WGS Spring 2021 Graduate Course Descriptions

WSGS 522/COMM 521: Communication and Gender
TR 12:15-1:30 (P. Arneson)

Examines research addressing differences and similarities in gendered communication styles in a variety of contexts, ranging from personal to social to work relationships, with attention given to philosophical and narrative understandings of communicating in cisgender and Other perspectives.

WSGS 529/HIST 520: History of Children and Childhood
Tue 6:00-8:40 (R. Chapdelaine)

History of Children and Childhood will survey how notions of ‘children’ and ‘childhood’ expanded alongside the formalization of social science scholarship focused on children. The study of children as historical subjects is necessary to fully understand the complexities of social, cultural, economic, and political histories worldwide. Because health specialists, child advocates, human rights activists, educators, and historians made evident their interest in children’s health programs, access to education, and child labor conditions this course will examine the social construction of ‘childhood’ in various global contexts. With an emphasis on gender, the assigned texts will show how identity shapes personal and community experiences, how private and public institutions influence what is expected of children and of the childhood experience, and how the intersection of age and gender became a category by which social control was/is enacted.

WSGS 548/Engl 549: Slave Narratives
Wed 6:00-8:40 (K. Glass)

Navigating sentimental, antislavery, and abolitionist discourses, slave narratives highlight the dignity and humanity of the slave. Calling for abolition in these narratives, black narrators also mobilized this form to document extreme hardships and craft triumphant tales of freedom. Using frameworks of race, class, and gender, students in this course will examine iterations of the slave narrative from 1845-1868. In particular, we will historicize these early black autobiographies and examine their formal and sociopolitical concerns. Readings will include critical essays and primary texts by Frederick Douglass, Ellen and William Craft, Harriet Jacobs, Solomon Northup, Elizabeth Keckley, and many others. In this course, students will acquire a nuanced understanding of African-American slave narratives and relevant black critical/theoretical traditions.

WSGS 568/Engl 558: African American Poetry
Mon 6:00-8:40 (L. Kinnahan)

Over the past century or more, African American poets have bodied forth a poetic diversity that richly attends to words and the shaping power of poetic form. In our readings of African
American poetry, we will explore diverse aesthetics, forms, and genres in relationship to intersectional politics of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Our readings of 20th and 21st-century poetry, prefaced by a selective look at late 19th-century poets, will be organized around specific forms, genres, and conventions, contextualized within socio-historical and political conditions. Although our readings will span from the late-19th century through the 20th and 21st centuries, rather than following a linear chronology, we will cluster our readings around several formal distinctions in poetry, including the following: the sonnet & metrical forms; the lyric; dialect use; voice; serial or long poem forms; experimental and/or hybrid forms; intercultural and interarts exchanges. We will ask: How does poetry do work in the world? What is the labor of poetic language and form? How does form speak? How can form be political?

Tentative poets include: Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Gwendolyn Brooks, Audre Lorde, Rita Dove, Amari Baraka, Nikki Giovanni, Terrance Hayes, Robin Coste Lewis, Harryette Mullen, Kevin Young, Cameron Barnette, Jeffrey Bolden, Erica Hunt, and Tyehimba Jess. (Some poets will be studied more in depth, with book collections, while others will be read in selected clusters of poems).

The course will also include critical readings in race and gender studies and in poetics. This course satisfies the post-1900 and Diversity requirements for English majors, and the post-1900 requirement for graduate students, and is cross-listed with Women’s and Gender Students.