

# Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies | Brooklyn College

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## Class Time

Fridays, 11-1:45 in TBD

## Instructor

B Lee-Harrison Aultman, Ph.D.

## Email

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## Office Location

1. In-Class: TBD
2. WGST Office:
3. Virtual: Zoom

## Office Hours

In-Person: 2-3:15 p.m. every Friday  
Virtual: 2-3:15 p.m. every Thursday

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Women's and Gender Studies is a growing and vibrant interdisciplinary field, spanning multiple areas of scholarly investigation. The founding intersections of these literatures assemble a series of critical insights that challenge many prevailing and inherited knowledges about our shared worlds. Our aim will be to examine the wider investments as well as the practices, communities, and ordinary lives as these lives are "gendered," and among other acts of power, "racialized." To grapple these issues, we begin and end with very similar questions. What is power and how has its effects produced the very identities that humans claim to possess, enact, or disavow? What does it mean to live at the margins of intersectional identities and what analyses are required to understand those lives? In our time it is essential that we understand what amounts to a politics of life. This class will fulfill the following learning objectives per the Brooklyn College General Education Pathways Requirements:

- Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
- Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
- Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.
- Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the U.S. experience in its diversity, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, economics, history, political science, psychology, public affairs, sociology, and U.S. literature.
- Analyze and discuss common institutions or patterns of life in contemporary U.S. society and how they influence, or are influenced by, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

To receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented visible or nonvisible disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at (718) 951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services, please provide me with the course accommodation form. In any case, please consult with me.

## BROOKLYN COLLEGE LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As a scholar and as students we must acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional and unceded territory of the Lenape. We, the Brooklyn College community, must therefore acknowledge: that academic institutions and the nation-state itself was founded upon and continues to enact exclusions and erasures of Indigenous Peoples. This acknowledgment demonstrates a commitment to the ethical, epistemic, and pedagogical process of working to dismantle ongoing legacies of settler colonialism, and to recognize the hundreds of Indigenous Nations who continue to resist, live, and uphold their sacred relations across their lands. We also pay our respect to Indigenous elders past, present, and future and to those who have stewarded this

land throughout the generations. I urge students to familiarize themselves with the Indigenous Studies Program at Brooklyn:

<https://libguides.brooklyn.cuny.edu/indigenoustudies>

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for policy implementation can be found at [www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies](http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies). If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member **MUST** report the violation. Students should be aware that faculty may use plagiarism detection software.

### **STUDENT BEREAVEMENT**

Students who experience the death of an immediate family member must contact the Division of Student Affairs, 2113 Boylan Hall, (718) 951-5352, or by email at [studentaffairs@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:studentaffairs@brooklyn.cuny.edu), if they wish to implement either the Standard Bereavement Procedure or the Leave of Absence Bereavement Procedure (see below). The Division of Student Affairs has the right to request a document that verifies the death (e.g., a funeral program or death notice).

### **IMPORTANT DATES**

Wednesday, Jan. 25: First day of Spring 2023 classes

Tuesday, Jan. 31: Last day to add a course

Sunday, Feb. 12: No classes scheduled

Monday, Feb. 13: No classes scheduled

Monday, Feb. 20: No classes scheduled

Tuesday, Feb. 21: Conversion Day (classes follow a Monday schedule)

Wednesday, April 5 - Thursday, April 13: Spring Recess.

Tuesday, May 16: Last day to withdraw from a course with a “W” grade

Wednesday, May 17 - Tuesday, May 23: Exam Week. Final TBD

### **REQUIRED TEXTS (ALL MATERIALS ONLINE)**

#### ***On Blackboard***

- *The Feminist Philosophy Reader*, edited by Allison Bailey and Chris Cuomo (available as a PDF via *Blackboard*).
- All other reading materials are available as PDFs on *Blackboard*.

## **COURSE EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS, GRADE DISTRIBUTION**

### ***Attendance (5%)***

Attendance and preparedness are expected. The course is designed around both lecture and in-class discussion. Students should have completed the reading assignment a given week before the class session that Friday.

### ***Weekly Journals (25%)***

Students are expected to write weekly (250 – 300 word minimum) journal entries answering the following questions:

- What was the key theme of the week’s reading?
- What were the main takeaways of the text and/or in-class discussion?
- Did this reading provide a different perspective on the issue?

### ***Monthly Quizzes (25%)***

Near the end of each month students will be expected to complete an online quiz. Each quiz will cover only the content for its preceding month, e.g., quizzes are not cumulative. These should be completed by their deadlines via the appropriate modules on *Blackboard*.

### ***Final Exam / Final Media Review Project (45%)***

There will be two options for a “final.” Students may take a traditional exam. Access to the final will be similar to the method of accessing monthly quizzes. Students will complete the written exam (essay-based and short answer) online in a time-monitored format. Students will have the option of saving their exam and returning to it at a later point. Alternatively, students may choose to write a media review. The expectations and rubric for this option are located at the end of the syllabus.

### ***Grade Distribution (Weighted)***

97-99 A+ | 93-96 A | 90-92 A-

87-89 B+ | 83-86 B | 80-82 B-

77-79 C+ | 73-77 C | 70- 72 C-

67-69 D+ | 63-66 D | 60-62 D-

0-59 F

### ***Incompletes/Make-Up Assignments***

I no longer assign INC (incomplete) grades. If a student cannot complete the required work for the semester and meets the Brooklyn College Registrar’s Office policy, they must reach out to the WGST Program Chair, Professor Florence, who will provide advisement on the matter. Additionally, I will not accept work that is one week passed the deadline.

## **COURSE AND READING SCHEDULE**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Text</b>	<b>Major Themes</b>
Friday, Jan. 27	Syllabus & Lecture: General Overview of Women's and Gender Studies.	Course Expectations, Graded Assignments, Important Deadlines, Resources, and Keywords. Question: What brought you to this course?
Friday, Feb. 3	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE
Friday, Feb. 10 [JOURNAL ENTRY 1 ON <i>BLACKBOARD</i> ]	Foucault, M. <i>History of Sexuality, Vol. 1.</i> "Part Four: Method"	Power and Sexuality, The Body, Discourse, History, Sex, Political Power
Friday, Feb. 17 [JOURNAL ENTRY 2 ON <i>BLACKBOARD</i> ]	Beauvoir, Simone. "Introduction," <i>The Second Sex</i> [IN READER]	Woman, Femininity, Gender Difference, Feminist Phenomenology, Existentialism, Philosophy of Gender
Friday, Feb. 24	Lorde, A. "The Master's Tools." [IN READER] <b>ASSIGNMENTS: QUIZ ONE MUST BE COMPLETED ON <i>BLACKBOARD</i>.</b>	Feminism, Racial Difference, Black Feminist Thought, Politics and Solidarity Movements, Coalition, Oppression
Friday, March 3 [JOURNAL ENTRY 3 ON <i>BLACKBOARD</i> ]	Hartman, S. "The Labors of Black Women."	Slavery's Afterlife, Affective Labor, Racial Difference, Racialized Gender, Sex and Sexuality
Friday, March 10 [JOURNAL ENTRY 4 ON <i>BLACKBOARD</i> ]	Spillers, H. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe."	Insurgency and Black Feminism, Slavery's Ungendering, Racial Difference/Sexual Difference
Friday, March 24 [JOURNAL ENTRY 5 ON <i>BLACKBOARD</i> ]	Crenshaw, K. "Mapping the Margins."	Intersectionality, Antidiscrimination, Race and the Law, Race and Gender
Friday, March 31	Williams, P. "The Object of Being Property." <b>ASSIGNMENTS: QUIZ TWO MUST BE COMPLETED ON <i>BLACKBOARD</i>.</b>	Histories of Race and Racism, Media and Representation
Friday, April 7	SPRING RECESS: NO CLASS	SPRING RECESS: NO CLASS
Friday, April 14 [JOURNAL ENTRY 6 ON <i>BLACKBOARD</i> ]	Butler, J. and Rich, A. "Compulsory Heterosexuality." [IN READER AND ONLINE]	Normativity and Sexuality, Lesbian Feminism,
Friday, April 21 [JOURNAL ENTRY 7 ON <i>BLACKBOARD</i> ]	Enke, F. "The Education of Little Cis."	Critical Trans Studies, Transness and Cisness, Disciplining Trans
Friday, April 28	Bey, M. "ALP Journals." <b>ASSIGNMENTS: QUIZ THREE MUST BE COMPLETED ON <i>BLACKBOARD</i>.</b>	Transfeminism, Blackness and Transness, Abolitionist Feminism, Intimate Protest, Coalition Building
Friday, May 5 [JOURNAL ENTRY 9 ON <i>BLACKBOARD</i> ]	Chu, A. "Study in Blue" and "The Wrong, Wrong Body."	Trauma, Representation, Psychoanalysis, Race and Gender, Phenomenology, Poetics of Sexuality

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<b>Week</b>	<b>Text</b>	<b>Major Themes</b>
Friday, May 12	REVIEW FOR FINAL	Final exam option will be reviewed; Final media review will be discussed.
FINAL EXAM DEADLINE	TBD/ONLINE/BLACKBOARD	Final option will be submitted via Turnitin.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND LINKS PROVIDED BY THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE LIBRARY

### *The Body and Embodiment*

- Andueza, Luis, Archie Davies, Alex Loftus, and Hannah Schling. 2021. "The Body as Infrastructure." *EPE: Nature and Space* 4 (3): 799–817.
- Awkward-Rich, Cameron. 2017. "Trans, Feminism: Or , Reading like a Depressed Transsexual." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 42 (4): 819–41.
- Berlant, Lauren. 1998. "Intimacy: A Special Issue." *Critical Inquiry* 24 (2): 281–88.
- . 2018. "Genre Flailing." *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry* 1 (2): 156–62.
- Chu, Andrea Long. 2017a. "Study in Blue: Trauma, Affect, Event." *Women & Performance* 27 (3): No Pagination.
- Enke, Finn. 2018. "Collective Memory and the Transfeminist 1970s." *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5 (1): 9–29. <https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-4291502>.
- Lugones, María. 1987. "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception." *Hypatia* 2 (2): 3–19.
- Ochoa, Marcia. 2016. "Los Huecos Negros: Cannibalism, Sodomy and the Failure of Modernity in Tierra Firme." *Genders* 1 (1). <https://www.colorado.edu/genders/2016/05/19/los-huecos-negros-cannibalism-sodomy-and-failure-modernity-tierra-firme>
- Silva, Denise Ferreira da. 2014. "Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(Ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World." *The Black Scholar* 44 (2): 81–97.
- Hartman, Saidiya. 2008. "Venus in Two Acts." *Small Axe* 12 (2): 1–14.
- Issar, Siddhant. 2021. "Listening to Black Lives Matter: Racial Capitalism and the Critique of Neoliberalism." *Contemporary Political Theory* 20 (1): 48–71.
- Wilson, Ara. 2016. "The Infrastructure of Intimacy." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 4 (2): 247–80.

### *Queer and Trans Studies*

- Amin, Kadji. 2022. "We Are All Nonbinary: A Brief History of Accidents." *Representations, Proximities: Reading with Judith Butler*, 158: 106–19. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2022.158.11.106>.
- Aultman, B Lee. 2014. "Cisgender." *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, Postposttranssexual: Key Concepts for a 21st Century Trans Studies, 1 (1–2): 61–62. <https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2399614>.
- Bradway, Tyler. 2021. "Queer Narrative Theory and the Relationality of Form." *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 136 (5): 711–27.
- Gill-Peterson, Jules. 2018. "Trans of Color Critique before Transsexuality." *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5 (4): 606–20.
- Rubin, Henry S. 1998. "Phenomenology as Method in Trans Studies." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 4 (2): 263–81.
- Stone, Sandy. 1992. "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto." *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 10 (2): 150–76.
- Stryker, Susan, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore. 2008. "Introduction: Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?" *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36 (3/4): 11–22.

### *Online Documentary Resources*

Academic and Student Achievement Resources for Students. Brooklyn College.  
<http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/academics/library.php>

Association of College and Research Libraries: Women's and Gender Studies Collection.  
<https://acrl.libguides.com/WGSScollections/collectionsandplatforms>

## GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED TERMS

**Affect:** The state or condition of being affected. Usually indicates sensation before emotional intelligibility.

**Alienation:** Refers to a psychic condition first advanced by Karl Marx in his *1844 Manuscripts* whereby human beings are stripped of their otherwise natural relationship with either: (1) the biological and metabolic conditions assigned to labor (*see* Embodiment); or (2) the products thereof.

**Binary Logic:** The ordering of reality (or ontology) into two essentially diametrically opposite groups. The binary itself is often loosely held together by historical consolidation and social taboo. The first term is often understood to be the “normative” term that conditions the second, or subordinate, term. The most notable binaries discussed in this class include:

**Male/Female:** Refers to the (biological) sexual differentiation of the human body usually assigned at birth and is dependent upon the intelligible presence of genitalia. Males typically have the visible signs of reproductive organs such as the penis, testes, and scrotum. Females typically have the visible signs of reproductive organs associated with the vulva: the clitoris, labia, and vaginal canal.

**Man/Woman:** Refers to the social functions assigned to the sexual differentiations accorded to a person birth-assigned sex. Social functions tend to follow a logic according primacy of the phallus: assertive/passive; penetrative/receptive; dominant/subservient; subject/object.

**Marked/Unmarked:** Refers to the conditional states associated with privileged or unprivileged status. The marked category is understood within a cultural imaginary as difference, is always seen or implied, and carries stigma. The unmarked category is understood as the very reproduction of the cultural imaginary itself. Hence man/woman follows the logic of marked/unmarked, so too does Black/white.

**Masculinity/Femininity:** Refers to the various expressions of gender’s social functionality that follow a similar logic assigned to the man/woman binary. Masculine traits are usually ascribed to male bodies and used to identify normative manly behaviors such as activity, productivity, and aggressivity. Feminine traits are usually ascribed to female bodies and are used to identify normative womanly behaviors such as passivity, reproductivity, and caregiving.

**Public/Private:** Refers to the general difference accorded to everyday life associated with Aristotle’s *Politics* that accord public life a primacy of relations (political in nature) assumed by property holders. The private is the domain of individual property holders whose ownership extended, for Aristotle, over the entirety of the domain. As property holders were limited to men this relation of dominance subsumed wives, children, concubines, and slaves.

**Sameness/Difference:** Refers to the philosophical relations of identity associated with John Locke and the European Enlightenment. Sameness is the basis for the consolidation of the self-identity of a subject, a human being accorded with rational faculties and civility. Difference is the basis for constructing the other or non-identity of an object, a (sometimes) human being denied rational faculties and civility. It should be noted that sameness as well as identity are founded on the presence of its binary opposite, difference.

**Subject/Object:** Refers to the European Enlightenment’s elaboration of the status of an agent or self-sufficient being (subject) and its passive non-agentic being (object) upon which the former exercises control over the latter. Subjects tend to reflect the privileges accorded to their relation within a cultural system or symbolic economy that has

consolidated subjectivity (manhood or selfhood) and objectivity (womanhood or otherness). *See* Subjectivity or Object Relations.

**Blackness:** The ante-ontological movement of a (what is before the bodies, flesh, or pigmentation) cultural whole associated Black American lifeworlds. Associated with the Radical Black Tradition and the works of Fred Moten, Cedric Robinson, and Hortense Spillers.

**Body, the:** The ontological (what is assigned real or existent) entity consisting of a whole organism with visible enclosures of flesh, internal structures that may include skeleton and muscle.

**Chattel Slavery:** Refers to the institutional designs of human servitude lasting between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as a global and, more particularly, an American economy. Characterized by the total abjection and objectification of the human-in-servitude (hence chattel) and the total loss of legal and social standing as a human being.

**Cis, *see* Trans:** Refers to a normativity that defines the so-called coherence between a subject's gender and their birth-assigned sex. Recent criticisms have shown that cis (gender, sexual) tends to naturalize this "coherence" and normalize transness as pathologically "incoherent."

**Color Line, the:** Refers to W. E. B. DuBois's term first elaborated in *The Souls of Black Folks* wherein he named racial difference a matter of socially constructed and historically consolidated value placed on the color of the flesh. Usually denotes a racial difference in binary distinction between Black and white.

**Commodity Fetish:** Refers to the theory first advanced by Karl Marx most famously in the first volume of *Das Kapital* holding that capitalism and its free markets alienate human labor from the products of that labor (commodity) to such an extent that the commodity's meaningfulness outstrips its actual worth.

**Community:** Community is a singular-plural noun referring to a group of individual members possessing a similar psychic, historical, or affective bond. May also refer to an "imaginal bond" such as the nation.

**Communities, of Color:** Refers to the multiple and sometimes overlapping groups consisting of a singular community-plural characterized by non-whiteness (*see* Racialization). Criticized for its lumping together of otherwise disparate communities, such as Black American communities, whose histories and contemporary social relations are radically divergent.

**Disability:** A term coined in during the late-20<sup>th</sup> century activists to describe the conditional (long-term or short-term, chronic or episodic) incapacity to interact with so-called normalized standards of society/culture. The terms is often criticized for its reduction of a person to a single or series of difference of embodiments that mark them redundantly as not able-bodied. A more capacious definition refers the ways that normative accounts of the so-called able body (bipedally mobile, heterosexually reproductive, economically productive) have become coherent thereby rendering the constructed world's normativity invisible. Visible and non-visible disabilities are typically included with the latter having only recently been added.

**Discourse:** The term typically refers to the exchange of communication between two or more people. Its importance to critical theory changed when Michel Foucault contended that discourse consists of a domain of knowledge affirming or disaffirming conditional statements consolidated into a field or branch of science. Importantly, the term links the production of both nature and culture, holding that nature is as much a product of domains of knowability within the frameworks historically defined within culture.

**Discursive:** The adjectival form of discourse. Refers to the way that an object or subject is formed under the conditions particular to a discourse (e.g., biology historically produced racial differences that have been largely criticized as discursive and, therefore, not part of any natural order).

**Embodiment, *see* Body:** The condition or phenomenological sensation assigned to having or living within a body.

**Enfleshment:** A term associated with Hortense Spillers in “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” referring to the way that the body is first visualized and understood through the interface of the flesh; it is, in her argument, the first body with which slavers and colonists came in contact.

**Essentialism:** The philosophical or moral belief associated with medieval Christian humanists like St. Augustine who argued that God created a fixed core that is universal and prior to any constituent part of a larger whole. Essentialism holds that an essence of a thing is the eternal cause of actions, behaviors, and the production or destruction of lifeworlds. It is summed up by the Latin motto *essentia prior ad actio*.

**Existentialism:** The philosophy or moral belief most associated with Jean-Paul Sartre who argued that human life is an ongoing product (an accumulation of action and agency) that cannot be ascribed to an essential feature. Human life is therefore open to radical free will which is only constrained by social conditions (such as class, race, gender, ableism). Often associated with later “anti-humanist” schools of thought arguing that the term “human” is corrupted by its history with humanism. It is summed up by the Latin motto *actio prior ad essentia*.

**Feminism:** A heterogenous (or pluralized) collection of philosophical and social beliefs, programs, and (sometimes) political identities. Feminist theory holds that most Western models of democracy (indeed its very history) is based on a male-sex dominated social arrangement privileging the status of men as a social group. Criticism of this arrangement, or patriarchy, has been recently revised to include heteronormative reproduction, cisnormative (or nontrans) ableism, and racial exclusivity. Criticisms internal to the most recent iterations of feminism include the cisnormativity and racially exclusivity of feminism itself, including its Euro-American (or Western) centrism.

**Fugitivity:** A term associated with decolonial thinker Edouard Glissant that has been recently been taken up within Black Studies and Critical Race Theory. Glissant refers to fugitivity as meaningfulness particular to a historical or cultural community or set of communities which remains outside the capacity of Western thought to conceptualize. *See* Blackness and its ante-ontological status.

**Gender:** One part of an often tripartite description of the reproductive body (sex/gender/gender identity) that refers to the social function associated with a person’s birth-assigned sex. *See* Sex, Gender Identity.

**Gender Identity:** On part of an often tripartite description of the reproductive body (sex/gender/gender identity) that refers to the internal relation between (or identity of) a person’s gender and their birth-assigned sex. *See* Gender, Sex.

**Historical Materialism:** A philosophical model associated with the collected works of Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels in their co-authored *Communist Manifesto*. This model elaborates the development and subsequent identity of a given social, political, and economic totality through a rigorous focus on the productive means and modes particular to moments within an historically conditioned time. Materialism is the underlying theoretical component positing the indispensable need to understand the actually existing modes of everyday life through focus on technologies, media, and human sensoria.

**Intersectionality:** A mode of analysis coined in the early 1990s by Kimberlé Crenshaw. Crenshaw developed the approach to illustrate and address how socio-economic inequalities affect Black women at disproportionately higher rates and under the specific circumstances these rates emerge. Crenshaw has described the origination of intersectionality as a prism through which feminism and other kinds of social justice advocacy can identify the situated antagonisms that race and gender coincide and condition life chances. It is part of the anti-racism labor that feminist approaches to social justice must incorporate.

**Intersex:** Refers to the often medicalized histories and narratives that mark “ambiguities” in newborn infants’ genitalia as pathological in condition and, often, argued to require medical intervention. These medicalized standards have been heavily criticized through decades of activism. Intersex is often discussed as a birth-attributable condition; but, as many have with the Intersex Society of North America have pointed out, intersex traits may not emerge until well after infancy.

**Nonbinary, or Genderqueer:** A social kind formed out of a relation of non-identity between a person's birth-assigned sex and socially elaborated genders. Nonbinary communities may identify between the binary poles of man/woman or entirely outside, invoking a different set of cultural and historical markers that are claimed over and beyond Western notions of gender.

**Normativity:** Refers to the interlocking set of social and historical imaginaries setting the framework for what constitutes regular, ordinary, or "normal" kinds or genres of being, behavior, and action.

**Object Relations, *see* Subjectivity:** Refers to the imaginary (but not fictional) relationships formed out of the integration of normative subjects and subjectivities within a larger cultural totality.

**Ontological, or Ontology:** Refers to a theory or conventional belief underwriting what constitutes reality and real objects. Often referred to by the philosophical branch of Metaphysics.

**Phenomenology:** Refers to the philosophical study of experience as a process through which the experience and phenomena are registered *as experience*. This philosophy breaks with existentialism's emphasis on the primacy of human consciousness. Phenomenology emphasizes a de-centered or non-centrality of consciousness as such and opens the field of thought to the importance of affect and the unconscious. The motto most often associated with phenomenology is "to the things themselves."

**Power, or Relations:** Typically refers to the capacity of one subject to exercise their will over another. Usually one agent can possess power and another cannot. This concept is attributed to the sociological vernacular of Max Weber. More recent scholarship has tended to adopt Michel Foucault's concept of power as being dispersed, non-possessable, and a product of a series of interlocking relations that produce different forms of coercion in the guise of non-oppressive "knowledge." Thus, power and knowledge become mutual expressions of one another when knowledge about the body enables prison wardens more exacting disciplinary measures to restrict movement and bodily mobility for punishment.

**Productive Labor:** Attributed to the work and industry of a person or class of persons whose metabolic energies (or labor) produce economically viable (or profitably) goods/commodities.

**Property Relations:** Refers to the kinds of relationships that emerge as a result of legal and social restrictions on who and how property (defined loosely as both land and material object) is distributed within civil society.

**Race/Racialization, *see* Color Line:** Refers to the socially assignment of value placed upon the human condition based on physiological differences. These racial divisions, or analytic as Denise Ferreira da Silva names it, took place over the course of centuries (racialization) and consolidated what is contemporarily the "vision" as color difference as racial difference. No scientific evidence exists that hasn't been summarily discarded proving the existence of biologically significant differences for "race" as a human distinction. Its continued influence over contemporary politics and social sciences (and some natural sciences) reproduces the power-as-knowledge relation. *See* Power.

**Reproductive Labor:** Attributed to the work and industry of those social subjects usually restricted to the private domain and excluded from the productive labor of market economies. These include, historically, women (wives) and domestic workers (hired outside the protections of the state), or slaves and indentured servants (the former lacking the conditional status of "human" granted to the latter). Each participated under relations that favored men (husbands) as workers. Wives, domestic workers, daughters, or other-mothers were responsible for the reproduction of and well-being of children and therefore the growth of the economy's labor force; the reproduction of everyday tasks that allowed men to enter the labor force; or the upkeep of the household so as to reduce the stress that enabled the daily operations of otherwise laboring men.

**Sex, or Sexual Difference:** Refers to the primary reproductive characteristics assigned to a newborn infant on the basis of male or female genitalia. Sex has become the site of ongoing criticism as the standards for

what constitutes adult sex in a meaningful or universal way has been adopted. For example, some U.S. states regard sex as genital-based while others refer to the chromosomal differences at the genetic level. Each elaboration of sex merely reaffirms the social functionality of a gender to which the latter is eventually assigned.

**Sexuality:** Refers to the erotic desires of a social subject that has too often been reduced to a heteronormative trope of sex-opposite attraction often presupposing a monogamous intention. Reproductive heterosexuality is generally used to ascribe what is socially understood as the “drive” or “instinct” to procreate. This has had direct effects on non-heterosexual sexualities that include dismissing same-gender eroticism (homophobia) to the legitimation of only the two-person monogamous couple (homonormative).

**Social Construction:** Refers to the theory that reality and its objects are constituted as “real” by and through the interdependencies of shared knowledge among peoples across history, culture, and material production. Social constructionists hold that everything is constructed to the extent that knowledge about a thing (as in *everything*) requires moving through the processes of historical and cultural meaning.

**Social Reproduction, see Reproductive Labor:** Refers to the labor required to keep the infrastructure of a civil society and its constituent parts (social subjects) alive and productive.

**Subjectivity, see Subject/Object under Binary Logic:** Refers to the capacity of a person to possess an interior psychic life in and through which feeling is expressed, explored, and enjoyed.

**Trans, see Cis:** Refers to the umbrella term that describes a variety of subjectivities. Some experience their normatively ascribed gender and birth-assigned sex at odds. Others describe their them in completely different vernaculars. Recent criticism among trans theorists hold that there is rarely “match” between any gender and sex and therefore push back against the “normalizing” form of dysphoria.

**Whiteness:** Refers to a cultural ontology that ascribes privilege to light-skin and otherwise visually “Euro-American” white social subjects. Whiteness does not depend on white populations or individual white people. It refers to the discursive and material system of rewards and punishments that includes an anti-Black racism (and classism) immanent to it which diminishes the life chances of Black and non-white people while enhancing those of ascribed as white.

## EXAMPLES OF ASSIGNMENTS AWARDED FULL POINTS

The following examples were taken from recent semesters and demonstrate the following for Journals: (1) A review of the material; (2) a regularity of reference to the material; (3) critical themes of import for the student. For Quizzes: (1), (2), and (3) elaboration of particular theme for which the question asked. Answers were edited “[...].”

### Journal Entries [Simone de Beauvoir and becoming “woman”]:

This idea that one isn't born a woman yet becomes one rings true to me and my own understanding of gender in itself personally I believe that gender isn't a real thing but rather a social construct that is taught and we learn through being socialized. Femininity is not inherent but rather constructed. De Beauvoir states in the second sex that women have been treated as inferior and as “secondary” due to the fact of society programming women to fulfill the needs of men and exist only in relation to men thus not being whole or developed but rather existing to please or serve, constantly seek validation from men inherently teaching women that their worth is connected to the way men perceive them enforcing the beliefs that being “pretty” or “desirable” is the utmost achievement of a woman, and, the historic imbalance of rights and political power or public influence. [...] De Beauvoir argues that a woman is taught from childhood to merely be an accessory rather than a full fledged person.

### Quiz Answer [Hortense Spillers, the “flesh,” and motherhood denied]:

The meaning of assigning a "female" form to the social position of "gender" is another nod to Black women being marked that label female to Black women speaks to how black women are gatekept from a lot of traditional "womanly" things reserved only for white women. [...] The figure of the Black woman, while she is valued for being able to procreate the status of mother is stripped away from her due to her not being able to care for, protect, or even claim her children because of the legal condition *partus sequitur ventrum*, or that which is born follows the womb. The Flesh stands before the body because the Black woman's gender is undone. The theft of the body becomes a displacement from social identities and the undoing of the Black female gender as a symbolically dense power. It is not the same as her white counterpart because it is complicated and subverted by her race. The body is stolen or disposed of. Spillers argues that the Black female gender, that of female subjectivity, because it is written out of cultural power, gives the woman-subject a unique position to name herself, to be insurgent.

## **FINAL OPTION 1: EXAMINATION QUESTION EXAMPLE/INSTRUCTIONS**

**GENERAL] INSTRUCTIONS:** You must provide answers as indicated for each part. Please read the instructions carefully. You may choose to answer any 3 of the 5 “short answer” questions in PART ONE, but you must additionally answer 2 of the 4 “essay answers” from PART TWO.

### **PART ONE**

**Short Answers:** Answer ONLY three in any order. You should answer any three as distinct questions. A 200-250 word paragraph for each answer should suffice. Please double space your answers in 12 pt. font. Reference the reading material if given the chance/prompt.

**1. 200-250 WORDS. [X]**

**2. 200-250 WORDS.**

**3. 200-250 WORDS.**

**4. 500-750 WORDS. [X]**

**5. 500-750 WORDS. [X]**

### **PART TWO**

**Essay Answers:** Answer two, and no more than two, from the following. Please provide your answers in essay format, i.e., 500 -750 words, double-spaced, and in 12 pt. font. These answers are not unlike your quiz responses. Again, each question should be treated separately. You should have two distinct answers that address their respective questions. For these answers, reference the reading material when and where you can. Each question is stand alone. They SHOULD NOT relate to one another.

**1. 500-750 WORDS.**

**2. 500-750 WORDS. [X]**

**3. 500-750 WORDS. [X]**

**4. 500-750 WORDS.**

**5. 500-750 WORDS.**

## FINAL OPTION 2: MEDIA REVIEW

### *Rubric*

- I. **GENERAL THEME:** Select an aesthetic representation from popular media. This can include, for instance, a popular TV show, streaming content, blog, or vlog, or even a book/graphic novel. Some shows discussed in class have been *Pose* and *RuPaul's Drag Race* while movies have included *Moonlight* and documentary films such as *Paris is Burning*. Other shows and movies include *Pose*, *Beautiful*, *Tangerine*, *Steven Universe*—to name a few.
- II. **OBJECTIVE:** The critical object is this. Tie that aesthetic representation to a theme from the course. This can (and should) include an author/thinker (e.g., Patricia Williams) within larger thematic content (e.g., racist sexism). This essay is a critical review of the show, or artwork, or book, or book chapter, etc., and its relation a theme you found interesting during the course. This is your chance to write something you find personally compelling and of interest, using thinkers from the syllabus to advance your claim.
- III. **FORMAT:** Complete your review in 1,500 words, double spaced, in 12-pt. font. Any citation style is acceptable. I will accept MLA, APA, Chicago/Turabian—any style. ***Please consult the following rubric for any format-related concerns/organizational inquiries. A reference page is required.***
- IV. **RUBRIC/STANDARD FORM FOR MEDIA REVIEW**

#### Part I—The Aesthetic Object/The Work/The Piece (30%):

1. **Subject Matter:** Who or What is Represented?
2. **Artist/Author/Thinker:** What person or group made it? Often this is not known. If there is a name, refer to this person as the artist, writer, painter, and/or author, depending on the medium. Refer to this person by their last name, not familiarly by their first name.
3. **Date:** When was it made? Is it a copy of something older? Was it made before or after other similar works?
4. **Provenance and Location:** Where was it made? For whom (was there an intended audience)? Is it typical of the art of a geographical area? Where is the work of art now? Where was it originally located? Who has access to it? Is it public, behind a paywall, or owned by a museum/archive?
5. **Technique and Medium:** What material is it made of (if painting, what kind; if animated, indicate that it is animation)?

#### Part II—Description of Substance (30%):

6. **Description:** In a few sentences describe the work. What does it look like or how was its presentation executed (if a show, for example, were there emphases on flow and time or montage and discontinuity)?
7. **Story-Telling Method:** Is it a representation of something? Provide, in your own words, what is being shown or told. Usually you can identify whether it is an abstraction of a real-world event, a people, or community, a narrative history, or contemporary situation? What aspects are emphasized through “the story” that the piece is telling. (Remember than a single episode of just one show can tell a whole story!)
8. **Subjective vs. Objective Mode:** Is it purely subjective work that is basing itself on a writer’s/director’s point of view (a TV show is very much along these lines)? Or is it an objective work that seeks to cast

new light on a subject matter (documentaries generally provide this kind of direction)? Tell me what elements are dominant in the piece.

Part III—Analysis/Discussion (20%) and Conclusion (10%):

9. **Analysis:** In your own words, consider how the artist/writer/thinker utilized their craft to tell their story. What principles of women’s and gender studies did they use? What theories were key to your understanding any “underlying” or “represented” meaning? Was there additional meaning apart from that provided by the work that possessed meaning?
10. **Discussion:** Provide support for what you are arguing. Refer to specific moments of the show, documentary, animation, or parts of the painting, performance, or theatrical rendition. Your discussion should contain facts about the work, yes. But it should also contain references to why these “facts” might mean something else. (For example, it is an observable fact that the subject of the *Mona Lisa* is half-smiling. But what does this mean, historically? Some speculate that she represents the opacity, or unknowability, of femininity—unknowable to Da Vinci and, for the time, any man whose gaze befalls the portrait.)
11. **Conclusion:** End with a few sentences restating what major theme, or themes, you hoped to convey in the essay. Clarify the intended interpretation. Did you, in fact, execute what you said you did?

I’ve attached an excerpt of an anthology chapter about *X-Men: The Animated Series* to give you an idea of the scope and breadth with which you can write and how you can write your review. Although I used the Chicago Manual of Style 17<sup>th</sup> Ed. Author-Date w/ Endnotes, I do not expect you to do the same. Choose a reference style with which you are comfortable and will remain consistent.

**EXAMPLE OF MEDIA REVIEW [EDITED]:**

**STUDENT NAME**

**COURSE NAME/NUMBER**

**DATE**

**TITLE OF THE ASSIGNMENT**

**“WAS MAGNETO RIGHT? NOTES ON THE POLITICAL AESTHETICS OF QUEER LOVE IN *X-MEN: THE ANIMATED SERIES*”**

**I. The Medium/Aesthetic Work: Poetics of Remembering**

*X-Men: The Animated Series* (TAS) was the brainchild of Larry Houston, Julia Lewald, and Eric Lewald. Co-creator Larry Houston told a reporter, “[t]here were no computers then. I brought in my collection of X-Men comic books to work. And when I went to hand out stories to the artists, I’d put them on the Xerox machine [and] copy the pages I thought were pertinent” (Belt 2020). TAS was a collaborative construction of a universe based on the interpretation of another, well-designed and intricate one. And all were, in the end, based on the interpretations of our world—the world of a nine-year-old fan of Marvel Comics, like me, when the series aired in 1992. [...]

**II. Description of Substance: Figures of Otherness**

[...] *TAS* poses complex questions of race, gender, ability, and class inequalities. And they are not merely projected onto the cartoon. As director and writer Eric Lewald states in an interview, the desire for a diverse team of actors in *TAS* had to be advanced with some force. Indeed, “it was dumb luck that [the animated team] was gender-balanced” Belt, “The Making of X-Men: The Animated Series.”. The creators’ stories are inscribed into their craft as so many representations of, and reactions to, the world. The genre of heroic storytelling compelled the team to produce the series during a time that, as I have mentioned, felt distinctively lacking in heroes. Social differences such as gender, sex, sexuality, race, and ability—not to mention economic class—find a representational home in a term Ramzi Fawaz calls “mutanity” *The New Mutants*, 159.. On my view, however, mutanity is able to represent *pure* difference. Mutants (humans whose genetic mutations have granted them extraordinary powers) still possess certain racial and gendered attributes that shape their appearances and bear tropological behaviors—racialized ascriptions of masculinity and femininity. This decision is one that opens a space of identification between viewer and animated characters. My point is that mutants are, in themselves, embodiments of difference *as* difference. They are considered different by virtue of their mutanity. Certain embodied differences are symbolically eclipsed even while they remain visible. Consider Ororo Munroe (or Storm). She is a mutant. But she is also a Black-African woman. She is an immigrant in the American milieu. She grew up in Cairo. She was exploited as a pickpocket in her youth. She would be worshipped as a goddess of her tribe. Yet she is bound to the narrative voice of mutanity’s pure difference. Her mutanity is the non-being of normative humanity. How does Magneto (like revolutionaries who fought to overcome bigotry) reconcile his own beliefs with those of his comrades and closest friend? [...]

### III. Analysis and Discussion: Magneto, Fantasy, and Queer Love

[...] Is Magneto bad at *being bad*? Exploring this requires looking into scenes of attachment that comprise his affective order to things. Teasing out scenes of attachment can clarify his fantasy-world that compel and, ironically, repel him. Attachments comprise the basis for believing life has some regularity to it. Desires get satisfied. The world turns. All attachments are optimistic in this way (Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 1). Every scene of attachment generates a force that pushes and pulls the subject (human/mutant) in ordinary life. This tends to be more than an individual achievement. Desires are not independent of the cultural fields that give them meaning. Magneto’s attachments emerge from a history of loss. The world becomes less complicated when humanity, overall, conspires against his utopian desire. The structural component that glues affect and attachment in this psychic dramatization is called fantasy. The fantasy allows Magneto to entertain all kinds of scenarios. Even the repetition of those scenes wherein he must inevitably lose. Fantasy de-dramatizes failure. More importantly, he fails to realize that his structural fantasy is an inversion of a human ideology: recognition. [...]

How might that alter our perception of justice and the projected outcome of Magneto’s projects? Obsessively re-watching *TAS* for research and evidence used in this chapter meant attending to repeated gestures and choice phrases. It also meant attuning as much as possible to differences between what was said and what felt to be unsayable. Animation (like all media) represents in some way the very real world of its creators. They construct for us objects of interest and experience. [...] Magneto’s utopia turns into a claustrophobic parody of itself. The episode is

certainly an allegory of sovereign greed. But it signifies more. Magneto survives Cortez's treachery and is restored to health through Earth's magnetic field. He returns and thwarts the planned missile launch. But he also decides to destroy Asteroid M. Why? I sketch an answer in two mutually reinforcing parts. The first is a realization that mutanity's utopian future is redeemed only through the destruction of Magneto's own colonial project. The second is the acceptance of nonsovereign relationality inscribed as an acknowledged "us." During the final scenes of the second episode, the Professor is hurriedly escaping with others on the Blackbird as Magneto sets his self-destructive plans in motion. He recites a plea to Magneto's made dozens of times. Magneto declines and tells Charles that this event must be "seen [to] the end." The tone of the expression feels almost underperformed. Magneto's character has a flare for the direct. But he makes the ambiguous statement that "[i]n time, the world might have learned to trust us" Houston, *X-Men: The Animated Series*, 1995; see Saylor, "Author's Transcript of Dialogue from 'Sanctuary (Part 2).'", transcription my own..

[...] The "us" in Magneto's confession is as ambiguous as "the world." It provides some room for speculation. I also want to consider the visual effects of superimposing the images of the Professor and Magento during the scene. The visual gulf that separates two beings is, indeed, engulfed. Viewers witness Magneto is at his most transformed. This interval, however brief, suspends both friends-in-love within an ambience of intimacy. Charles and Magneto's mutual engagement "manipulate[s] absence [and thereby] extends this interval to delay as long as possible the moment when the other might topple sharply from absence into death" Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, 269.. Charles witnesses Magneto's ultimate expression of vulnerability as the purposeful destruction of Asteroid M. Magneto acknowledges Charles as a harbinger of one vision of many utopian visions for mutanity. He ends their link reassuringly: "I will survive this" Houston, *X-Men: The Animated Series*, 1995; see Saylor, "Author's Transcript of Dialogue from 'Sanctuary (Part 2).'", transcription my own.. He desires to allay the Professor's anxieties. The underlying message is that they will meet again. Magneto had been undone and recomposed by the world and brought back into being through a suspended scene that superimposed discontinuous images. Queer love is the vulnerability of learning that we are already and always vulnerable to one another. [...]

#### **IV. Conclusion**

[...] Magneto was right. He was right to emancipate mutants from their unjust incarceration. He was right to act as abolitionist. But Magneto was myopic. His vision failed for counterintuitive reasons. His sovereign fantasy corrupted poetics that might have kept those utopian horizons open. He learned that social transformations cannot begin or end at the limits of selfhood. Asteroid M represents a dramatized visualization of what the immanent project of dismantling social inequality might require. These projects cannot merely reform. Reforms flatten histories, forsake differences, and cede to desires for power. Magneto realized this and cast his own colonial project of Asteroid M into Earth's oceanic, and purifying, void.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> There are moments that break with this convention. The second part of "One Worth Man's Worth" Houston, *X-Men: The Animated Series*, 1995. presents us with an altered timeline. Storm and Wolverine are brought together in an interracial romance. Storm experience the color line's anti-miscegenation and misogynoir at full force. They were thrown into the early 1960s. Storm, in a kind of recessive affect (as being from the future such instances hardly if every occur) remarks that the bartender's "quaint" reaction to her presence with Wolverine was racism. In characteristic machismo, Wolverine didn't take kindly when commanded they leave. Director Larry Houston told a reporter that "Wolverine and Storm in that story [contained] one of the first interracial kisses, interracial marriages, in animation" Belt, "The Making of X-Men: The Animated Series."