

Sex, Power, and Politics

WGSS 101

Fall 2025 Section 80 Fully Online 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/26/2025

Contact Information

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Office Hours: Mondays 9am-10am & 12-1pm in DMH 211 and Zoom. See Canvas for Zoom link.

Course Description and Requisites

Multidisciplinary introduction to traditional and new images, roles, experiences, ethnic similarities and differences, and contemporary problems of American women. GE Area: S

Prerequisite(s): Completion of Core General Education and upper division standing are prerequisites to all SJSU studies courses. Completion of, or co-registration in, 100W is strongly recommended.

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Email Etiquette

It is your responsibility to read information communicated through your SJSU email account. I am available through email Monday-Friday 9-5pm, except for holidays and I will typically respond within 24 hours, but budget for 48 hours.

Professional email etiquette is required. All emails should have the course and section number and the topic of your email in the subject ("WGSS 101 01 Question about Discussion Q" or "WGSS 101 80 Link not working"). Your email should have an opening salutation such as, "Hi Dr. Jones" and a closing salutation like, "Thank you, [your name]." I will not respond to emails that include slang (Lol, idk, plz) read like a text message ("when is the paper due?"), and do not have a clear body.

Civility & Respect

Many theories and corresponding topics may be challenging. That's okay. The important thing is that we maintain a respectful climate where one another's ideas and perspectives are considered. People making rude, discriminatory, or hateful comments may be removed from discussions or asked to leave the class.

Generative AI Policy

Here's my deal with generative AI: it is an incredibly powerful tool that can streamline burdensome, time-consuming, and difficult tasks.

To me, generative AI is comparable to a power tool—say, a drill. If I'm putting together a desk, it can be manually completed with a screwdriver and it will take time, effort, and probably sweat. A drill can complete the task in a fraction of the amount of time and leave me with more time and brain power to focus on (what I find to be more interesting) things like figuring out where the desk should go or what color I should paint it. But the drill can't build the desk for me. It must be used with care and caution, *especially* if I have little experience using it *or* a screwdriver. Respect the tools: know their benefits and know their limitations. I can hurt myself with a power tool if I have little knowledge of how it operates and the consequences of not using it properly.

If you use AI tools for any assignment in this course, you must submit a [Student AI Disclosure \(https://the-said.pages.dev/\)](https://the-said.pages.dev/) (SAID) certificate. You can find out how to do this [here \(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XjSmMeGR98jHjyTyl4XawSxEgAQDPaDHKY-WP5f6QKw/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.vrepi4k7ihlo\)](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XjSmMeGR98jHjyTyl4XawSxEgAQDPaDHKY-WP5f6QKw/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.vrepi4k7ihlo). This tool empowers you to transparently document your use of AI tools in academic assignments.

Failure to disclose the use of AI tools as specified will result in a grade of '0' for the assignment and referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development, in accordance with SJSU's [Academic Integrity Policy \(https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/docs/SJSU-Academic-Integrity-Policy-F15-7.pdf?mkt_tok=NjYzLVVLUS050TgAAAGcOUMeOXibgfXYsHwcehh4yedEazqOX26N1IBkpUKITKNHkJwmCqnRv-w9M_4XUn2HEJ1U7pbubnNuB7uAERrHqcdLS1Dx-zEE2ANKFREBwk92Eg\)](https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/docs/SJSU-Academic-Integrity-Policy-F15-7.pdf?mkt_tok=NjYzLVVLUS050TgAAAGcOUMeOXibgfXYsHwcehh4yedEazqOX26N1IBkpUKITKNHkJwmCqnRv-w9M_4XUn2HEJ1U7pbubnNuB7uAERrHqcdLS1Dx-zEE2ANKFREBwk92Eg)(University Policy F15-7 (https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/docs/SJSU-Academic-Integrity-Policy-F15-7.pdf?mkt_tok=NjYzLVVLUS050TgAAAGcOUMeOXibgfXYsHwcehh4yedEazqOX26N1IBkpUKITKNHkJwmCqnRv-w9M_4XUn2HEJ1U7pbubnNuB7uAERrHqcdLS1Dx-zEE2ANKFREBwk92Eg)). If you are ever in doubt about acceptable applications of AI tools for an assignment, please don't hesitate to ask me!

The Writing Center has an [AI Writer Toolbox \(https://sites.google.com/sjsu.edu/aiwritertoolbox/home?mkt_tok=NjYzLVVLUS050TgAAAGcOUMeOXT-LDeE6rOi6GeMUUY8u3C1HDmNddtsTcFk_nmWW3icWHmMdwNz97IOPla0DRvx7n03n7wCyyXvqK0ptweCcYfROV9CsqDmLkU_vy0l2g\)](https://sites.google.com/sjsu.edu/aiwritertoolbox/home?mkt_tok=NjYzLVVLUS050TgAAAGcOUMeOXT-LDeE6rOi6GeMUUY8u3C1HDmNddtsTcFk_nmWW3icWHmMdwNz97IOPla0DRvx7n03n7wCyyXvqK0ptweCcYfROV9CsqDmLkU_vy0l2g) to help you navigate how to ethically use AI for things like generating ideas and revising your writing.

Participation and Netiquette

Respectful and professional participation is expected of everyone. This includes:

- Preparing the readings and actively participating
 - Read and annotate texts and actively watch or listen to other multimedia materials before the dates for which they are assigned on the syllabus. Research shows that reading and annotating hard-copy texts is the most effective method for increasing learning for most people. All of the readings on the syllabus are required unless otherwise noted. There may be suggested readings that are not required.
 - Actively take notes on your class materials. Research also shows that handwritten notetaking is the most effective method for most people (vs. typing and reviewing posted notes). I encourage you to exchange notes and study with classmates for additional engagement. If you need assistance with note-taking strategies, please see me and/or contact the [Accessible Education Center \(https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/\)](https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/).
- Being respectful to everyone in the class when they are speaking live, virtually, or in writing, including fellow students, the professor, and guests.
- Most importantly, this means showing fellow members of our learning community a level of professional courtesy that facilitates an open environment where the potentially difficult and sensitive ideas that are a part of this course can be explored fully. This does not mean that members of the class community always have to agree with one another. But you must be thoughtful and respectful about the way you challenge someone's argument by grounding the discussion in readings and without attempting to invalidate the individual's experiences, statuses, or memberships. Racist, sexist, homophobic, violent, victim-blaming, bullying/harassment, or similar types of comments will not be tolerated.
- Read "[The Core Rules of Netiquette \(http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html\)](http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html)" to understand how to respectfully engage in an online course.*

*Participation and Netiquette is adapted with permission from Dr. DuCros's SOCI 162 course.

Late Work

Assignments submitted up to 24 hours after the deadline will incur a 50% deduction. Assignments submitted more than 24 hours after the deadline will receive a zero.

Extensions

Extensions may be granted for reasons such as medical emergencies or unforeseen personal circumstances. Requests must be submitted in writing via e-mail as soon as possible and before the assignment deadline. Approval is at the instructor's discretion, and documentation may be required.

Make-Up Work

I do not allow work to be made up unless it is for reasons mentioned above (see "Extensions"). It is your responsibility to adhere to all deadlines.

Program Information

Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

Goal 1: To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

Goal 2: To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

Goal 3: To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website \(https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php\)](https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php).

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area S: Self, Society, and Equality in the U.S.

SJSU Studies courses -- Areas R, S, and V -- help students integrate knowledge between and among disciplines. In Area S courses, students study the interrelationships of individuals, racial groups, and cultural groups to understand and appreciate issues of diversity, inclusion, inequalities, and justice in the United States.

GE Area S Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area S course, students should be able to:

1. describe how identities are shaped by cultural and societal influences within contexts of equality and inequality. Examples include, but are not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, disability status, age, generation, regional origin, national identity, language, and intersectionalities;
2. analyze historical, economic, political, or social processes that shape diversity, equality, and structured inequalities in the U.S. and reflect on one's own identities and positions within these structures;
3. evaluate social actions which have or have not led to greater equality and social justice in the U.S.; and
4. engage in constructive interactions about social issues in the U.S. within the framework of equality and inequalities.

Writing Practice: Students will write a minimum of 3000 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

Course Materials

All course materials are posted on the Canvas course site.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Engagement Exercises

Introductory vlog: 5 points

This assignment will introduce you to your peers and begin building an engaged learning community. I grade this assignment based on completion.

Syllabus quiz: 5 points

This multiple choice quiz is meant to help you become more familiar with the syllabus, due dates, course policies and protocol, and assignment expectations.

10 Hypothesis weekly annotations: 20 points (2 points / week)

This assignment invites students to dig into the weekly assigned readings and begin to pull information from them that you find meaningful, provocative, and/or challenging. I grade this assignment based on completion. The deadline to complete the week's annotation is Saturday at 11:59PM. Detailed instructions on how to complete these annotations are posted on Canvas.

6 End-of-Unit Discussion Questions: 30 points (5 points / question)

This assignment is designed to help you synthesize course materials (readings, videos, etc.) at the end of each unit. You are invited to meaningfully engage in a discussion with your classmates in response to a discussion question. I grade your responses on depth, nuance, and originality. There are a total of 7 units in this course and you must complete 6 end-of-unit discussion assignments, so you are allowed to skip one.

The deadline to complete the week's discussion question is Sunday at 11:59PM. Detailed instructions on how to complete this assignment are posted on Canvas.

Written Exercises

Sex in the News (Paper #1): 20 points

Sex in the News is an assignment that invites students to analyze a current event (in the past year) that relates to sex, power, and politics in 700 words. You will find a news event sourced from an independent journalism and explain how it relates to any of the course material. This paper is due on Sunday October 19 at 11:59PM. Detailed instructions on how to complete this assignment are posted on Canvas.

Sex in a Movement (Paper #2): 20 points

This assignment invites you to dig further into a course topic that interests you and research how a specific organization/collective/group organizes to effect change within this movement. Students will articulate

how a specific organization's core purpose relates to the broader movement of which it is apart. This paper is due Tuesday December 16 at 11:59PM. Detailed instructions on how to complete this assignment are posted on Canvas.

✓ Grading Information

Introductory vlog	5 points
Syllabus quiz	5 points
10 Hypothesis weekly annotations (2 points each)	20 points
6 End-of-Unit Discussion Questions (5 points each)	30 points
Sex in the News (Paper #1)	20 points
Sex in a Movement (Paper #2)	20 points
Total possible	100 points

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Readings	Deadlines
.5	8.20	Introduction to course	
		Unit 1: The Construction of Sexuality <i>How is sexuality shaped by social, political, and cultural forces?</i>	
1	8.25	1. Christiansen and Fischer, "Construction as a Social Process" 2. Roberts, "Medicine and the Making of the Sexual Body" 3. Weitz, "A History of Women's Bodies"	Hypothesis due 8.30

2	9.3	<p>*No class on Monday 9.1 Labor Day</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fausto-Sterling, "Dueling Dualisms" 2. Martin, "The Egg and the Sperm" 3. Lorber, "Believing is Seeing, Biology as Ideology" 	Hypothesis due 9.6 Discussion Q due 9.7
		<p align="center">Unit 2: The State and Sexual Governance</p> <p align="center"><i>How does the state regulate, discipline, and define sexuality, and what are the consequences of this governance for different bodies, communities, and identities?</i></p>	
3	9.8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Patil, "The Coloniality of Sexuality" 2. Moore and Currah, "Legally Sexed" 3. Bernstein, "The Marriage Contract: The Legal Context of Marriage" 	Hypothesis due 9.13
4	9.15	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Robinson, "Children's Sexual Citizenship" 2. Puri, "Sexuality, State, and Nation" 	Hypothesis due 9.20 Discussion Q due 9.21
		<p align="center">Unit 3: Reproductive Politics & Bodily Autonomy</p> <p align="center"><i>How is reproductive justice different from reproductive rights? What does reproductive have to do with trans justice, disability justice, and economic justice?</i></p>	
5	9.22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ross, "Trust Black Women: Reproductive Justice and Eugenics" 	Hypothesis due 9.27
6	9.29	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. O'Connell, "We Need to Talk about Disability as a Reproductive Justice Issue" 2. Miller, "Mothering While Poor" 3. Gimeno, "The Reluctant Reproductive Justice Organizer and Birthworker" 	Hypothesis due 10.4 Discussion Q due 10.5
		<p align="center">Unit 4: Labor, Capital, & Sexual Economies</p> <p align="center"><i>How are sexuality and intimacy commodified? How can we differentiate (can we?) between labor, exploitation, and pleasure?</i></p>	
7	10.6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Silvia Federici, "Wages Against Housework" 2. Kathi Weeks, "Life Within and Against Work" 3. Elizabeth Verklan, "What's Love Got to Do With It?" 4. Hemangini Gupta, "When the Office Is Family" 	Hypothesis due 10.11

8	10.13	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sparks, "Sex work, the victim, and the anti-trafficking movement" 2. Heather Berg, "Intimate labor in the adult film industry" 3. Hanson and Smith, "Cybrothel: The World's First AI Sex Worker" 4. Hidalgo and Maxxine, "Sex workers' rights activism in the United States" 	<p>Hypothesis due 10.18 Sex in the News Paper #1 due 10.19</p>
9	10.20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brents, "Sexual economies and Nevada's legal brothels" 2. Hanson and Smith, "Cybrothel: The World's First AI Sex Worker" 3. Hidalgo and Maxxine, "Sex workers' rights activism in the United States" 	<p>Hypothesis due 10.25 Discussion Q due 10.26</p>
		<p style="text-align: center;">Unit 5: Desire, Desirability, & the Body</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>What shapes our desire and how does that impact how we navigate intimacy? What "counts" as sexual acts? How is sexuality policed, celebrated, or erased through particular bodies?</i></p>	
10	10.27	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Buggs, "Sexualized othering in multiracial women's experiences with sex and romance" 2. Scott, "Can Disabled People Have Sex? And Other Questions You Probably Should't Ask Me if We Just Met," 3. Tompkins "Trans sexualities Identities, relationships, and desires" 4. Sanberg, "Sex in later life" 5. Miller, "Disrupting Dichotomies: Nonbinary sexual identities" 	<p>Hypothesis due 11.1</p>
11	11.3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Davis " Intersexy, but fat" 2. Pacho, "Cake is Better than sex:." 3. Cooper, "Big Girls Need Love, Too" 4. Virgie Tovar, "Ugliness is a Myth" 	<p>Hypothesis due 11.8 Discussion Q due 11.9</p>
		<p style="text-align: center;">Unit 6: Social Media, Sex Education, & Sexual Violence</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Who gets to decide what counts as "accurate" or "appropriate" sex education, and education more broadly? How do digital platforms shape sexual knowledge and literacy? How do different frameworks--political, activist, public health, and consent-based--shape our understanding of sexual violence, its causes, and possibilities for prevention and justice?</i></p>	
12	11.10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fields and Gilbert, "Sex education and its failures" 2. Barcelos, "The Fight for Accurate, Affirming, and Liberatory Sexuality Education," 3. Levine, "Sex Education and the Digital Age" 4. Scarcelli, "Young People and Sexual Media" 	<p>Hypothesis due 11.15</p>

13	11.17	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Palacios and Posocco, "War and the politics of sexual violence" 2. Loney-Howes, "The history of activism against sexual violence and the modern #MeToo movement" 3. Hirsch and Kahn, "A public health approach to campus sexual assault prevention" 4. Grzanka, "The ally paradox" 	<p>Hypothesis due 11.22 Discussion Q due 11.23</p>
14	11.24	<p>NO THANKS NO GIVING No module this week</p> <p>Optional: Manning, "The Thanksgiving Myth" Virgie Tovar, "4 Body Boundary Tips For The Holidays"</p>	
		<p>UNIT 7: Resistance, Pleasure, and Future Worlds <i>How can pleasure, erotic power, and embodied joy function as strategies of resistance?</i></p>	
15	12.1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brown, "Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good" (pgs. 65-112) 2. Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic" 	<p>Hypothesis due 12.6</p>
15.5	12.8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Singh, "Affirming and Enjoying your Body" 	<p>Hypothesis due 12.13 Discussion Q due 12.14</p>
			<p>Sex in a Movement Paper #2 due 12.16</p>