

Narrative Women's Studies 200: Introduction to Women's Studies

Introduction to Women's Studies (WS 200) encourages students to think about the world around them from the perspectives of women from varied backgrounds and to think about the ways in which cultural ideas about gender influence women's options. Students are asked to analyze the ways in which cultural assumptions about gender affect the way people are educated, the way they participate in politics, their experiences at school and at work, and their self image. They are also asked to think about the ways in which social institutions (school, church, family, and government) shape people's assumptions about their roles as women and men in their own society and to contemplate alternatives rooted in cultures other than their own. WS 200 is taught on a rotating basis by professors from various academic disciplines, all of whom share expertise in the fields of women's and gender studies. The syllabus offered below is a sample of how this course may be taught.

Understand the historical and philosophical bases of ethical decision-making and social responsibility. By examining cultural conceptions of gender, their impact on women, and women's influence in shaping the gendered ideas surrounding them, students ultimately interrogate the choices people make. The course is organized around the following questions: are cultural conceptions of gender, given that they are inherently discriminatory, detrimental to women? are gendered arrangements, particularly those that are detrimental, ethical? do people have a social responsibility to change the gendered arrangements under which they live if and when they are deemed detrimental?

Use independent thinking, critical analysis, and reasoned inquiry when assessing personal, professional, and societal issues. As indicated in the syllabus, the course readings continually ask students to critically assess a variety of social issues. They are asked to apply a reasoned line of inquiry to issues including poverty, political power, "ideal" body image, wage structures, and violent crime, among other topics. Assignments and in-class discussion ask students to consider how both historical and contemporary contexts have shaped the ways in which discussions around these social issues are structured and subsequent policies enacted. Students are also asked to envision the ways in which their own belief systems help to shape the context surrounding a variety of social issues.

Demonstrate the ability to make personal and professional decisions by applying knowledge and skills obtained from the study of ethics and theories of social responsibility. Women's Studies 200 asks students to develop policy on several social issues including "welfare," abortion, sexual harassment, funding for athletics, participation in the military, domestic violence, beauty standards, wage and benefit packages, among others. As they develop policy, students confront their own assumptions. Assignments require students to justify the policies they create by examining the ethical bases upon which their policies rest and the theories of social responsibility embedded in them. The syllabus indicates how specific in-class exercises and assignments enable students to apply their knowledge and skills.

Articulate how one's framework and understanding of social responsibility shape one's actions. Students in Women's Studies 200 are asked to act on the policies they develop. Students determine both the official and unofficial channels available to influence policy making decisions at the local, state, and federal levels and articulate their concerns to people in positions of authority. They are also asked to examine the historical context surrounding the ways in which similar policies were or were not enacted in years past. In examining their own and others' actions, students are required to think critically about people's varying understanding of social responsibility.

Women's Studies 200 supports the Skilled and Applied Learning Requirements of the Foundational Studies Ethical and Social Responsibility Category. The course: **gives students the opportunity to apply what they are learning to real world scenarios** (they use the reading to better understand the basis for current policy and are then asked to create new policy and try and implement it at the local, state, and federal levels); **includes opportunities for experiential learning or community engagement** (students are asked to make policy recommendations to people in positions of authority and/or to influence policy in arenas in which they are directly involved); **gives students the opportunity to identify and solve problems** (the policy development requirement asks students to attempt to solve some of the problems identified as being detrimental manifestations of particular gendered arrangements); **incorporates opportunities for students to critically read and analyze text-based materials beyond textbooks** (students analyze several geographic maps organized topically around women's experiences worldwide, read two novels, and engage with members of the community as part of their required assignments).

Introduction to Women's Studies Women's Studies 200

Required Texts

Judy Root Aulette, et al. *Gendered Worlds* (Oxford, 2009)
Joni Seager, *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World* (Penguin, 2009)
Mary Crow Dog, *Lakota Woman* (Harper Perennial, 1991)
Gerd Bratenberg, *Egalia's Daughters* (Seal, 2004)

Course Description

Women's Studies 200 is designed to encourage students think about the world from the perspectives of women from a wide variety of backgrounds. Every issue examined in this class is central to understanding women's experiences, particularly those of women in the United States and to lesser degree women in other countries. The course asks students to think critically about gender, i.e. their assumptions about men and women. By examining women's varying experiences at work, as athletes, with beauty standards, with poverty, as "welfare" recipients, as perpetrators and victims of crime, in the family unit, at school, in church, and as members of the military, students develop their ability to think critically about a range of important issues. Assignments ask students to develop new policy in ways they justify as beneficial to women. Students will complete the course knowing how to exercise their power as citizens and influence policy on these and other issues.

Course Aims

This course satisfies Indiana State University's Ethical and Social Responsibility requirement for the Foundational Studies program.

Ethics and Social Responsibility Objectives (ESRO 1-4, noted later)

Courses that satisfy the Ethics and Social Responsibility requirement are designed to prepare students to be responsible citizens. Responsible citizens identify problems in the society in which they live and act to solve those problems. They are engaged in their community or communities at the local, state, and/or federal levels. They think critically about the decisions that are being made at varying levels of authority and they act to influence those decisions in ways they see fit. Responsible citizens are also able to articulate the ethical basis for their recommendations in both written and oral formats. Courses in Ethical and Social Responsibility provide students with several opportunities to hone their responsible citizenship skills.

The following are the specific Ethics and Social Responsibility Objectives developed at ISU

1. Understand the historical and philosophical bases of ethical decision-making and social responsibility;
2. Use independent thinking, critical analysis, and reasoned inquiry when assessing personal, professional, and societal issues;
3. Demonstrate the ability to make personal and professional decisions by applying knowledge and skills obtained from the study of ethics and theories of social responsibility; and
4. Articulate how one's framework and understanding of social responsibility shape one's actions.

Foundational Studies Objectives (FSO 1-10, noted later)

Because this course is part of the larger Foundational Studies Program, it is important to place its goals within the context of the program's goals. By the conclusion of your Foundational Studies Program at ISU, you will be able to...

1. Locate, critically read, and evaluate information to solve problems;
2. Critically evaluate the ideas of others;
3. Apply knowledge and skills within and across the fundamental ways of knowing (natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences, arts and humanities, mathematics, and history);
4. Demonstrate an appreciation of human expression through literature and fine and performing arts;
5. Demonstrate the skills for effective citizenship and stewardship;
6. Demonstrate an understanding of diverse cultures within and across societies;

7. Demonstrate the skills to place their current and local experience in a global, cultural, and historical context;
8. Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical implications of decisions and actions;
9. Apply principles of physical and emotional health to wellness;
10. Express themselves effectively, professionally, and persuasively both orally and in writing.

Skilled and Applied Learning Objectives (SALO 1-3, noted later). The program is also designed to build skills for applied learning. These Skill and Applied Learning Objectives require that the course contribute to

1. Developing critical thinking skills
2. Developing information literacy skills
3. Developing your writing skills (by including a graded writing component)

Skilled and Applied Learning Objectives specific to Ethics and Social Responsibility (SALO-ESR 1-4, noted later). Skilled and Applied Learning Requirements of the Foundational Studies Ethical and Social Responsibility Category also require that the course

1. Must give students the opportunity to apply what they are learning to read world scenarios
2. Must include opportunities for experiential learning or community engagement
3. Must give students the opportunity to identify and solve problems
4. Must incorporate opportunities for students to critically read and analyze text-based materials beyond textbooks (e.g, novels, classical literature, primary sources, science journals, poems, lyrics, blogs, etc.)

Course Learning Objectives in Women's Studies 200

The following outlines how students in this class will meet all of the Ethics and Social Responsibility objectives, including the Skilled and Applied Learning Objectives that pertain to Ethics and Social Responsibility courses, and most of the Foundational Studies objectives.

Content Objectives

By the end of this course, students will have...

- Gained an understanding of the relationship between people's assumptions about gender and men's and women's lived experiences by analyzing social theory related to gender including theory on intersectionality, social roles and social learning, and the interactionist theory of gender. [Ethics and Social Responsibility Objectives (ESRO) 1 and 4; Foundational Studies Objectives (FSO) 8]
- Examined the variation in women's experiences both within and outside of the United States. While the course is focused on the experiences of women in the United States, a significant amount of material is related to women who live in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. By examining women's varied experiences both in the United States and worldwide, students will be understand that women's experiences, while related to gendered assumptions about men and women, are rarely if ever the same and are dependent upon the interplay between the larger context and their own personal experiences. [ESRO 2, 3, 4; FSO 2, 6, 7, 8]
- Gained some comprehension of the ways in which societal institutions are organized around assumptions about gender. The course asks students to analyze the ways in which government policies, education, work, religion, the mass media "envision" women and influence the ways in which they, as citizens of the society that is governed by these institutions, are influenced by the assumptions about gender embedded in them. [ERSO 1, 2,4; FSO 3, 5, 8]

Skill Objectives

By the end of this course, students will have been given...

- **the opportunity to apply what they have learned to real world scenarios** by developing policy recommendations based upon their understanding of the ways in which gendered assumptions affect women's lived experiences. For example, during the week we read about and discuss gender in education, you will be asked whether you think the current set-up is detrimental to girls and women (based upon the reading) and develop policy to enhance those aspects of education that are beneficial and change those aspects of education that are damaging. [SLO-ERSO 1, 3; FSO 1, 2, 5, 7, 8]
- **opportunities for experiential learning and community engagement;** once students develop new policy recommendations, they will be asked to first identify then contact people within the local community who have decision making authority over that particular issue, contact them, and seek an audience to make their recommendations [SLO-ERSO 2, 3; FSO 1, 2, 5, 89]
- **the opportunity to identify and solve problems;** in addition to the policy development project, students will read a novel (*Lakota Woman*) that asks them to analyze the reasons why Mary Crow Dog's life unfolded as it did. They will examine aspects of American Indian history, i.e., the development of the reservation system, contemporary conditions on reservations and their manifestations for American Indian men, women, and children. Students will be encouraged to think about the structural and societal pressures that created the reservation system in the first place along with current statistics with regard to unemployment and domestic violence (both of which figure prominently in the book) and think about possible solutions to the problems women face on reservations. [SLO-ERSO 3, 4; FSO 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10]
- **opportunities to critically read and analyze text-based materials beyond textbooks** In addition to reading *Lakota Woman*, students will read *Egalia's Daughters*, a novel that reverses gender as we know it here in the United States (and Europe). Students will be asked to think critically about the fictional society depicted in the book given that, even though gender roles are reversed, some of the same manifestations of gender discrimination emerge in that society, although they affect "menwim" (U.S. version of men), rather than women. As part of their policy development projects, students will be asked to incorporate non-print material (blogs, websites, etc.) as a way to tap into "current" opinion on the policy they are developing. [SLO-ERSO 4; FSO 2, 6, 7, 8]

Assignments

Students will complete quizzes and exams, written essay assignments, and develop policy statements (along with regular in-class discussions) that will accomplish several goals. Students will gradually build up knowledge of content related to women's experiences and to theories about gender, ethics, and social responsibility while honing their abilities to think and communicate effectively as responsible citizens.

- Four quizzes, focusing primarily on the reading material, films and documentaries, and the fruits of our weekly discussions.
- Two written essays on the following:
 - Crow Dog, *Lakota Woman*: This novel examines one woman's experiences growing up Lakota in the 1940s through the early 1970s. It is an autobiographical account of Mary Crow Dog's experiences on the reservation, in Indian boarding school, and as a member of the American Indian Movement. It provides students with the opportunity to consider Crow Dog's experiences as an Indian girl, daughter, sister, wife, mother, activist, and author. It also enables students to think about the ways in which assumptions about gender shape Crow Dog's experiences, both her own assumptions and varied assumptions of the people around her at various stages of her life.
 - Bratenberg, *Egalia's Daughters*: This book is a fictional account of a society that reverses what we in the "West" consider normal gender roles. Men are "menwim," women are "wom." Power is held and brokered primarily by "wom," children are taken care of by "housebonds," the "menwim" of society who dress to please wom, accessorize, are plagued with self-doubt, encouraged to be fat and downplay their muscularity. The book helps students critically assess our own gendered assumptions and the policies that result from them.

- Two Policy Development Projects: These projects ask students to analyze current policy on a topic of their choice covered in their reading material, critique it, develop new and presumably better policy, and try to implement that policy at the local, state, and/or federal levels.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Below is our schedule. Make sure to come to class each week having already completed the reading and assignments for the week.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments: Be prepared for class each Tuesday and Thursday by having done the reading PRIOR to class on Tuesday. We will be reading 30-40 pages of material/day or 120-150 pages to get ready for each week. Also, make sure to begin reading *Lakota Woman* right away.

1. Week of August 24: Introductions: What is Women's Studies?

Discussion: What are your assumptions about Women's Studies, about "feminism"?

Watch in class: Gender Stereotypes at PS 107 (6 min--on course website)¹

2. Week of August 31: Some Ground Rules for Studying Gender

Read by Tues of this week: Aulette, Ch. 1 "Social Life is Socially Based and Politically Structured," "Gender is Part of a Network of Social Inequalities," "Scholarship is Political," "Overarching Theories of Intersectionality," and "Hegemonic Masculinities and Emphasized Femininities"²

Listen in class to: NPR news story about Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor (on course website)³

Quiz #1⁴

3. Week of Sept 7: Bodies and Genders

Read: Aulette, Ch. 2 "The Interplay of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality," "Sexed Bodies in Other Times and Other Places"

Read and Analyze: Seager, Map 17 "Beauty"⁵

Watch: A Walk To Beautiful⁶

4. Week of Sept 14: Socialization

Read: Aulette, Ch. 3 "Individual-level theories: Social Roles and Social Learning," "The Interactionist Theory of Gender: Gender as a Course of Action"⁷

¹ The course begins by asking students to questions their own assumptions about what it means to be a man or woman, boy or girl as a way to start the process of interrogating societal assumptions about gender. (FSO 2, 6; SALO 1)

² The first week of reading lays the theoretical basis for the study of gender, implicit in which is the critique of the ways in which assumptions about gender place women at a disadvantage relative to men in the U.S.; once the framework of inequality (and the detrimental effects of it) is established, students begin to question the ethical basis of gendered societal frameworks and their own social responsibility to change them. (FSO 3, 5, 6, 8; ESRO 1, 2, 4)

³ Listening to Justice Sotomayor's confirmation hearings and analysis demonstrates a clear gender bias; students will be asked to apply the theories they read for the week to understand how and why Sotomayor's "femininity" was questioned as were her qualifications. (SALO-ESR 1)

⁴ Quizzes are primarily designed to ask questions about the reading material to ensure that students are motivated to do it; they are asked to answer multiple choice questions for the quizzes and write one short essay about a debatable aspect of the weeks' reading. (FSO 10)

⁵ The Atlas students read and analyze provides a wealth of information. The world's countries are color-coded for which of them participated in the "Miss Universe" beauty pageant in an effort to show how Western ideals of beauty have proliferated along with the process of economic globalization. The map also contains information on cosmetic surgery, the sale of beauty products, etc. and statistics about the percentage of women v. men who participate in the "beauty" culture. (FSO 6, 7, 8; SALO-ESR 1)

⁶ The films shown in this course are all critiques of a variety of social practices that affect women negatively. A Walk To Beautiful profiles rural African women's experiences with vaginal fistulas, the ostracization that occurs as a result, and the efforts of activists (doctors, most women) who specialize in repairing the fistulas but who have to convince women and their families that they are worth the time and little bit of money necessary to have the procedure done. (FSO 6, 8, 9; SALO-ESR 1, 3)

⁷ The week's reading lay the basis for understanding one's responsibility for creating the gendered assumptions that surround us and also for changing them. (ESRO 1, 4; FSO 2, 8)

Read and Analyze: Seager, Maps 2 and 3 “The State of Women” and “In Their Place”⁸

5. Week of Sept 21: Education

Read: Aulette, Ch. 5, “Elementary School Snapshots,” “Gender in the K-12 Classroom,” “High School,” “Higher Education and Gender,” “Global Rates of Illiteracy”

Read and Analyze: Seager, Maps 29 and 30 “School” and “Higher Education”

Quiz #2

6. Week of Sept 28: Work

Read: Aulette, Ch. 6 “Wal-Mart,” “Paid Work,” “Is There a Wage Gap?” “How Can the Gender Gap in Promotion Be Closed,” “Unpaid Work Through the Lifecycle”⁹

Read and Analyze: Seager, Maps 28 thru 34

Watch: North Country

7. Week of Oct 5: Families

Read: Aulette Ch. 7 “Customary Marriage Laws,” “Marriage,” “Parenting and Caregiving,” “Balancing Work and Family,” “Divorce”

Read and Analyze: Seager, Maps 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 “Households,” “Motherhood,” “Contraception,” “Abortion,” “Maternal Mortality,” “Son Preference”

8. Week of Oct 12: Violence

Read: Aulette, Ch. 8 “The Gendered Continuum of Violence,” “Some statistics on violence,” “Rape and Domestic Violence,” “Men’s Personal Safety and Gendered Violence,” “What’s To Be Done? CEDAW, the International Criminal Court, and Security Council Resolution”

Read and Analyze: Seager, Maps 7, 8, 20 “Domestic Violence,” “Murder,” “Rape”

Watch: “Tough Guise”

Quiz #3

9. Week of Oct 19: Politics and the Law

Read: Aulette, Ch. 10 “Affirmative Action in Spanish Politics,” “Politics and Government,” “Political Institutions: The Courts and Prisons,” “Political Institutions: The Military”

Watch: Liberia, the Market Women, and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Read and Analyze: Seager, Maps 36, 37, 38, 39 and 40 “Women in Government” thru “Feminist Organizing” and the PBS map “Women and World Power” (link on course website)

10. Week of Oct 26: Media and Sports

Read: Aulette, Ch. 11 “Feminist Ads from Nike,” “Mass Media,” “The Spectacle of Sport,” Affirmative Action in Spanish Politics,” “Politics and Government,” “Political Institutions: The Courts and Prisons,” “Political Institutions: The Military”

Read and Analyze: Seager, Map 16 “Sports”

Watch: “Killing Us Softly 3”

11. Week of Nov 2: Religion

Read: Aulette, Ch. 12 “The Promise Keepers,” “What is a Religion,” “Islam,” “Fundamentalisms,” “Women in the Pulpit,” “Classical Theory on Religion: Durkheim, Marx, Weber,”

Quiz #4

⁸ All of the maps assigned are critical to helping students understand the larger, global context of a variety of women’s experiences. In this case, the maps examine women’s life expectancy (83 years in Hong Kong, 37 years in Zimbabwe) and their status using the “gender development index” and the “gender gap index.” They also examine the cultural practices that keep women “in their place” from dress codes, to driving restrictions, to legally sanctioned rape, and others. (FSO 6, 7, 8, 9; ESRO 1, 2, 4; SALO-ESR 1, 2, 4)

⁹ Much of the reading from the Aulette text lends itself to discussions that ask students to analyze the ways in which their assumptions lead directly to their actions! In this case, the reading focuses on work. Students will be asked to consider whether it’s ethical that women do not earn money in the U.S. when they leave work for an extended period to raise children. (ESRO 4; FSO 2; SALO 1, 2; SALO-ESR 2)

12. Week of Nov 9: Women in History

Read: “Introduction: Gender and the New Women’s History” (pdf on course website, the “e-reserves” tab)

Read: “The New Woman in Public Life and Politics, 1900-1930” (pdf on course website, the “e-reserves” tab)

Read and Analyze: Seager, Map 35 “The Vote”

Watch “Iron Jawed Angels”

Policy Papers (2) Outlines DUE¹⁰

12: Week of Nov 16: Native American Women

Read: *Lakota Woman*

Read: “Women, Men, and American Indian Policy ...” (pdf on course website, the “e-reserves” tab)

Watch/Listen: NPR documentary on Native American boarding schools (15 minutes—on course website)

Lakota Woman Essay Due

14. Week of Nov 23: The Feminization of Poverty and Sex Trafficking

Read and Analyze: Maps 19, 26, 33, 34, “Global Sex Trafficking,” “Migration,” “Poverty,” “Debt”

Watch: “Sex Slaves” Frontline documentary

Policy Papers (2) Draft #1 DUE

15. Week of Nov 30: *Egalia’s Daughters*

Reverse your gender role for a day!

Egalia’s Daughters Essay Due

16. Week of Dec 7: Policy Projects and Presentations

17. Week of Dec 14: Policy Projects and Presentations

Grading:

Quizzes (4 at 50 points each)

=200 points

Essays *Lakota Woman* and *Egalia’s Daughters* (2 @ 100 pts each)

=200 points

Policy Projects (2 at 200 points each)

=400 points

Participation

=200 points

There are 1000 points possible in the course. Your final grade will be assigned based on how many points you earn out of 1000; your letter grade will be determined as follows:

A	940-1000
A-	900-939
B+	870-899
B	840-849
B-	800-839
C+	770-799
C	740-769
C-	700-739
D+	670-699
D	640-699

¹⁰ Policy papers/projects are meant to be the culminating experience of this Ethics and Social Responsibility course. The Projects ask students to pick two issues, taken from the first 11 weeks of material covered in the course, and trace the history of social policy related to it (e.g., if a student chose work, they would be asked to trace the history of —pregnancy policy, equal wage policy, maternity leave, etc), current policy surrounding the issue, detail the experiences of women in that setting (at work, school, in the military, etc.), identify the negative consequences of social policy for women regarding the issue, and develop NEW policy that ameliorates the detrimental effects of current policy. They are then asked to identify the people in positions of authority related to the issue, contact them, and take steps to get their policies implemented (ERSO 1,2,3,4; FSO 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10; SALO 1, 2, 3; SALO-ESR 1, 2, 3, 4).

D- 600-639
F 599 and below

COURSE RULES AND POLICIES

Attendance and participation

Regular attendance is a pre-requisite for succeeding in this course and is an essential responsibility of all students in the class. You are expected to attend every class, to come to class prepared to discuss the material you have read, and to participate fully in any class activities and discussions. Aside from consideration for the instructor and fellow classmates, attendance allows you the opportunity to maximize your learning potential while missing class puts you at a disadvantage. For example, many points I will discuss in lecture are not included in the text. I will take attendance daily. You are allowed 3 absences. If you are absent more than 3 times for ANY reason (doctor's appointments, illnesses, family emergencies, etc.) I will deduct 5 points for each absence over 3 from your final grade. There are no "excused" absences in this class beyond the 3 "freebies" I allow. THE LECTURES ARE A CENTRAL FORM OF "HOMEWORK". THEY SHOULD NOT BE MISSED.

Course Policies: Make sure to do the reading each week, keep up with the study guides, and turn everything in by the deadline. Also, please, when using the discussion board, be respectful of yourself, your classmates, and me. Please disagree with each other; disagreement creates the best discussions but, when you do, listen openly and learn from each other's points of view.

I do not accept work late or offer make up exams. Keep to the deadlines! (You'll thank me for this later) I will not accept assignments that are e-mailed or faxed.

Do not plagiarize (see the guidelines below). In practical terms, do not copy information directly from the book or from each other. If you plagiarize, you will receive a 0 for the assignment and risk disciplinary action by the Dean's office.

Laptops are permitted but, if you do use one, you may use it ONLY to take notes. If I see that you're using your laptop for something other than taking notes, I will ask you to leave class and you will be counted absent for the day.

Turn your cell phones off when you arrive for class. I do not allow phone calls or text messaging in class. As with laptops, if your phone goes off continually or if I see that you're texting, I will ask you to leave and you will be counted absent for the day.

For Students with Disabilities: Indiana State University seeks to provide effective services and accommodation for qualified individuals with documented disabilities. If you need an accommodation because of a documented disability, you are required to register with Disability Support Services at the beginning of the semester. Contact the Director of Student Support Services. The telephone number is 237-2301 and the office is located in Gillum Hall, Room 202A. The Director will ensure that you receive all the additional help that Indiana State offers.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is a cornerstone of academic life. As stated on ISU's website (<http://www.indstate.edu/academicintegrity>): "All students are expected to maintain professional behavior, which includes the highest standard of integrity and honesty." Students are encouraged to visit this site for guidelines on academic integrity and plagiarism. The penalty for academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, can include a failing grade on the assignment, a failing grade in the class, and/or referral to Student Judicial Programs. For more information, please see the Student Code of Conduct available on the web at: <http://www.indstate.edu/academicintegrity/studentguide.pdf>.