

## WGSS 250: Introduction to WGSS: Women, Art and Culture

Professor: TBD  
Class Location: Zoom

Class Times: Synchronous M, W, F 10-12pm  
Asynchronous Tu/Th



### Course Description:

Dive into the vibrant world of art and activism! This course invites you to explore how artists have boldly confronted social justice, using visual art as a powerful lens to examine the complexities of identity and society. Engaging critically with the work of trailblazing scholars including bell hooks and Eli Clare, you'll discover key issues and analytical frameworks shaping the field. Together, we'll analyze how artistic products challenge oppressive systems and serve as powerful forms of creative expression. Through lively discussions and critical examinations, you'll uncover the transformative potential of art as a catalyst for social change. Get ready to think deeply, engage passionately, and try your hand at artistic production as we explore art's vital role in shaping our understanding of justice and the social systems that define our world.

### Learning Outcomes:

1. Critically interpret and analyze, orally and in writing, a variety of art works.
2. Explore the significance of creative production to community formations with a focus on Prince George's County and Washington, DC.
3. Understand feminist theories that are of particular relevance to art and cultural production, and articulate one's own analysis and points of intervention.
4. Develop skills in critical thinking and the ability to engage with course materials through reading, writing, research, and discussion.
5. Enhance skills necessary for thoughtful and respectful dialogue with peers.

**Academic Integrity:** You are responsible for adhering to the University of Maryland's Code of Academic Integrity, which is available at [academiccatalog.umd.edu/undergraduate/registration-academicrequirements-regulations/academic-integrity-student-conduct-codes/](https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/undergraduate/registration-academicrequirements-regulations/academic-integrity-student-conduct-codes/)

- In our class, content authored for all assignments must be your own writing. Content produced with AI technologies is not your own writing. In our class, all use of AI text generators is academic dishonesty.
- As noted by the plagiarism policy, all quotations—including those retrieved from online sources—must be indicated by quotation marks and accurate citation. If you are unsure how to properly cite sources, or if you do not fully comprehend what constitutes plagiarism, please make an appointment to meet with me and with the university's Writing Center.

Failure to adhere to the university's Code of Academic Integrity results in a report to the Office of Judicial Programs.

**Accessibility and Disability Services:** The University of Maryland works to provide accommodations to disabled students. If you need a classroom accommodation, please contact me and the Accessibility and Disability Service (ADS) as soon as possible.

**Accommodations:** If you have access to classroom accommodations through Accessibility and Disability Service (ADS) or through the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, please meet with me during Zoom or in-person office hours to discuss the accommodations. Please do so in advance of February 9.

**Course Materials:** Please bring your copy of the day's assigned reading to class meetings. All course materials—including scholarly articles, book chapters, and films—are accessible through ELMS-Canvas. No books are required for purchase.

### Course Requirements

**1. Participation (20%):** The work we will accomplish together, throughout the semester, is necessarily an active and collaborative process. When you read, write, research, reflect, and participate in online classroom discussion, you will actively engage with the course materials. We will learn with and from one another, and as a result will understand more than we ever could if we were each working through the materials on our own, in an independent rather than collaborative environment. For your benefit and the benefit of your classmates, you are expected to attend class, participate thoughtfully and respectfully in class discussion and breakout rooms, and study the assigned readings and films in advance of their due date.

**2. Discussion Posts (20%):** By 11:59pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, students will turn in a 150-200 word discussion post assignment to ELMS-Canvas. The prompts will guide your reading and help encourage our class discussion. Each prompt pertains to the day's assigned materials. The answers you craft should please demonstrate your close reading and accurate interpretation of the day's assigned materials. Work to craft answers that are well elaborated but also clear and concise; the assignment may not exceed 200 words.

**3. Social Justice Poster Assignment (20%):** Select an art gallery of your choice and view an exhibition (online or in person). Choose one artist featured in the exhibition and research their background and the breadth of their work. Think of a social justice issue that you wish to do something about. Draw on your selected artist to inspire you to create a poster that conveys the message that you wish to share about your social justice issue. You will submit your poster and a 1-page discussion that explains your process, the focus of your poster and how inspired by the work of your selected artists and post it on ELMS.

**4. Museum Assignment (National Museum of Women in the Arts OR Enoch Pratt Free Library OR The David C. Driskell Center) (20%):** Our region benefits from a rich presence of museums, galleries and centers – they vary thematically, by genre, geocultural focus and historical periods etc. It follows that their programming and community outreach are equally rich and variable. This assignment requires that you attend ONE event this semester. I have identified three possible sites, however, should you wish to attend a different site, please liaise with me to discuss the event. You are required to attend the selected event (e.g. artist talk, panel discussion) and submit a 5 page paper that addresses the following: After

attending the event you should: - Provide a summary of the main arguments. - Identify three themes/ideas that resonate with the concerns and objectives of the course. Provide an overview of how these themes were explored in the discussion. - Provide two additional peer-reviewed article references that help you explore and discuss the themes you've identified. Provide annotated entries of these two references, being clear to connect that articles arguments with the themes you've identified with the discussion. In other words, provide an overview of the article's main arguments, and identify how these arguments enhance your understanding of the event's discussion. - Provide appropriate background for any artist or artwork referenced in your paper.

### **5. Feminist Art & Culture Analysis Paper or Artistic Production:**

Option 1: Using the theoretical paradigms we have learned in this course, students will analyze a work of art or culture of their choice (photography, sculpture, painting, film, television, music, etc) that deals heavily with feminism, women, gender, race and/or sexuality. The paper should be 4-6 pages in length, double-spaced.

Option 2: If you choose to do a creative or artistic production you must accompany it with a 2 page single spaced artist statement explaining how your work is informed by feminist, critical race and/or disability theory. Your artistic piece should be uploadable to ELMS along with the artist statement. For example, if you create a painting, you should upload a photograph of the painting to ELMS along with your artist statement.

### **Course Evaluation**

Final grades are calculated on a 1000 point scale, which translate to the following letter grades: A+ = 970-1000, A = 930-969, A- = 900-929, B+ = 870-899, B = 830-869, B- = 800-829, C+ = 770-799, C = 730-769, C- = 700-729, D+ = 670-699, D = 630-669, D- = 600-629, F = 599 and below.

### **Schedule of Classes**

*Materials and assignments are to be completed in advance of the day next to which they are listed.*

Monday, Week 1                      Greetings and Introduction to the Course

**Discussion Topics:**                      **intersectionality, difference, genealogies, art, work**

Tuesday, Week 1                      Elsa Barkley Brown, "African-American Women's Quilting: A Framework for Conceptualizing and Teaching African-American Women's History." *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14, No. 4 (Summer 1989), 921-929.

Anna Julia Cooper, "The Status of Women in America." In *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, edited by Beverly Guy-Sheftall, 43-49. Originally 1892. (New York: The New Press, 1995).

Vivian May, "Tracing Resistant Legacies, Rethinking Intellectual Genealogies: Reflections on Cooper's Black Feminist Theorizing." In *Anna Julia Cooper, Visionary Black Feminist* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 169-188.

Video: “Kimberlé Crenshaw Discusses Intersectional Feminism,”  
Lafayette College, 15 October 2015.  
Video available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROwquxC\\_Gxc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROwquxC_Gxc) (9  
minutes)

Discussion Post #1 Due

Wednesday, Week 1

Tressie McMillan Cottom, “Dying to Be Competent.” In *Thick: And Other Essays* (New York: The New Press, 2019), 77-97.

[Content Warning: racist violence in health care, pregnancy crisis and death]

Gloria Anzaldúa, “To(o) Queer the Writer.” In *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, edited by AnaLouise Keating (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009). Originally 1991.

Donna Kate Rushin, “The Bridge Poem,” 1991. Poem available at <https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/thebridgepoem.html>

Thursday, Week 1

bell hooks, “Women Artists: The Creative Process.” In *Feminism-ArtTheory: An Anthology, 1968-2000*, edited by Hilary Robinson, 635-640. Originally 1995. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001.

Sarah Jaffe, “My Studio Is the World: Art.” In *Work Won’t Love You Back* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2021), 175-206.

Discussion Post Due

Friday, Week 1

Please turn in your Social Justice Poster to ELMS.

**Discussion Topics:**

**gender, citizenship, language, abolition**

Monday, Week 2

Ocean Vuong, selections from *Time is a Mother* (New York: Penguin Press, 2022).

Alok Vaid-Menon, *Beyond the Gender Binary* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2020), 1-36.

Tuesday, Week 2

Dean Spade, “About Purportedly Gendered Body Parts,” 1-2. The essay is published on Spade’s website and it is available in PDF form on ELMSCanvas.

Sylvia Rivera Law Project, “Trans 101.” Article available at <http://srlp.org/resources/trans-101/>

Film: “Toilet Training: Law and Order in the Bathroom,” produced by Tara Mateik and the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, 2003. Film available at <https://vimeo.com/85470055> (30 minutes)

Video: Travis Alabanza, “Who is allowed to be a victim?” October 2017. Video available at [https://www.ted.com/talks/travis\\_alabanza\\_who\\_is\\_allowed\\_to\\_be\\_a\\_victim?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/travis_alabanza_who_is_allowed_to_be_a_victim?language=en) (15 minutes)

### Discussion Post #3

Wednesday, Week 2

Harrick Wu interviews Julio Salgado, “‘Undocu-Queer’ Artist Julio Salgado on Creative Resistance,” KQUED, July 2018. Article available at <https://www.kqed.org/arts/13836333/undocu-queer-artist-julio-salgado-on-creative-resistance>

Kiese Laymon, “What We Owe and Are Owed: Kiese Laymon on Black Revision, Repayment, and Renewal.” *Vox*, 17 May 2021.

Thursday, Week 2

Olúfemi O. Táíwò, “The Fight for Reparations Cannot Ignore Climate Change.” *Boston Review*, 10 January 22. Article available at <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/the-fight-for-reparations-cannotignore-climate-change/>

Selections from “Prisons and Class Warfare: An Interview with Ruth Wilson Gilmore,” by Clément Petitjean, 2 August 2018.

Mariame Kaba, selections from *We Do This ‘Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021). [Content Warning: The essays by Kaba describe violence.]

### Discussion Post #4 Due

Friday, Week 2

Please turn in your museum assignment to ELMS.

**Discussion Topics:**

**capitalism, economic justice, representation, disability**

Monday Week 3

David F. Ruccio, “Keyword: Capitalism.” In *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (New York: NYU Press, 2014).

Robin D. G. Kelley, “What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?” *Boston Review*, 12 January 2017. Article available at

<https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/robin-d-g-kelley-introduction-racecapitalism-justice/>

Tuesday, Week 3

Film: “Made in L.A.,” directed by Almudena Carracedo, 2007 (70 minutes)

Discussion Post #5

Wednesday, Week 3

Vivyan C. Adair, “Branded With Infamy: Inscriptions of Poverty and Class in the United States.” In *The Politics of Women’s Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance, and Behavior*, 3rd edition, edited by Rose Weitz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 232-244.

Minh-Ha T. Pham, selections from *Why We Can’t Have Nice Things: Social Media’s Influence on Fashion, Ethics, and Property* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 1-7 and 41-52.

Thursday, Week 3

Eli Clare, “The Mountain.” In *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020, originally 1999), 1-13.

[Content Warning: Mention of sexual abuse in Part 3]

Alison Kafer, “Introduction: Imagined Futures.” In *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 1-24.

Discussion Post #6 Due

Friday, Week 3

Please turn in your final paper or artistic production to ELMS.

### **Discussion Post Prompts**

- Prompt #1 Despite that the term “intersectionality” wasn’t coined until 1989, the concept has long been a feature of Black feminisms. How does Cooper’s work contribute to our study of the term “intersectionality”? Please quote either the primary source titled “The Status of Women in America” and/or the secondary source called “Tracing Resistant Legacies, Rethinking Intellectual Genealogies” to substantiate your answer.
- Prompt #2 How does hooks describe the relationship of “work” and “art”? How does Jaffe describe the relationship of “work” and “art”? Compare and contrast the two definitions.
- Prompt #3 How do each of the 2 assigned video sources address community/allyship/solidarity
- Prompt #4 Please choose 1 of the 2 questions to answer: a) How does Gilmore describe “organizing”? or b) In her essay published by The New York Times, Kaba writes: “We are not abandoning our communities to violence. We don’t want to just close police departments. We want to make them obsolete.” How does Kaba elaborate this argument? What does it mean, according to Kaba, to make police departments “obsolete”?
- Prompt #5 How does the film address the relationship of racism and capitalism? Please quote at least one sentence from the film to substantiate your answer.

Prompt #6 How does Kafer describe the political/relational model of disability? How is the political/relational model distinct from the social model? Please quote at least one sentence from the chapter to substantiate your answer.

Sample