

WMNST 100, Section 021: Women's and Gender
Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies WMST 100 Section

Penn State Lehigh Valley

Spring 2024 Tuesday – Thursday Room 330

Nichola D. Gutgold, PhD. Professor Communication Arts and Sciences (she/her)

Office: 217 J

In-Person Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 8-9 a.m. and 12- 1

Individual assistance is also always available by appointment.

I look forward to seeing you at office hours; please stop by and say hello. My very best students come and sit awhile.

Email: dgn2@psu.edu

.

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to women's and gender studies, an interdisciplinary, academic field that explores critical questions about the meaning gender in society. This course takes a diverse, multidisciplinary approach to expose students to the complex ways that sex, gender, and sexuality shape social, economic, and political life. Specifically, this course examines these issues through the lens of how our US first ladies have intersected with social identities and political structures are constructed and intersected, with a focus on power and privilege and in an international context. This course utilizes contemporary media and current politics to supplement a textual overview of the discipline of women's and gender studies.

Course Goals

The primary goal of this course is to familiarize students with key issues, questions and debates in Women's and Gender Studies scholarship, both historical and contemporary. Throughout the semester, we will examine the role of gender by considering its role in our first ladies.

We will ask:

Why has gender been a primary organizing principle of society?

How do gendered structures of power and authority operate?

How does gender intersect with race, ethnicity, and other social identities?

What factors contribute to the formation and success of movements for and against gender equality and fluidity?

How do "gendered scripts" for dress, appearance and behavior emerge among different social groups and in different societies and historical periods?

How do we explain the sexual division of labor and the unequal status of women and girls, and those activities and roles deemed "feminine" in society?

Can we imagine a future in which we largely ignore gender or envision gender in more expansive or egalitarian ways?

My hope is for you to be better prepared to participate in and contribute effectively to the larger public conversation about the role of gender in society, to apply the critical tools of women's and gender studies in their academic, family, and occupational lives, and to take more advanced classes in this field.

Course Objectives

In this course, you will have the opportunity to learn about the many ways in which gender intersects with class, race, ethnicity, sexuality and age within various spheres and institutions of society. You will become acquainted with many of the critical questions and concepts feminist scholars have developed as tools for thinking about gendered experience. You will complete this course with the ability to critically analyze themes of gendered performance and power in a range of social spheres, such as law, culture, education, work, medicine, social policy, and the family.

Required Texts

US FIRST LADIES; MAKING HISTORY AND LEAVING LEGACIES by Diana Carlin, Anita B. McBride and Nancy Kegan Smith (Cognella, 2023)

Viewing of interest:

Killing Us Softly

Miss Representation

Miss America

I also have an extensive library of first ladies' biographies and you are encouraged to borrow any if you wish. I will bring some to class, others are in my office.

This course will be in a semi-seminar format where lectures will be given in the first half of the class and followed by discussions and various activities. In this course, I will be facilitating an open, respectful, and informed class setting that considers differences in identity, opinion,

experience, and analysis as a fertile space for learning. Such an environment takes effort by both students and the instructor.

For students, your responsibilities are:

Preparation: Complete the required readings before coming to class. We go into details of the assigned reading in class – please also bring the readings of the day to class.

Participation: Participation in class is based on participation in class lecture and discussion, as well as group activities. (See details in the course component section below.)

Respect: Throughout the course, I would like everyone to feel free to share her/his opinion with one another. To do so, we must maintain a civil environment, even when we are discussing controversial topics. You are responsible to actively listen to others and treat others' contributions respectfully, even if you share disagreements. I will not tolerate any language or acts of discrimination and intimidation.

Sometimes we will discuss political affiliation of our first ladies. Please be respectful.

I will contribute to this environment by:

Treating all students with respect.

Welcoming diverse viewpoints, experiences, and interpretations of the class materials.

Challenging your thinking, beliefs, and analysis of issues, concepts, and ideas in this class. ☒
Making sure every student can speak at least once before allowing students to speak multiple times.

Electronic Devices

There are some occasions where you may need to use computer, cellphone, etc. in class. However, you will not need them most of the time, so please turn off your electronic devices or put them away. While open laptops and other similar devices may be used for notetaking and reading texts, I would rather have you listening to one another with attention.

Course Components

I. Participation 25 points

Your participation grade is based on two components: attendance and participation in class.

You should attend every class. I understand that extenuating circumstances arise that can make this difficult, but if circumstances make you miss more than three classes, you may have overextended yourself and you may fail this course. Unless you are missing an exam, an

assignment, or are absent due to a long-term illness or issue, you do not need to notify me if you need to miss class.

In addition to showing up for class, active participation in class and the Thursday discussion board is essential to your learning and performance in the course. Participation in class includes participating in group activities and classroom discussions, e.g. speaking up in class, sharing your thoughts, responding to my questions, etc. Thoughtful participation requires that you complete all the course readings on time and to reflect on them enough to bring something cogent to class meetings. "Good" class participation is not just a function of quantity, but also quality. Simply coming to class does not guarantee a high participation grade; the frequency and quality of your comments also matter. You can earn maximum participation points by participating regularly and respectfully. Here are some things you can do to earn maximum credit for participation:

Attend class.

Participate openly and regularly in discussions.

Ask questions when you have them – no matter how big or small.

Always consider and question but never disrespect others' contributions ☒ Try not to interrupt or monopolize the conversation.

Help create discussion openings by which other students may participate ☒ Stay on topic.

If you have difficulty speaking in public or for some other reason do not feel comfortable participating in the manner described above, please speak with me within the first few days of class so that we can brainstorm ways for you to be more actively involved in class.

Discussion Forum Posts (25 points)

The best learning takes place when a student like yourself engages in the texts you read, asks questions, mounts objections to ideas, tries to figure out why the author wrote the article/book the way s/he did—and what relation this article has to your own experiences and perceptions. In this class discussion forum, you may offer your responses, questions, confusions, recognitions.

These postings should be either thoughtful postings of questions based on the texts or thoughtful responses to those questions. To receive a perfect score, your posting must be well-developed, thoughtful, and useful for facilitating class discussion that week. You should write at least one to two paragraphs in response to that topic's question. This portion of your assessment will address the quality, not simply the quantity of your weekly posts.

One Mid Term Paper (25 points each) Topic: How has the role of first lady changed with the times? What impact if any will men as "First Gentlemen" change the role? The paper must be 3-5 pages with a minimum of four original sources. MLA or APA accepted.

Group Research Activity and PowerPoint (25 points)

Your group project in this class will be the integration of conceptual concepts in this course applied to first ladies and the obstacles and opportunities of their time in the White House.

With a group, you will research and interpret You will produce a PowerPoint to present in class, based on the concepts we study, and presented with your group.

Review the first lady your group chooses and:

Situate her first lady ship in the historical context.

What are the ethical and social responsibilities she faced?

Was there any historical precedent for the ethical and social responsibilities she faced as first lady?

What are the supporters' and opponents' positions on this issue event?

How was she covered in the media?

What is her legacy?

**Late assignments will be penalized five points each calendar day after the due date and time.

Group Power Point Presentation, Paper revealing the role of each team member and printed out slides and sources (at least five) must be submitted. 25 points

Further explanation of assignments will be discussed in class.

Class Grade Scale

A: 94—100% A-: 90—93% B+: 87—89%

B: 83—86% B-: 80—82% C+: 77—79%

C: 70—76%

D: 60-69%

F: 59% and Below

Grades in this class are based on mastery of the class material. This doesn't just mean attending class and reading the material; it means analyzing and understanding the material—and being able to articulate the material thoughtfully and precisely through assignments, discussion, and exams. At the end of the semester, I do not allow extra credit, "round up," barter, to improve your final grade.

Disability Services

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services. For further information regarding policies, rights and responsibilities please visit the Office for Disability Services (ODS) Web site at: www.equity.psu.edu/ods/. Please contact me early in the semester—I am happy to work with you regarding accommodations.

Class Schedule

T MARCH 12

Discussion of class expectations, assignments, exams, and reading schedule

What is Women's and Gender Studies? What is a First Lady? Chapters 1-2 of text.

Evolving the Role: From Lady Washington to Dr. Biden; Confronting a Complex History: From Slavery to Civil Rights

Th Discussion Board Probe What is Women's and Gender Studies? Why is it even a course?

Why are first ladies a good lens through which to study women's roles in society?

T – March 19. Chapter 3-4 Creating and Refining the Role: The First Three First Ladies.

Further Developing the Role: Nineteenth-Century First Ladies

Th Chapter 5; Bridging Two Centuries and Expanding Their Influence

T MARCH 26. Chapter 6-7; Anna Eleanor Roosevelt: First Lady, Activist, Humanitarian; Stepping Back from Eleanor Roosevelt's Activism and Charting Their Own Course

Th - Chapter 8 Using Her Podium: Claudia Alta "Ladybird" Taylor Johnson

T chapter 9 and 10 APRIL 2 Formalizing the Office of First Lady; World War II Wives: Bridging Two Generations and Moving the Model Forward

Th – Chapter 11 The Entrance of Baby Boomers

T APRIL 9 Chapters 12-13. Making History: Michelle Lavaughn Robinson Obama; Communicating Their Messages; Making Choices

Th: chapter 14 Expanding the Rhetorical Role: First Ladies' Significant Speeches

T APRIL 16 Chapter 15-16. First Ladies on the Campaign Trail; Influencing the White House: The People's House from Abigail to Jill

Th. Chapter 17 – 18. Locating Their Words and Deeds: Researching First Ladies and Their Papers; Leaving a Legacy and Looking Ahead: First Ladies and the Good They Do

T APRIL 23. In class presentations

Th

T APRIL 30 In class presentations

Course Summary:

Date Details Due

Thu Mar 14, 2024 Discussion Topic What is Gender and Women's Studies due by 11:59pm

Thu Mar 21, 2024 Discussion Topic Bridging Two Centuries and Expanding Their Influence: First Ladies due by 11:59pm

Thu Mar 28, 2024 Discussion Topic Using Her Podium: Claudia Alta "Ladybird" Taylor Johnson due by 11:59pm

Thu Apr 4, 2024 Discussion Topic The Entrance of Baby Boomers due by 11:59pm

Thu Apr 18, 2024 Discussion Topic Expanding the Rhetorical Role: First Ladies' Significant