living a Feminist Life</i></p>	Live Class Meeting
April 26		Final Projects Due