CHAPTER 1

WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

Perspectives and Practices

WHAT IS WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES (WGS)?

WGS is an interdisciplinary academic field devoted to topics concerning women, gender, and feminism. It focuses on gender arrangements (the ways society creates, patterns, and rewards our understandings of femininity and masculinity) and examines the multiple ways these arrangements affect everyday life. In particular, WGS is concerned with gender as it intersects with multiple categories, such as race, ethnicity, social class, age, ability, religion, and sexuality. Exploring how we perform gender and how this interacts with other aspects of our identities, WGS focuses on the ways women and other feminized bodies experience discrimination and oppression. Simply put, WGS involves the study of gender as a central aspect of human existence.

The goal of WGS, however, is not only to provide an academic framework and broad-based community for inquiry about the impacts of gender practices on social, cultural, and political thought and behavior, but also to provide advocacy and work toward social change. This endeavor is framed by understandings of the social, economic, and political changes of the past half century that include a rapid increase in globalization and its impacts locally, including the deindustrialization of the global north, the blurring and dispersal of geopolitical boundaries and national identities, and the growth of new technologies that have not only transformed political and economic institutions, but supported mass consumerism. Such changes shape contemporary imperialism (economic, military, political, and/or cultural domination over nations or geopolitical formations) with implications for people in both local and global communities.

In this way, WGS seeks understanding of these issues and realities with the goal of social justice. In this endeavor it puts women and other marginalized peoples at the center of inquiry as subjects of study, informing knowledge through these lenses. This inclusion implies that traditional notions regarding men as "humans" and women as "others" must be challenged and transcended. Such a confusion of maleness with humanity, putting men at the center and relegating women to outsiders in society, is called androcentrism.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

WHY ARE WE READING THESE ESSAYS?

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Imagine that you, not Susan Shaw and Janet Lee, have final responsibility for *Gendered Voices, Feminist Visions*. Shaw and Lee have finished arranging all the contents, which appear in their current order. Everything is ready to go to press, and at this point you cannot move anything around. Nonetheless, you have just received an urgent message from the publisher, who wants to include one additional essay in the book: Pandora L. Leong's "Living Outside the Box" from *Colonize This!* (2002). Your instructor will let you know how to access this article.

Now it is up to you to figure out where to place Leong's essay in the existing volume. Leong discusses a number of feminist issues, which means that the essay could go into any one of several different sections of the book. You will have to decide which is the most significant of the topics that Leong raises, as that will determine which chapter would be most appropriate for this inclusion.

But you will also have to choose where, within the chapter, to put the essay, and that, too, will be an important matter. If you place it at the start of a section, how might that affect readers' feelings about the essays that follow, especially the essay that comes right after it? If you place it at the end of a section, how will its presence implicitly comment on the earlier essays in the section and perhaps color readers' reactions to the essay immediately preceding it? And if you sandwich it between two essays, midway through a section, how will that influence the way readers look at both the essay that comes before it and the one that comes after? You have a lot of power here, and you must think about how to exercise it.

Write a report to the publisher. In your report, you will need to do the following:

1. Identify the issue in Leong's "Living Outside the Box" that you think is most worth highlighting, and describe what she says about it.
2. Explain how you chose a place for "Living Outside the Box" in *Gendered Voices, Feminist Visions*, and make a case for your choice.
3. Discuss the possible implications of its placement, talking briefly about the essays that will surround it.

What do you think this activity suggests about the construction of an introductory women's and gender studies textbook? What kinds of decisions do you think Shaw and Lee had to make in developing *Gendered Voices, Feminist Visions*? If you were a co-author/co-editor, would you make similar or different decisions?

By making those who identify as women and other marginalized peoples the subjects of study, we assume that our opinions and thoughts about our own experiences are central in understanding human society generally. Adrienne Rich's classic essay from the late 1970s "Claiming an Education" articulates this demand for women as subjects of study. It also encourages you as a student to recognize your right to be taken seriously and invites you to understand the relationship between your personal biography and the wider forces in society that affect your life. As authors of this text, we also invite your participation in knowledge creation, hoping it will be personally enriching and vocationally useful.

HOW DID WGS ORIGINATE?

The original manifestation of WGS was the emergence of women's studies programs and departments in response to the absence, misrepresentation, and trivialization of women in the higher education curriculum, as well as the ways women were systematically excluded from many positions of power and authority as college faculty and administrators. This exclusion was especially true for women of color, who experienced intersecting obstacles based on both race and gender. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, students and faculty began demanding that the knowledge learned and shared in colleges around the country

be more inclusive of women's issues. It was not unusual, for example, for entire courses in English or American literature to not include a single novel written by a woman, much less a woman of color. Literature was full of men's ideas about women—ideas that often continued to stereotype women and justify their subordination. History courses often taught only about men in wars and as leaders, and sociology courses addressed women primarily in the context of marriage and the family. Similarly, students and faculty asked to see more women in leadership positions on college campuses: entire departments often consisted exclusively of men with perhaps a small minority of (usually white) women in junior or part-time positions. Although there have been important changes on most college campuses as women's and multicultural issues are slowly integrated into the curriculum and advances are made in terms of leadership positions, unfortunately these problems still exist in higher education today. What kinds of people hold leadership positions on your campus?

It is important to note in terms of the history of WGS that making women subjects of study involved two strategies that together resulted in changes in the production of knowledge in higher education. First, it rebalanced the curriculum. Women as subjects of study were integrated into existing curricula through the development of new courses about women. This shifted the focus on men and men's lives in the traditional academic curriculum and gave some attention to women's lives and concerns by developing, for example, courses such as "Women and Art" and "Women in U.S. History" alongside "regular" courses that sometimes claimed to be inclusive but focused on (usually white) men. In addition, not only did traditional academic departments (such as sociology or English) offer these separate courses on women, but the development of women's studies programs and departments offered curricula on a variety of issues that focused specifically on (initially, mostly white) women's issues.

Second, the integration of women as subjects of study resulted in a transformation of traditional knowledge. People began questioning the nature of knowledge, how knowledge is produced, and the applications and consequences of knowledge in wider society. This means that claims to "truth" and objective "facts" were challenged by new knowledge integrating the perspectives of marginalized people. It recognized, for example, that a history of the American West written by migrating whites is necessarily incomplete and differs from a history written from the perspective of indigenous native people who had their land taken from them. Although the first strategy was an "add women and stir" approach, this second involved a serious challenge to traditional knowledge and its claims to truth. In this way, women's studies aimed not only to create programs of study where students might focus on women's issues and concerns, but also to integrate a perspective that would challenge previously unquestioned knowledge. This perspective questioned how such knowledge reflects women's lives and concerns, how it maintains patterns of male privilege and power, and how the consequences of such knowledge affect women and other marginalized people. This approach fostered heightened consciousness and advocacy about gendered violence and was also central in the development of other academic fields such as gay and lesbian and gender studies.

HISTORICAL MOMENT

THE FIRST WOMEN'S STUDIES DEPARTMENT

Following the activism of the 1960s, feminists in academia worked to begin establishing a place for the study of women. In 1970 women faculty at San Diego State University (SDSU) taught five upper-division women's studies classes on a voluntary overload basis. In the fall of that year, the SDSU senate approved a women's studies department, the first in the United States, and a curriculum of 11 courses. The school hired one full-time instructor for the program. Other instructors included students and faculty from several existing departments. Quickly, many other colleges and universities around the nation followed suit, establishing women's studies courses, programs, and departments. In 1977 academic and activist feminists formed the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) to further the development of the discipline. NWSA held its first convention in 1979.

Women's studies has its origins in the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, known as the "second-wave" women's movement. The second wave refers to this twentieth-century period of social activism that addressed formal and informal inequalities associated, for example, with the workplace, family, sexuality, and reproductive freedom. The second-wave movement can be distinguished from "first-wave" mid-nineteenth-century women's rights and suffrage (voting) activity, which sought to overturn legal obstacles to women's participation in society, and more contemporary "third-wave" movements, discussed in more detail later. As an academic discipline, women's studies was influenced by the American studies and ethnic studies programs of the late 1960s. The demand to include women and other marginalized people as subjects of study in higher education was facilitated by broad societal movements in which organizations and individuals focused on such issues as work and employment, family and parenting, sexuality, reproductive rights, and violence. The objective was to improve women's status in society and therefore the conditions of women's lives. The U.S. women's movement emerged at a moment of widespread social turmoil as various social movements questioned traditional social and sexual values, racism, poverty and other inequities, and U.S. militarism. These social movements, including the women's movement and the civil rights movement, struggled for the rights of people of color, women, the poor, gays and lesbians, the aged and the young, and the disabled, and fought to transform society through laws and policies as well as changes in attitudes and consciousness.

Two aspects of the women's movement—commitment to personal change and to societal transformation—helped establish women's studies. In terms of the personal, the U.S. women's movement involved women asking questions about the cultural meanings of being a woman. Intellectual perspectives that became central to women's studies as a discipline were created from the everyday experiences of people both inside and outside the movement. Through consciousness-raising groups and other situations where some women were able to come together to talk about their lives, participants realized that they were not alone in their experiences. Problems they thought to be personal (like working outside the home all day and then coming home to work another full day's worth of

domestic tasks involved in being a wife and mother) were actually part of a much bigger picture of masculine privilege and female subordination. Women began to make connections and coined the phrase "the personal is political" to explain how things taken as personal or idiosyncratic have broader social, political, and economic causes and consequences. In other words, situations that we are encouraged to view as personal are actually part of broader cultural patterns and arrangements. In addition, the idea that the personal is political encouraged people to live their politics—or understandings of the world and how it is organized—in their everyday lives: to practice what they preach, in other words. This concept is illustrated in the essay (originally presented as a leaflet) "No More Miss America," written in 1968 by members of an organization called the New York Radical Women. It accompanied a protest against the 1968 Miss America beauty pageant and was one of the first women's liberation protests covered widely by the national media. The 10 points in the leaflet present a feminist critique of the objectification of female "beauty" and its connection to sexism, racism, and consumerism. Is this critique still relevant today? Particularly interesting about the 1968 protest was the way the media produced the idea that women were "burning their bras." Even though no bra-burnings took place there, and there is no evidence that any ever took place, the notion has survived many decades and still exists as a fabricated, yet iconic, aspect of feminism. Why do you think this is the case?

By the 1970s questions were being raised about this generic notion of "woman" and the monolithic way "women's experiences" were being interpreted. In particular, critiques of the women's movement and women's studies centered on their lack of inclusivity around issues of race, class, sexual identity or orientation, and other differences. These critiques fostered, among other developments, a field of black women's studies that encouraged a focus on intersectionality that continues to transform the discipline. Intersectionality involves the ways all people's experiences of gender are created by the intersection, or coming together, of multiple identities like race, ethnicity, social class, and so forth. The need to provide more inclusive curricula involves the necessity of incorporating knowledge by and about people of color and those who do not identify with the binaries of gender (masculinity/femininity) or sexuality (heterosexuality/homosexuality) or who represent marginalized communities like immigrants, migrants, or people with disabilities. Although intersectionality is most easily understood as multifaceted identities, it also necessarily includes the organization of power in society and can be used as a tool of social justice. Kia M. Q. Hall addresses these intersections in the reading "A Transnational Black Feminist Framework," using the Black Lives Matter movement as an example of intersectionality and solidarity in activism. As readings in Chapter 2 also illustrate, intersectional analyses have shown how systems of power maintain patterns of privilege and discrimination.

The emergence of WGS within the last few decades represents not only the inclusion of intersectional analyses as mentioned earlier, but the movement away from a stable and fixed idea of "woman," as in "women's studies," toward a more inclusive focus on gender, as in "gender studies." The latter encourages the study of gender as socially constructed,

historically and culturally variable, and subject to change through social and political action. Recognizing that "woman" and "man" are changeable and contested categories is central to the study of the ways gendered personhood is mapped onto physical bodies. In particular, gender studies provides knowledge and advocacy for understanding the ways bodies and gender expressions (as feminine or masculine) do not necessarily adhere to the typical female/male binary (implied in what is known as "trans" or gender fluid or gender nonbinary and discussed more in later chapters). However, while such a study emphasizes the ways social practices produce bodies that perform gender, it is important to note that gender performances are privileged and constrained by institutional structures that affect people who actually identify as "real" women and men. This means that even though gender studies may provide a more inclusive approach, there are social and political consequences of identifying as a woman, or living with a feminized body, that result in certain experiences and outcomes (for example, being more likely to live in poverty, or experience violence and sexual assault). The importance of understanding the experience of living as women in society, alongside the recognition of inclusivity and intersectionality, means that "women's studies" tends not to have been changed to "gender studies," but instead to have been transformed into "women's and gender studies." This move recognizes the historical development and contemporary reality of the field of women's studies as a site for social justice for those who live and identify as women in the world.

A key term for WGS writers and activists is "patriarchy," defined as a system where men and masculine bodies dominate because power and authority are in the hands of adult men. Discussions of patriarchy must recognize the intersectional nature of this concept whereby someone may be simultaneously privileged by gender but face limitations based on other identities. Men of color, for example, may benefit from patriarchy, but their expressions of masculine privilege are shaped by the politics of racism. It is important to remember that many men are supporters of women's rights and that many of the goals of the women's movement benefit men as well, although being a supporter of women's rights does not necessarily translate into men understanding how everyday privileges associated with masculinity maintain entitlements in a patriarchal society. It is one thing to feel indignant about inequality or compassion for marginalized people, and another to recognize that one's privilege is connected to the oppression of others. Connecting with the personal as political encourages men to potentially function as allies on a deeper, more authentic level. The concept of the personal as political has relevance for those with masculine privilege as understandings are made about the connections between social institutions that reward men and personal experiences of gendered entitlement.

In terms of societal change, the U.S. women's movement and other social movements have improved, and continue to improve, the lives of marginalized people through various forms of activism. The legal changes of the second wave include the passage of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 that sought equal pay for equal work, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that forbade workplace discrimination, and the creation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 1965 to enforce antidiscrimination laws (although

LEARNING ACTIVITY

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

What is the program that sponsors this introductory course at your institution called? Is it "Women's Studies," "Gender Studies," "Women's and Gender Studies," "Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies," "Feminist Studies," or some other name? Have you ever stopped to think about the history and politics of the name of that unit?

In this chapter we have discussed how in its early years, women's studies tended to focus on women as an essential category and explored the ways women experienced discrimination based on sex or recovered the ways women had contributed to society. Soon a number of critiques and realizations challenged this understanding of the discipline, emphasizing that sex and gender are socially constructed ways of relating within systems of domination and subordination.

This realization that gave rise to "gender studies" as an interdisciplinary field examines the complex interactions of biology and society, sex and gender, with a specific emphasis on how gender is constituted across forms of difference.

Another contested area of study that related to but was not always central to women's studies and gender studies was sexuality. While many early second-wave feminists made important connections between women's oppression and the control of sexuality, others feared the intrusion of lesbian politics. As queer studies emerged, debates also arose about the place of gay men, transgender people, and queer-identified people in the women's studies and gender studies curricula.

Different colleges and universities have grappled with the controversies and developments in different ways. At Oregon State University, our program came into being in late 1972 as "Women Studies." Notice the absence of the apostrophe and "s." In the archives we have a number of memos back and forth between the founder of our program and university administrators about this. The founder argued (successfully) that women were the subject of study, not the owners of the discipline. Therefore, she contended, the program should be "Women Studies," not "Women's Studies." This name lasted for 40 years, even as the focus of our program shifted with changes in the discipline. From about 2008 to 2012 we added faculty members with expertise in multicultural, transnational, and queer feminisms, and so in 2013 we changed our name to "Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies" to reflect growth both in the discipline and in our specific program. As our name change proposal moved through the approval process, we were asked several times why we wanted to keep the word "women." Our response was twofold: We did not want women to become invisible in our identity, and we wanted to acknowledge our history. So, as you can see, politics played a very important role in the naming of our program and shaping of our identity nearly 50 years ago and very recently.

What about your program? Research the history of your program's name, and find out why your institution made the decisions it did. Has the name changed over the years? Why or why not? Ask your professors how they think those choices have affected the courses and degrees the program offers. What difference do you think the name makes for you?

this enforcement did not occur until 1972). Rulings in 1978 and 1991 prohibited discrimination against pregnant women and provided women workers the right to damages for sex discrimination, respectively. The Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 provided 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for workers to care for children or ill relatives (although it is required only for businesses with more than 50 employees and for workers with at least a year's tenure in their job). Affirmative action as a legal mechanism to combat discrimination was first utilized in 1961 and was extended to women in 1967, although it is increasingly under attack. Similarly, although Supreme Court decisions such as *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion and provided reproductive choices for women and the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act of 1994 protected reproductive health care workers and patients accessing these services, such gains are currently under attack as well. In terms of legal changes directly aimed at higher education, Title IX of the Education

Amendments of 1972 supported equal education and forbade gender discrimination, including in sports, in schools. Since that time the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988 reversed a Supreme Court decision gutting Title IX, and more recent rulings (e.g., *Fitzgerald v. Barnstable School Committee*, 2009) established parents' right to sue for sex discrimination in schools under both Title IX and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Women's right to fight in combat positions and the overturning of the antigay military policy "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in 2012 also reflect the activism of the women's and other civil rights movements, especially LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer) activism. These examples of civil rights legislation, often taken for granted today, are the result of organized resistance and a concerted effort to democratize the legal structure of U.S. society.

Legal changes in the United States have been accompanied by relatively significant increases in the numbers of women and people of color running for political office; taking positions of authority in government, business, education, science, and the arts; and becoming more visible and active in all societal institutions. These societal changes have strengthened the demand for alternative educational models: Not only is it the right thing to include women in college life, but it is illegal to prevent their participation. Alongside Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards's classic essay "A Day Without Feminism," which encourages you to think about these second-wave gains, is Marge Piercy's plea to recognize the "heroines" who continuously strive every day in their families and communities to improve women's everyday lives. Her poem/reading "My Heroines" emphasizes that it is these people who write our future.

WHAT WERE THE ORIGINS OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISM IN THE UNITED STATES?

Although the original women's studies programs emerged out of the second wave of mid- to late-twentieth-century social activism, that activism itself was a part of an ongoing commitment to women's liberation that had its roots in late-eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century struggles for gender equity. Women had few legal, social, and economic rights in nineteenth-century U.S. society. They had no direct relationship to the law outside of their relationships as daughters or wives; in particular, married women lost property rights upon marriage. Women were also mostly barred from higher education until women's colleges started opening in the mid-nineteenth century. However, when socioeconomically privileged white women started to access higher education in the late nineteenth century, most women of color still faced obstacles that continued through the twentieth century and into the present. Despite this, African American women like Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, and Anna Julia Cooper (see "Activist Profile") offered strategies of resistance that provided an explicit analysis of patriarchy to address racial domination.

Most early women's rights activists (then it was referred to as "woman's" rights) in the United States had their first experience with social activism in the abolition movement, the struggle to free slaves. These activists included such figures as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, [illegible] Grimke, Henry

Blackwell, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Tubman. Many abolitionists became aware of inequities elsewhere in society. Some realized that to improve women's status a separate social movement was required. In this way, for many abolitionists, their experiences with abolition inspired their desire to improve the conditions of all women's lives.

ACTIVIST PROFILE

ANNA JULIA COOPER

Anna Julia Cooper was born in North Carolina in 1858 to an enslaved woman and her white slave owner. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, she had become a profound voice for the rights and dignity of black women.

Even as a child, she protested the unequal treatment of women and girls, and when she attended Oberlin College, she refused to take the less rigorous course set out for women and insisted on enrolling in the men's course. By 1887, she had earned a master's degree in math, and she moved to Washington, DC, to work at the only all-black high school in the city. She became the school's principal in 1902.

Cooper saw education as the path to uplift and empower black women. She insisted on preparing students for college rather than for the trades, and she was successful in sending many students on to prestigious universities. She also founded the Colored Women's League of Washington and helped begin the first black women's chapter of the YWCA.

Her book *A Voice from the South* offered an early analysis of the intersections of gender and race. In it she wrote, "Only the BLACK WOMAN can say when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me."

In 1924, Cooper became only the fourth black woman in the United States to earn a PhD. In 1930, she became president of Frelinghuysen University, a DC institution founded to provide access to education for local residents. She died in 1964 at the age of 105.

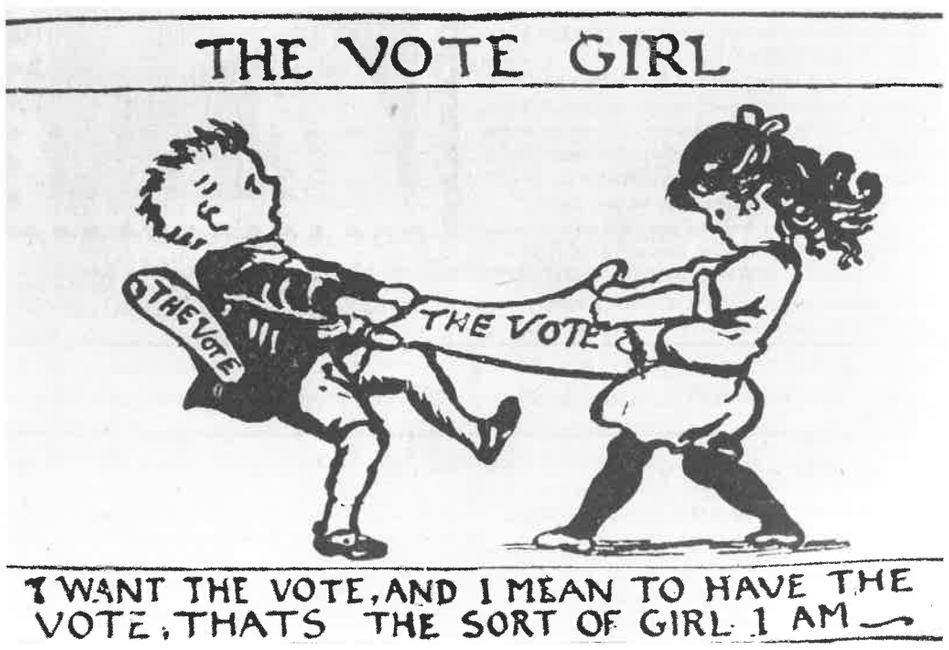
Learn more by visiting the website for the Anna Julia Cooper Project at www.cooperproject.org.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME

How many significant American women can you name? Most students cannot name 20 women from American history. To learn more about some of the women who have made important contributions in the United States, visit the National Women's Hall of Fame at www.womenofthehall.org. What is the mission of the Hall of Fame? Select five inductees and read their biographies. Why do you think they were selected for the Hall of Fame? What do you think is the significance of having a National Women's Hall of Fame?

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), by English philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft, is seen as the first important expression of the demand for women's equality, although the beginning of the women's movement in the United States is usually dated to the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. This convention was conceived as a response to the experience of Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who, as delegates to the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840, were refused seating, made to sit behind a curtain, and not allowed to voice their opinions because they were women. Their experience fueled the need for an independent women's movement in the United States and facilitated the convention at Seneca Falls, New York, in July 1848. An important document, the "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions," came out of this convention. Authored primarily by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, it used the language of the U.S. Declaration of Independence and included a variety of demands to improve women's status in the family and in society. Woman's suffrage, the right of women to vote, was included. Other conventions were held across the country, and national organizations were formed to promote women's rights generally and suffrage in particular. These organizations included the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) formed in 1869 and the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1890. NAWSA was formed from the merging of NWSA and the American Woman Suffrage Association and continues today as the League of Women Voters. It is important to understand that throughout all this history the rights of women of color were often subordinated and "women's rights" came to mean the liberation of white women. In some cases movement leaders conspired with racist forces to



keep women of color subordinated, arguing, for example, for literacy requirements for voters that enhanced the status of economically privileged women and undermined the poor, ex-slaves, and many immigrants and migrants. Despite these serious problems, the first-wave women's movement fought for political personhood—a struggle that continues today. The "Anthony Amendment," a proposed women's suffrage amendment, was introduced into Congress in 1878; it took another 42 years for this proposal to be ratified as the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, granting women the right to vote.

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF WGS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES TODAY?

WGS has steadily become institutionalized, or established as a regular custom, on many college campuses. From a scattering of courses (often taught for free by committed faculty when colleges did not want to spend money on these courses) have come whole programs and departments with minors and majors of study and graduate degrees at both the master's and doctoral levels. Although most programs adopted the name "women's studies," some went with "gender studies" and others with "feminist studies," and over the years many have been renamed "women's and gender studies." These different names reflect different perspectives concerning knowledge about and for women. As the learning activity "What's in a Name?" asks, how is WGS institutionalized on your campus?

Professors of WGS might teach only in WGS, or they might do most of their work in another department like anthropology or history. This illustrates the multidisciplinary nature of our field: It can be taught from the point of view of many different disciplines. For the most part, however, WGS is interdisciplinary; that is, it combines knowledge and methodologies from across many academic disciplines. Knowledge integration has occurred at a more rapid rate in the humanities and social sciences than in the biological and physical sciences. This is primarily because those sciences are considered "objective" (free of values), with topics of study immune from consideration of issues of gender, race, and class. However, as scholars have pointed out, science is a cultural product and its methodologies are grounded in historical practices and cultural ideas. There are now courses on many campuses examining the history and current practices of science that integrate knowledge about science as a human (gendered and racialized) product.

A list of the goals or objectives of WGS might look like this:

- To understand the social construction of gender: the ways gendered personhood is mapped onto physical bodies.
- To examine the intersection of gender with other systems of inequality, including the effects of imperialism and globalization.
- To learn about the status of women and other marginalized peoples in society and ways to improve that status through individual and collective action for social change.
- To experience how institutions in society affect individual lives and to be able to think critically about the role of patterns of privilege and discrimination in our own lives.
- To develop critical thinking skills, improve writing and speaking skills, and empower self and others.

WHAT DOES WGS HAVE TO DO WITH FEMINISM?

WGS is generally associated with feminism as a paradigm for understanding self and society. Although there are many definitions of feminism and some disagreement concerning a specific definition, there is agreement on two core principles underlying any concept of feminism. First, feminism concerns equality and justice. Because feminism is a politics of equality and a social movement for social justice, it anticipates a future that guarantees human dignity and equality for all. A social movement can be defined as a sustained, collective campaign that arises as people with shared interests come together in support of a common goal. Second, feminism is inclusive and affirming of women across their differences; it celebrates women's achievements and struggles, and it works to provide a positive and affirming stance toward women and expressions of the feminine. As longtime feminist advocate and *Ms.* magazine cofounder Gloria Steinem explains in an interview with Rachel Graham Cody, feminism is about social, economic, and political equality. Steinem makes the case that reproductive freedom is the key to women's equality, emphasizing its role in explaining poverty, educational attainments, and health outcomes.

Feminism is a personal perspective as well as a political theory and social movement that has worked as a central force in advocating women's rights and making room for other liberatory possibilities. Put this way, feminism is hardly a radical notion. In the reading "Feminist Consciousness," Sara Ahmed points to the ways that people come to feminism and embrace its liberatory possibilities. In terms of transforming social inequality in a broad sense, however, it is important to note that feminism has worked alongside other social movements such as immigrant and migrant rights and indigenous peoples' movements that may or may not identify as feminist. And, while feminism is usually at the center of WGS and has embodied the discipline with advocacy for social justice and cultural plurality, the concept itself, and the often accompanying (although not always or necessarily present) "baggage" of its ideological location in the global north, can exclude those who do not identify as feminist from movements for the improvement of women's lives.

It is also important to understand that although this chapter addresses the origins of U.S. feminism, the movement for social justice takes different forms in societies around the world, and certainly feminism's multiple origins do not necessarily reside in the United States. In addition, transnational feminism, the movement for the social, political, and economic equality of women across national boundaries, is alive and well. Transnational feminism recognizes opportunities associated with the development of alliances and networks for the emancipation of marginalized peoples worldwide. It also educates about the problems of claiming a "universal sisterhood" that ignores differences between women and claims solidarity based on shared conditions, experiences, or concerns. Such claims often result in women in the global north or "First World" societies (those with political and economic privilege in the world order) making decisions for those in developing countries of the global south or "Third World" nations. Note how the terms "First World" and "Third World" imply a hierarchical ordering. The problematic nature of these terms is underscored by the phrase "Two-Thirds World" to emphasize that the global north has

In this way, feminism recognizes both the similarities and differences in women's status worldwide. This status in developing and nonindustrialized countries is often very low, especially in societies where strict religious doctrines govern gendered behaviors. Although women in various countries around the world often tend to be in subordinate positions, the form this subordination takes varies. As a result, certain issues, like the ability of women to maintain subsistence agriculture and feed their families—matters of personal survival—take priority over the various claims to autonomy that characterize women's issues in the global north or what is often termed "westernized" societies. What are considered feminist issues in the United States are not necessarily the most important concerns of women in other parts of the world. As already mentioned, it is important to understand this in order to avoid overgeneralizing about feminism's usefulness globally, even though the notion of global feminism or transnational feminism is real and useful for political alliances across national borders. It is also important to recognize that any claims for "Western" feminisms are necessarily interpreted internationally in the context of U.S. militarism, a history of colonialism, and international "development," as well as in regard to the power of U.S.-based corporations, consumerism, and popular culture. Nonetheless, transnational feminisms underscore the similarities women share across the world and seek strategies that take into account the interdependence of women globally. And, as communication technologies have advanced, the difficulties of organizing women in all parts of the world have decreased, despite issues of access for many people.

Some feminist peace and social justice movements have used the concept of the personal as political to make the case that diverse personal narratives shared within and across cultures encourage political awareness and have the potential to foster opportunities for communication and networking in an increasingly globalized world. Indeed, transnational feminist groups have worked against militarism, global capitalism, and racism, and for issues identified by local women in specific communities worldwide. Such actions were reflected in the United Nations (UN) Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, in 1995 and the post-Beijing gatherings of the last decades. More than 30,000 women attended the Beijing conference, and 189 governments signed the "Platform for Action." This platform was a call for concrete action to include the human rights of women and girls as part of universal human rights, thus eradicating poverty of women, removing the obstacles to women's full participation in public life and decision making, eliminating all forms of violence against women, ensuring women's access to educational and health services, and promoting actions for women's economic autonomy.

Currently, much transnational feminist emphasis is on the passage of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and already ratified by 186 countries (over 90 percent of UN countries). CEDAW prohibits all forms of discrimination against women by legally binding the countries that ratify it to incorporate equality of men and women into their legal systems. Measures include abolishing discriminatory laws and adopting new ones, establishing tribunals to ensure the protection of women, and eliminating acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations, or enterprises. As of this writing, the United States is the only industrial society that has still not yet ratified the convention because of fear among some that it would give the UN power over U.S. legal statutes and institutions.

Various kinds of feminist thought (while embracing the two core concepts described earlier) differ in terms of their specific explanations for understanding the social organization of gender and their ideas for social change. An important distinction among U.S. feminisms is that between liberal and radical feminisms. Liberal feminists believe in the viability of the present system (meaning the system is okay) and work within this context for change in such public areas as education and employment. They attempt to remove obstacles to women's full participation in public life using strategies such as education, federal and state policies, and legal statutes.

Whereas liberal feminists want a piece of the pie, and have been critiqued as conservative reformists on account of this perspective, radical feminists (sometimes known as radical cultural feminists or difference feminists) want a whole new pie. Radical feminists recognize the oppression of women as a fundamental political oppression wherein women are categorized as inferior based on their gender. It is not enough to remove barriers to equality; rather, deeper, more transformational changes need to be made in societal institutions (like the government or media) as well as in people's heads. Patriarchy, radical feminists believe, shapes how women and men think about the world, their place in it, and their relationships with one another. Radical feminists assert that reformist solutions like those that liberal feminism would enact are problematic because they work to maintain rather than undermine the system. The "No More Miss America" manifesto by the radical feminist social organization New York Radical Women illustrates these points.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

GLOBAL FEMINISMS, TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM

Feminism is not simply a U.S. phenomenon. Indigenous feminisms have arisen all over the world to address the specific issues facing women in particular places. For example, in Botswana in the early 1990s a human rights attorney named Unity Dow challenged her country's Citizenship Act. That act, authorized in 1984, conferred citizenship on children born in Botswana only when the father was a citizen of Botswana. If the mother was a citizen of Botswana but the father was not, the children were not granted citizenship. Dow believed the law violated Botswana's constitution and challenged it in the high court. She won the case after four years of fighting. Another Botswanan woman, Musa Dube, a biblical critic and professor at the University of Botswana, uses her perspective as an African woman as a lens for interpreting the Bible. So, for example, when she reads the story of the hemorrhaging woman in Mark 5: 24–43 from an African postcolonial feminist perspective, she imagines the bleeding woman as Mama Africa, who is oppressed by sexism as well as colonialism and yet survives and participates in her own healing. Other feminists in Botswana have worked diligently to support people living with HIV/AIDS and to stop the spread of the virus through the empowerment of women.

Choose one of the following nations and research feminisms in that country. What issues facing women do feminists confront? What forms does feminist activism take? How do these feminisms and forms of activism connect with feminist issues and activism in other countries? How do feminists work together across national borders to support one another's efforts?

- Australia
- Chile
- China
- Costa Rica
- Egypt
- Ghana
- India
- Lesotho
- Russia
- South Africa
- South Korea
- Turkey

Not surprisingly, although the focus of liberal feminism is on the public sphere, the focus of this radical approach is the private sphere of everyday individual consciousness and change. Radical feminist offshoots include lesbian feminism, which focuses on how compulsory heterosexuality (the cultural norm that assumes and requires heterosexuality) and heterosexual privilege (the rights and privileges of heterosexuality, such as legal marriage and being intimate in public) function to maintain power in society. Radical feminist thought also includes ecofeminism, a perspective that focuses on the association of women with nature and the environment and the simultaneous relationships among patriarchy, global economic expansion, and environmental degradation. Radical feminism tends to have a relatively fixed or biologically based idea of who is a "woman" and is often guilty of essentialism in treating all women as having common attributes and in minimizing differences among them.

Other feminist perspectives of "late modernity" (the latter part of the twentieth century) include Marxist feminism, a perspective that uses economic explanations from traditional Marxist theory to understand women's oppression. For Marxist feminists, the socioeconomic inequities of the class system are the major issues. This can be distinguished from socialist feminism, a perspective that integrates both Marxist and radical feminism. Socialist feminists use the insights of class analysis alongside radical feminist explanations of gender oppression. Contemporary socialist feminists seek to understand the workings of capitalist patriarchal institutions and often incorporate an environmental analysis that sees capitalism's push for private profits as the major cause of environmental degradation.

Many of these feminist approaches have been critiqued by the perspectives of women of color, who insist that theory be inclusive of all women's lives. Multiracial feminism or women of color feminism, for example, asserts that gender is constructed by a range of interlocking inequalities that work simultaneously to shape women's experience. This is the concept of intersections mentioned earlier. It brings together understandings drawn from the lived experiences of diverse women and influences all feminist writing today. Indeed, expressions of feminism grounded in the lives of women of color have included womanism, a social change perspective rooted in the lives of black women and other women of color that emphasizes that social change begins with self-change, and critiques the location of feminism in the ivory towers of academia. The name of this perspective was coined in 1983 by writer Alice Walker, who sought to distinguish this approach from that of white feminism. More recently, Latina/Chicana feminists have referred to themselves as Xicanistas to represent their indigenous roots and postcolonial histories.

Finally, some feminists have utilized a postmodern perspective that focuses on the relationship between knowledge and power. A postmodern approach questions the assumption that reality has an inherent order that is discernible through scientific inquiry, rejects binaries or dualistic thinking like male/female and heterosexual/homosexual, and attempts to destabilize such fixed identities. This approach recognizes changes in the organization of contemporary social life as a result, for example, of virtual technologies and increasing globalization and capitalist development. It also pays attention to how language constructs reality. Christine Garcia highlights the importance of language in disrupting hegemonic assumptions in the reading "In Defense of Latinx." Postmodernism emphasizes that humans actively construct or shape their lives in the context of various

social systems, and often in the face of serious constraints. Queer theory is influenced by postmodernism and makes the case that gender and sexuality are socially produced and used as instruments of power. "Queer," once a derogatory term, is claimed back and celebrated in this approach that emphasizes fluid notions of power and identity and seeks to dismantle the binaries of gender and sexuality.

Many writers refer to a "third wave" of feminist activity influenced by postmodernism, queer theory, and multiracial feminism, that problematizes the universality and potential inclusivity of the term "woman." Third-wave feminism has its origins in the 1990s and reflects the thinking, writing, and activism of those who came of age taking for granted the gains of second-wave feminism, as well as the resistance or backlash to it. Third-wave perspectives are shaped by the material conditions created by globalization and techno-culture, and tend to focus on issues of sexuality and identity. Contemporary third-wave activity has been important in fueling feminist activism, especially through musical and art forms, such as "zines" (consciousness-raising magazines produced locally and often shared electronically), and through social networking and other virtual technologies.

Despite the advantages of using a "wave" metaphor to characterize the developments in feminism, the metaphor distracts attention from the continuity of feminist activity and runs the risk of setting up distinctions and potential intergenerational divisiveness between a more stodgy second-wave generation, devoid of sexuality and unwilling to share power, and a younger, self-absorbed generation obsessed with popular culture and uncritically

THANK A FEMINIST

Thank a feminist if you agree that . . .

- Women should have the right to vote.
- Women should have access to contraceptives.
- Women should have the right to work outside the home.
- Women should receive equal pay for equal work.
- Women should have the right to refuse sex, even with their husbands.
- Women should be able to receive a higher education.
- Women should have access to safe, legal abortion.
- Women should be able to participate in sports.
- Women should be able to hold political office.
- Women should be able to choose any career that interests them.
- Women should be free from sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Women should be able to enter into legal and financial transactions.
- Women should be able to study issues about women's lives and experiences.

One hundred years ago, none of these statements was possible for women in the United States. Only through the hard work and dedication of feminists in become available to women, and certainly access to each of these rights still continues to be shaped by race, social class, sexual identity, gender identity, ability, age, and other forms of difference.

Imagine a world without feminism. If you are a woman, you are not be in college. You are not able to vote. You cannot play sports. Contraception is illegal. So is abortion. You're expected to marry and raise a family. If you must work, the only jobs available to you are in cleaning, clerical services, or teaching.

And you have no legal protection on the job if your boss pressures you for sex or makes lewd comments. Your husband can force you to have sex, and, if you were sexually abused as a child, most likely no one will believe you if you tell. If you are sexually attracted to women, you are considered mentally ill and may be subjected to an array of treatments for your illness.

Of course, much work remains to be done. Women across all their differences still do not have equality. Feminist work on issues of racial justice, gender identity, economic disparities, and other social justice issues is necessary to transform systems of oppression.

Still, today, young people who claim "I'm not a feminist, but . . ." benefit from the many gains made by feminists through the twentieth century. So the next time you see a woman go to class or vote or play basket-

IDEAS FOR ACTIVISM

TWO-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Many important legislative issues related to women come before elected officials regularly. You can make your voice to support women heard by contacting your senators and representatives. To become a two-minute activist ("one minute to read, one minute to act"), visit the website of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) at www.aauw.org. Click the "Take Action" button to find the Two-Minute Activist suggestions. There, you'll find links to information about the latest issues before Congress and to prewritten AAUW messages that you can personalize and send to your representatives. You can also sign up for Two-Minute Activist alerts.

sexualized. And, although contemporary feminism is accessible for many young women in the United States and is energizing in its focus on media, popular culture, sexuality, and so forth, it is critiqued as an "anything goes" movement. Some critics question its transformation of self rather than society, in part because of its potential ineffectiveness for collective action and structural change. In addition, they suggest it distorts the history of the second wave and fabricates a victim and/or anti-sex feminism that actually never existed. In this way, just as feminism encompasses diversity, so feminists do not all agree on what equality looks like or how to get there. As a social movement, feminism has always thrived on differences of ideology and practice. In "A Day Without Feminism," self-proclaimed third-wavers Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards actively claim feminism as relevant to their lives and underscore the gains of second-wave feminist activism.

WHAT ARE THE MYTHS ASSOCIATED WITH FEMINISM?

A nationwide poll on feminism was published by the *Washington Post*–Kaiser Family Foundation in 2016. Sixty percent of women and 33 percent of men polled indicated they considered themselves to be either a feminist or a "strong feminist." Sixty-three percent of women aged 18–34 identified with these categories. Eighty-three percent of women aged 18–34 said feminism is empowering, and 45 percent have posted views about women's rights on social media. Only 16 percent of women younger than 35 viewed feminism as "outdated." Fifty-eight percent reported thinking that feminism is focused on the changes they want to see. An earlier poll from 2003 also found that when respondents were asked their opinion of the movement to strengthen women's rights, not the "women's rights movement," people's support was much higher. The misleading and negative connotations associated with the words "feminism" and "women's movement" play a central role in backlash, or organized resistance, to them and encompass what some call the "battered-word syndrome." The organized backlash to feminism also involves, for example, the ways certain groups who believe they would lose from a redistribution of power have worked hard to discredit and destroy the feminist movement and brand feminists in negative ways. This perspective is known as anti-feminism. Although such anti-feminist activity includes conservative groups and politicians, it also involves women who claim to be feminists yet are resistant to its core principles. These women, whose careers in part have been fueled by the gains brought about by the feminist movement, include such successful female academics as Christina Hoff Summers, Camille Paglia, Daphne Patai, Katie

One result of this backlash has been the coining of the term "postfeminism" by those who recognize feminism as an important perspective but believe its time has passed and it is now obsolete. "We're already liberated" is the stance they take. The way this notion is accepted by public opinion is evidenced above by the number of people who believe the goals of the women's movement have already been met. Like other broad generalizations, there is some small truth to this: Things have improved for some women in some areas. Although generally it is accurate to say that women's status in the United States in the early decades of the twenty-first century is markedly improved, we still have a long way to go to reach full equality. In terms of the issues of poverty, violence, pornography, and health (to name just a few), things are worse for many women than they ever have been. There are still many areas in which women's status might be enhanced, and, for the majority of the world's women, life is very difficult indeed.

The idea that women have achieved equality is reinforced by the capitalist society in which we live. Surrounded by consumer products, we are encouraged to confuse liberation with the freedom to purchase products or to choose among a relatively narrow range of choices. Often personal style is mistaken for personal freedom as the body becomes a focus for fashion, hair, piercing, exercise, tattoos, and so forth. We are often encouraged to confuse such freedoms of expression with freedom in the sense of equality and social justice. Of course, popular culture and social media play a large part in this. We are encouraged to enjoy the freedoms that, in part, feminism has brought, often without recognition of this struggle or allegiance to maintaining such freedoms. Feminist writers explain that cultural changes exacerbated by virtual technologies often encourage young women to participate in their own objectification (being made into objects for male pleasure). They emphasize that these young women (who might consider themselves feminists) confuse their freedom to objectify themselves with authentic freedom.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

THE DINNER PARTY

In *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards tell the story of a dinner party they hosted, reminiscent of the consciousness-raising meetings of the 1970s during which women shared the stories and frustrations of their lives, most of which were directly related to sexism. The point of consciousness raising was to radicalize women, to help them develop the consciousness and motivation needed to make personal and political change in the world. One night many years ago, Jennifer and Amy brought together six of their friends around a dinner table to talk about current issues for women and directions needed for the contemporary women's movement. They found that the conversation wound its way around personal experiences and stories and their political implications and strategies. Their dinner party offered the beginnings of a revolution. They write, "Every time women get together around a table and speak honestly, they are embarking on an education that they aren't getting elsewhere in our patriarchal society. And that's the best reason for a dinner party a feminist could hope for."

Have a dinner party! Invite five or six of your friends over for dinner to discuss issues related to women, gender, and sexuality. What are the experiences of the people around the table in terms of sexuality, work, family, body image, media, and religion? What are the political implications of these experiences? What can be done to make the world better around these issues?

After your dinner party, write about what happened. What issues came up? What did various guests have to say about the issues? What strategies for change did the group identify? What plans for action did the group make? What did you learn from the experience?

Many people, groups, and institutions have attempted to discredit feminism (and therefore WGS) in other ways. Feminism has been subject to the following accusations: (1) Feminists are angry, whiny women who have an axe to grind, who have no sense of humor, and who exaggerate discrimination against women; (2) feminists hate men or want to be like men and selfishly want to create new systems of power over men; (3) all feminists are lesbians, women who choose romantic relationships with other women; (4) feminists reject motherhood, consider children a burden, and reject all things feminine; and (5) feminism is a white, middle-class movement that draws energy away from attempts to correct social and economic problems and discourages coalition building.

While several of these myths contain grains of truth, as a whole they can easily be shattered. First, although there are some feminists who respond, some would say rightly, to societal injustices with anger, most feminists work patiently with little resentment. Men as a social group demonstrate much more anger than women, feminists included. Even though male rage comes out in numerous acts of violence, wars, school shootings, and so on, men's anger is seen merely as a human response to circumstance. Note the androcentrism at work here. Because a few angry feminists get much more publicity than the majority of those working productively to change the status quo, a better question might be why women are not more angry, given the levels of injustice against women both in the United States and worldwide. Feminists do not exaggerate this injustice; injustice is a central organizing principle of contemporary society. We should also ask why women's anger provokes such a negative response. The cause of the relatively intense reaction to women's anger is grounded in a societal mandate against female anger that works to keep women from resisting their subordination—that is, it keeps them passive. Anger is seen as destructive and inappropriate, going against what we imagine to be feminine. As a result, organized expressions of anger are interpreted as hostile.

Second, it is often said that feminists hate men. It is accurate to say that in their affirmation of women and their desire to remove systems of inequality, feminists ask men to understand how gender privilege works in men's lives. Many men are more than willing to do this because the same social constructions of masculinity that privilege men also limit them. Because the demand for the examination of gender privilege is not synonymous with hating men, we might ask why these different concepts are so easily conflated. A more interesting question is why men are not accused more often of hating women, given the high levels of violence perpetrated by men against women. Certainly the world is full of misogyny—the hatred of, or contempt for, women—and every day we see examples of the ways misogyny influences, and sometimes destroys, the lives of women. The reality, of course, is that most feminists are in relationships of some kind (family, work, friends) with men, and some feminists are men. Some men eagerly call themselves pro-feminist because feminism is a perspective on life. The reading by Byron Hurt in Chapter 13, "Feminist Men," illustrates this practice. Nonetheless, the man-hating myth works to prevent many women who want to be in relationships with men from claiming feminism. They are encouraged to avoid a political stance that suggests antagonism toward men.

Feminists often respond to the declaration that they hate men with the observation that the statement illustrates a hypersensitivity about the possibility of exclusion and loss

of power on the part of men. Only in a patriarchal society would the inclusion of women be interpreted as a potential threat or loss of men's power. It is a reflection of the fact that we live in a competitive patriarchal society when it is assumed that the feminist agenda is one that seeks to have power over men. Only in an androcentric society where men and their reality is center stage would it be assumed that an inclusion of one group must mean the exclusion of another. In other words, male domination encourages the idea that affirming women means hating men and interprets women's request for power sharing as a form of taking over. This projection of patriarchal mentality equates someone's gain with another's loss.

In response to the assertion that feminists want to be men, it is true to say that feminists might like to share some of the power granted to men in society. However, feminism is not about encouraging women to be like men; it's about valuing women for being women and respecting expressions of femininity no matter what body these expressions are mapped on. People opposed to feminism often confuse sameness with equality and say that women will never be equal to men because they are different (less physically strong, more emotional, etc.) or they say that equality is dangerous because women will start being like men. Feminism, of course, affirms and works to maintain difference; it merely asks that these differences be valued equally. That is the basis of social justice.

Third, feminists are accused of being lesbians in an effort to discredit feminism and prevent women both from joining the movement and from taking WGS classes. The term for this is "lesbian baiting." Feminism affirms women's choices to be and love whomever they choose. Although some lesbians are feminists, many lesbians are not feminists, and many feminists are heterosexual or have other sexual identities. Feminists do not interpret an association with lesbianism as an insult. Nonetheless, homophobia—the societal fear or hatred of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer people—functions to maintain this as an insult. There is considerable fear associated with being called a lesbian, and this declaration that all feminists are lesbians serves to keep women in line, apart from one another, and suspicious of feminism and WGS. Note that this myth is related to the earlier discussion on man hating because it is assumed that lesbians hate men too. Again, although lesbians love women, this does not necessitate a dislike of men.

Fourth, feminism does not reject motherhood but instead attempts to improve the conditions under which women mother. Contemporary legislation to improve working mothers' lives and provide safe and affordable health care, child care, and education for children (to name just a few examples) has come about because of the work of feminists. In terms of rejecting femininity, feminists have rejected some of the constraints associated with femininity such as corsets and hazardous beauty products and practices, but mostly they strive to reclaim femininity as a valuable construct that should be respected.

Fifth, feminism has been critiqued as a white, middle-class perspective that has no relevance to the lives of women of color. The corollary of this is that WGS is about only the lives of white, bourgeois women. This critique is important because, as discussed earlier, the history of the women's movement provides examples of both blatant and subtle racism, and white women have been the ones to hold most positions of power and authority in those movements. Similarly, working-class women have been underrepresented

This is also reflected in the discipline of WGS as faculty and students have often been disproportionately white and economically privileged. Much work has been done to transform the women's movement into an inclusive social movement that has relevance for all people's lives. WGS departments and programs today are often among the most diverse units on college campuses, although most still have work to do. It is absolutely crucial that the study of women and other marginalized peoples as subjects both recognizes and celebrates diversity and works to transform all systems of oppression in society. Feminist scholar bell hooks claims back feminism as the movement to do just that. She emphasizes that any call to sisterhood must involve a commitment on the part of white women to examine white privilege and understand the interconnections among gender, race, and class domination.

Although the women's movement has had a profound impact on the lives of women in the United States and great strides have been made toward equality, real problems still remain. Women continue to face workplace discrimination and harassment, domestic violence, rape and abuse, education inequities, poverty, racism, and homophobia. WGS provides a forum for naming the problems women face, analyzing the root causes of these problems, envisioning a just and equitable world, and developing strategies for change. As you read the following articles, keep these questions in mind: What does the author identify as problems women face? What does the author suggest is the root of these problems? What strategies does the author suggest for bringing about change to improve the lives of women?

THE BLOG

WHY WE STILL NEED ETHNIC STUDIES AND WOMEN, GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES

Susan M. Shaw (2017)

Recently someone wrote a letter to the editor of our local paper criticizing our university's Ethnic Studies and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies programs for being divisive by their focus on "tiny subgroups" (African American, Latinx, Native American, Asian American, LGBTQ, women) rather than the larger human population.

In other words, this writer believes we don't need Ethnic Studies (ES) and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) because we should be teaching about our common humanity rather than our different identities, experiences, and cultures.

He could not be more wrong.

First of all, human beings do experience themselves as people who have gender, race, sexuality, and culture. And those differences lead to different experiences in the world. If we are to broaden and deepen our understanding of human experience, we have to examine it in all of its diversity and understand the difference difference makes. Ignoring social differences in human experience in academic study would make as much sense as ignoring differences in fish or stars or flowers. Commonalities don't negate differences.

Second, those "tiny subgroups" are actually the majority of the human population, and, yet, those subgroups are still mostly ignored or marginalized in much of the curriculum of higher education. Ethnic Studies and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies ensure that students have an opportunity to develop skills to understand how race, gender, sexuality, and other forms of difference work in the world.

Third, research shows that taking Ethnic Studies and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classes is good for students and helps achieve the goals of higher education.

Many Ethnic Studies and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies students are members of the groups studied in these courses, and they are attracted to courses that focus on their communities, identities, and

histories because they do not find their experiences and concerns centered in many other classes throughout the university. Research shows that ES and WGSS courses have positive impacts on these students. Taking these courses improves students' sense of empowerment and their sense of self-worth and enhances student engagement and academic achievement.

ES and WGSS courses also have positive impact on all students, especially heterosexual white men. White students who take Ethnic Studies courses experience reductions in prejudice and bias, and they become more democratic in their orientation. Students in ES and WGSS classes become more empathetic and more accepting of diversity.

Additionally, students who take ES and WGSS courses develop greater cognitive complexity and higher levels of thinking because of their exposure to diverse experiences and ideas.

And on campuses with strong attention to diversity, students across all groups report that they are more satisfied with their college experience than students who do not engage with diversity in college.

Finally, ES and WGSS faculty contribute essential scholarship to local and global communities. Here at Oregon State University my ES and WGSS colleagues are involved with research on motherhood, immigration, minority health, student success, and transnational adoption, to name a few topics. One just returned from supporting a medical team working with refugees in southern Iraq. Another works with Latinx communities in Oregon. One was nationally recognized [in 2016] for work on behalf of transgender people. Another was recently honored by our local community on MLK Day for his work with students and other people of color on campus and in the community.

Ethnic Studies and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies bring unique analytical lenses to academic study that help us understand how race, gender, sexuality, and other forms of difference shape individual and group experiences. They help us examine social institutions and the roles these institutions play in maintaining social inequality. And these academic disciplines also help us think about how people can work to bring about changes in the world that create more inclusive, equitable, and just workplaces, families, schools, churches, and other social organizations.

We still need Ethnic Studies and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies because race, gender, and sexuality are still important facets of human experience that give shape to the ways we are in the world. We need ES and WGSS because people from those "tiny subgroups" need an academic home to explore their concerns. We need ES and WGSS because all students benefit from exposure to diverse people and ideas. And we need ES and WGSS because the world still needs academics who can help us see things in a new way and develop skills to create a world that is life-affirming for us all.

1. CLAIMING AN EDUCATION

ADRIENNE RICH (1979)

is convocation, I planned to separate my re- into two parts: some thoughts about you, the n students here, and some thoughts about us ach in a women's college. But ultimately, those arts are indivisible. If university education anything beyond the processing of human into expected roles, through credit hours, nd grades (and I believe that in a women's col- pecially it *might* mean much more), it implies ical and intellectual contract between teacher udent. This contract must remain intuitive, dy- unwritten; but we must turn to it again and if learning is to be reclaimed from the deper- zing and cheapening pressures of the present- ademic scene.

The first thing I want to say to you who are students is that you cannot afford to think of being here to *receive* an education; you will do much better to think of yourselves as being here to *claim* one. One of the dictionary definitions of the verb "to claim" is *to take as the rightful owner; to assert in the face of possible contradiction*. "To receive" is *to come into possession of; to act as receptacle or container for; to accept as authoritative or true*. The difference is that between

This talk was given at the Douglass College Convocation, September 6, 1977, and first printed in *The Common Woman*, a feminist literary magazine founded by Rutgers University women in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

acting and being acted upon, and for women it can literally mean the difference between life and death.

One of the devastating weaknesses of university learning, of the store of knowledge and opinion that has been handed down through academic training, has been its almost total erasure of women's experience and thought from the curriculum, and its exclusion of women as members of the academic community. Today, with increasing numbers of women students in nearly every branch of higher learning, we still see very few women in the upper levels of faculty and administration in most institutions. Douglass College itself is a women's college in a university administered overwhelmingly by men, who in turn are answerable to the state legislature, again composed predominantly of men. But the most significant fact for you is that what you learn here, the very texts you read, the lectures you hear, the way your studies are divided into categories and fragmented one from the other—all this reflects, to a very large degree, neither objective reality, nor an accurate picture of the past, nor a group of rigorously tested observations about human behavior. What you can learn here (and I mean not only at Douglass but any college in any university) is how men have perceived and organized their experience, their history, their ideas of social relationships, good and evil, sickness and health, etc. When you read or hear about "great issues," "major texts," "the mainstream of Western thought," you are hearing about what men, above all white men, in their male subjectivity, have decided is important.

Black and other minority peoples have for some time recognized that their racial and ethnic experience was not accounted for in the studies broadly labeled human; and that even the sciences can be racist. For many reasons, it has been more difficult for women to comprehend our exclusion, and to realize that even the sciences can be sexist. For one thing, it is only within the last hundred years that higher education has grudgingly been opened up to women at all, even to white, middle-class women. And many of us have found ourselves poring eagerly over books with titles like *The Descent of Man; Man and His Symbols; Irrational Man; The Phenomenon of Man; The Future of Man; Man and the Machine; From Man to Man; May Man Prevail?; Man, Science and Society*; or *One-Dimensional Man*—books pretending to describe a "human" reality that does not include over one-half the human species.

Less than a decade ago, with the rebirth of a feminist movement in this country, women students and teachers in a number of universities began to demand and set up women's studies courses—to *claim* a woman-directed education. And, despite the inevitable accusations of "unscholarly," "group therapy," "faddism," etc., despite backlash and budget cuts, women's studies are still growing, offering to more and more women a new intellectual grasp on their lives, new understanding of our history, a fresh vision of the human experience, and also a critical basis for evaluating what they hear and read in other courses, and in the society at large.

But my talk is not really about women's studies, much as I believe in their scholarly, scientific, and human necessity. While I think that any Douglass student has everything to gain by investigating and enrolling in women's studies courses, I want to suggest that there is a more essential experience that you owe yourselves, one which courses in women's studies can greatly enrich, but which finally depends on you, in all your interactions with yourself and your world. This is the experience of *taking responsibility toward your selves*. Our upbringing as women has so often told us that this should come second to our relationships and responsibilities to other people. We have been offered ethical models of the self-denying wife and mother; intellectual models of the brilliant but slapdash dilettante who never commits herself to anything the whole way, or the intelligent woman who denies her intelligence in order to seem more "feminine," or who sits in passive silence even when she disagrees inwardly with everything that is being said around her.

Responsibility to yourself means refusing to let others do your thinking, talking, and naming for you; it means learning to respect and use your own brains and instincts; hence, grappling with hard work. It means that you do not treat your body as a commodity with which to purchase superficial intimacy or economic security; for our bodies and minds are inseparable in this life, and when we allow

CHAPTER 1

WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

Perspectives and Practices

WHAT IS WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES (WGS)?

WGS is an interdisciplinary academic field devoted to topics concerning women, gender, and feminism. It focuses on gender arrangements (the ways society creates, patterns, and rewards our understandings of femininity and masculinity) and examines the multiple ways these arrangements affect everyday life. In particular, WGS is concerned with gender as it intersects with multiple categories, such as race, ethnicity, social class, age, ability, religion, and sexuality. Exploring how we perform gender and how this interacts with other aspects of our identities, WGS focuses on the ways women and other feminized bodies experience discrimination and oppression. Simply put, WGS involves the study of gender as a central aspect of human existence.

The goal of WGS, however, is not only to provide an academic framework and broad-based community for inquiry about the impacts of gender practices on social, cultural, and political thought and behavior, but also to provide advocacy and work toward social change. This endeavor is framed by understandings of the social, economic, and political changes of the past half century that include a rapid increase in globalization and its impacts locally, including the deindustrialization of the global north, the blurring and dispersal of geopolitical boundaries and national identities, and the growth of new technologies that have not only transformed political and economic institutions, but supported mass consumerism. Such changes shape contemporary imperialism (economic, military, political, and/or cultural domination over nations or geopolitical formations) with implications for people in both local and global communities.

In this way, WGS seeks understanding of these issues and realities with the goal of social justice. In this endeavor it puts women and other marginalized peoples at the center of inquiry as subjects of study, informing knowledge through these lenses. This inclusion implies that traditional notions regarding men as "humans" and women as "others" must be challenged and transcended. Such a confusion of maleness with humanity, putting men at the center and relegating women to outsiders in society, is called androcentrism.