

Submitted  
1996

**PROPOSAL FOR LDGE-E NEW COURSE:**

**WMST 201: WOMEN: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course surveys contemporary issues in women's lives from the standpoints of diverse women. Topics include, but are not limited to: images of women, reproductive rights, sexuality, economic justice, political empowerment, family relations, and cultural practices. Topics are introduced in a variety of ways including case studies, narratives, novels, film, and music. Students do cross-cultural research on the Internet and Lexis/Nexus to develop a topic for their final project.

**1. Fulfillment of GE goals, objectives and requirements (re: Item A):**

A. Goals: Students in WMST 201 explore the variety of gendering cross-culturally as they both elucidate and examine particular contemporary issues in women's lives. This course promotes skill development in accessing information, understanding differences between gender and sex difference, awareness of technological change, global issues/perspectives, diversity and discussion of ethics. Students use new information technology. Students grapple with global variety in the impact of new technology (e.g. reproductive technology, "labor saving" innovations in the "global assembly line") on women's lives, and with related discussions about new ethical dilemmas that arise as a result of new technology.

B. Objectives: Students will develop the analytical skill to assess the impact of particular contemporary issues on the lives of diverse women. Their analytical skills are honed through examinations of the on-going construction of gender tied to specific contemporary issues. Their use of Internet and Lexis/Nexus promotes their communication and information access skills. Technological issues, human creativity, global linkages, ethics, and human rights issues are integral to their exploration of contemporary issues in women's lives. For example, analysis of the impact of the "global assembly line" or the introduction of Norplants contraceptives requires students to source information cross-culturally, examine both group issues (re: women) and individual issues (diversity among women), in the context of sovereignty issues (human rights).

C. Requirements: Students do a series of writing, Internet/Lexis/Nexus assignments that prepare them, in stages, for the culmination of the course--a major project based on selection of a critical contemporary issue for analysis cross-culturally that attends to nationality, class, race, and sexual preference diversity among women.

**2. Fulfillment of Area E Objectives:** Students will be equipped for lifelong learning about sex difference and gender construction. Grounded in the selection of substantive contemporary issues, students examine the impact and variance of the social meanings attached to sex differences. The interplay between social construction of gender and physiological sex difference is a consistent and prominent them in the course. The variety--by culture, race, nationality, sexuality, religion, etc.--of gendering is the central aspect which reveals, for students, the social aspect of gender.

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3. **Technology and Information Literacy Components:** Student research is begun by casting a wide net on the information highway, followed by careful library research through use of CD rom bibliographies and other standard sources (journal articles, books, annotated bibliographies), to culminate in their final project.

4. **Assessment:** Student progress is continually assessed through a variety of assignments, beginning with identification of perspective and important issues, through the various stages of research, analysis, synthesis, and written/oral presentation. At early stages of research gathering, student work is credit/no credit--redo. In other words, to ensure students are off to a good start, they have the opportunity early on to learn to do their work correctly in order to have it "count." As we move on, and student confidence/skill increases, work is graded in the customary (A, B, C, D, ) manner, ranging from superior to grossly incompetent+.

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## COURSE OUTLINE (SAMPLE)

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#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students meet the 2500 word writing requirement in part by completing a final written project based on cross-cultural research (Internet/Lexis-Nexus, Cdrom bibliographies, periodicals and books). This paper is produced after a series of assignments building on the knowledge base provided through course texts. Class discussion and workshops help students process new gender-related concepts, ethical and human rights concerns related to particular issues, and research strategies. Film and video discussions and short written reviews help students to deepen their analytical skills in relation to examining women's gendered lives.

#### READINGS

(May include, and are not limited to...)

Adler, Leonora. *Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. New York: Praeger, 1991.

Fernandez-Kelly, Maria Patricia. *For We Are Sold: I and My People*.

Hazon, Winnie. *The Social and Legal Status of Women: A Global Perspective*. New York: Praeger, 1990.

Sen, Gita and Snow, Rachel. *Power and Decision: The Social Control of Reproduction*. Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies, Harvard University Press, 1994.

#### TOPICS

Distinguishing sex difference from gender construction  
Contemporary Issues for Women: A Question of Standpoint and Diversity  
Case Study: Women and Maquiladora Work  
Women's Work & Technology Issues  
Reproductive Rights Issues (new technologies, population control, etc.)  
Multiple family forms--One Ideal  
Images of Women Cross-culturally