Gen&WS 340: Queering Ecofeminism and Environmental Racism

Instructor: Dr. Ruth Goldstein
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Office: Sterling Hall 3312
Office hours: Walk-in Wednesdays 12-2pm or by appointment

3 Credit Course: This intermediate level social science course fulfills the social science and humanities approach and gender, race, and the environment areas in the Gender & Women’s Studies major.

This class meets for two 75-minute class periods each week over the fall semester, and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, etc.) for about 3 hours out of classroom for every class period. The syllabus includes more information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

Canvas Course URL: https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/242600/external_tools/5326

Requisite: Sophomore standing.

Seminar Time: Tues/Thurs 1pm-2:15pm
Location: Online https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/242600/external_tools/5326

Course Description
This course brings environmental studies and critical race theory perspectives to bear on gender and sexuality studies, taking “eco-feminism” as an identity, an object of analysis, and as a methodological approach. It engages social science and historical texts, films, short videos and poetry to give an introduction to ecofeminism, queer and transecologies, and connections with critical race theory and indigenous studies.

Course Learning Outcomes
- To increase knowledge of environmental racism and gendered effects of environmental destruction.
- To develop analytical thinking and improve written and spoken communication skills.
- To engage empathic connections and ethical actions in the face of climate change, environmental racism, and social injustice broadly conceived yet deeply and specifically experiences.

Required Materials:
- Nature’s Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science (available as an e-book through UW libraries)
- The River is in Us: Fighting Toxics in a Mohawk Community (available as an e-book through UW libraries)
- All other course readings will be made available on Canvas
Course Policies:

Universal Design & Accommodations: I believe everyone has a right to a quality education and that classrooms can adapt to students’ needs. Everyone learns differently. If you have ideas on how you can best learn and express your learning in this class, if you have an undocumented disability, or if you have a change in disability status during the semester, I encourage you to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss a learning plan. If you have a documented disability, please provide me your accommodation information within the first two weeks of class. The University accommodation policy reads as follows:

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty, will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Questions about documenting your disability can be directed to the McBurney Disability Resource Center (mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu, 608/263-2741).

Classroom Conduct: Students are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful manner toward both their peers and faculty at all times. While disagreement and passion are welcome in our discussions, the emotional and intellectual safety of everyone is of utmost importance. Students behaving in a way which disrespects, harms, threatens or otherwise significantly negatively impacts others in the classroom will have their participation grade voided for that class period. Repeated violations will result in a zero for participation in the course.

Late Policy: All assignments lose five percent for each day they are late, unless an accommodation plan is already in place. In emergency cases, students may request extensions and must do so at least 24 hours before the assignment is due with evidence of emergency situation and evidence of progress on the assignment. A common complaint is work being lost on broken computers or lost flash drives. I highly recommend all students set up a cloud account like Dropbox or Google Docs to save their drafts and final work.

Technology: Technology is a vital part of our everyday lives and, for many, a useful learning tool. You are welcome to bring laptops or tablets to use during class for referring to articles, taking notes, or looking up information related to the class discussion. Make choices about technology in the classroom that are right for you and your learning, however, please make sure all devices and your use of them are not distracting to your peers: turn off sound and vibrations before class begins. Internet is not required during class meetings, however, students should have regular, reliable access to the internet to access course readings online well as to submit their written work.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to uphold University expectations for academic integrity by submitting only their own original works and ideas for all assignments in this course. Violations of academic integrity can result in a range of repercussions depending on the severity of the violation, from having to repeat the assignment to expulsion from the University. All academic integrity violations will be recorded and reported to the Office of
Student Conduct & Community Standards (OSCCS). For more on academic misconduct procedures at UW-Madison see: https://students.wisc.edu/student-conduct/academic-integrity/

Assignments:
This course is graded on the UW-Madison grading system: A (93-100%), AB (88-92%), B (83-87%), BC (78-82%), C (70-77%), D (60-69%), F (below 60%). The assignments are weighted as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Class Participation (written and spoken)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Questions Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal for Final</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper/Project</td>
<td>35%</td>
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Attendance: Attendance is graded by percentage of classes attended. There are no excused absences in this class, however, your first three absences count as 50% attendance; all additional absences count as a zero. If you anticipate frequently missing class, you should consider taking another course. If a medical or personal emergency results in missing multiple class sessions, contact Dr. Goldstein as soon as possible to set up a meeting to discuss how you can keep up with the course. Students with disabilities should meet with Dr. Goldstein to set up an accommodation plan for their absences and contact the McBurney. Attendance counts for 10% of the final grade.

Participation: Participation is a vital part of the course and one of the primary ways through which students learn to become critical thinkers. Participation in this course will be half constituted by pre-class writing assignments of 200-300 words submitted to Canvas and half constituted by being actively involved in the class in a respectful manner. Pre-class writing assignments will respond to a different prompt each week. Late pre-class assignments are worth 50% and your lowest grade assignment will be dropped. In-class participation includes communicating in class discussions (including asking questions) and engaging in class activities, such as group work, in-class writing assignments, writing on the board, and reading aloud. Since participation is essential to practicing expressing critical thinking skills, it is important that students be on time and prepared for class and ready to actively participate each day. Excessive tardiness, sleeping in class, or distracting use of technology will reduce your participation grade. Participation accounts for 10% of the final grade.

Presentations: Students will be assigned groups to do a presentation on one set of class readings. The presentation need not be exhaustive. It can simply be a set of questions about the readings, in response to classmates posted comments as well as to current events. Music videos, poetry, artwork and such can be brought into frame or expand discussion. There is a minimum of ten minutes to present discussion questions and comments. This is worth 15% of the final grade.

Midterm Paper: The midterm is a 3-5 double-spaced paper with 12-point Times New Roman font or equivalent. Bibliography required. There are several prompts for the midterm that will also serve for the final. Choices range from an annotated bibliography, a climate manifesto, sci-fi short story, performance or visual art to more typical academic papers. The midterm is meant to be a stepping-stone for the final paper or project, but students are not beholden to one just because this was the choice for the midterm. It is worth 20% of the final grade.
**Final Paper/Project Proposal or Reflection:** All students must submit a 2-page (double-spaced, 12 pt font) proposal or reflection for their final paper or project (see Final Paper/Project assignment description for details on the options). If students are continuing to build on their midterm, then this assignment will be more of a reflection about the midterm process and how they will make the revisions and grow the project or paper. If a proposal for a different paper or project, then students must submit a title, a working thesis statement and outline with an annotated bibliography of two academic sources (which can be from class) and how they relate to your paper/project. This is worth 5% of the final grade.

**Final Paper/Project:** For the final, students may decide between two options, a traditional paper or a creative project. The final paper/project is worth 25 percent of the final grade.

The final project has a 6-8 page analytical text for undergraduates, 15-20 pages for graduate students. An ethnographic component with interviews and participant observation is strongly encouraged but not required. Should you want to incorporate a creative piece—a sculpture, painting, photography or performance piece, please come to office hours and discuss this by midterm. Note that a creative piece must also be accompanied by a short analytical paper (around 2-4 pages). The idea is that if we (humans) are to think differently about gender and sexuality, about the world and bodies that we live in and with, and about (re)production, then our modes of expressing ourselves might be a starting point for imagining otherwise. How might you think differently and envisage difference in poetry or lyrical prose? In music, dialogue, the spoken word? What if your words made a design on the page; how would you think differently about what you might be able to say? Beyond page and word count, I am asking you to analyze the ways that language(s) shape(s), constructions of gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity, “oikos” and the ability to feel “at home” in the world.

**Option 1:** Traditional academic paper. Throughout the readings thus far, there have been a variety of perspectives on eco-feminism and what it means to take a queer perspective. You have also read about the ways that advocacy for gender rights can obscure considerations of race and ethnicity. The half-lives and half-truths that accompany toxic spills have been brewing long before they hit the surface of everyday life. To that end, these three questions form the basis for this prompt: 1) How would you queer ecofeminism without letting important racial and ethnic considerations become secondary if not entirely erased? 2) Where do we begin to tell these stories of erasure and dispossession? 3) Does the beginning of the story matter to how it ends? Please feel free to be intellectually transgressive and choose geographical or contamination zones not covered in class.

For this prompt, please chose a total of 5 sources, of which, at least 2 come from the syllabus (they may all be from the syllabus, but I encourage/invite you to engage your own library too).

**Option 2:** Creative project. This project can be done independently, in pairs, or in a group of three students. The project should be a creative engagement with some of the issues and themes we have addressed throughout the semester regarding ecogender and ecosexual studies and environmental racism. Examples include short films, zines, original songs, spoken word poetry, creative writing, and visual art—see the prompts for a climate manifesto, sci-fi story and visual/performance work). The length of the project depends on the project and should be accompanied by a 3-5 page artist’s statement, reflecting on the choices made, class themes engaged as well as sources cited from class. Depending on the project, at least 3 sources from class should be cited in a formal bibliography.
### Week 1

#### Introduction to the Course

**Tuesday, January 26**
- Review syllabus
- We will also discuss the definitions of environmental racism, ecofeminism, queering ecofeminism and transecologies, along with the “oikos” of the economy and ecology. This in-class introduction with include a short version of “SkyWoman” from Robin Wall Kimmerer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants.*

**Thursday, January 28**
- Listen to Robin Wall Kimmerer “The Serviceberry: An Economy of Abundance”

### Week 2

#### From Ecofeminism to EcoGender and EcoSexuality Studies

**Tuesday, February 2**
- Karen Warren “Introduction to Ecofeminism and Social Justice”
- Jennifer J. Reed “From Ecofeminism to Ecosexuality: Queering the Environmental Movement

**Thursday, February 4**
- “In Conversation: An Episode on Climate Justice and Queer and Trans Liberation”
- Caroline Finney “It Matters Who You See in Outdoor Media”

### Week 3

#### Queering Notions of “Progress” and (his)Stories

**Tuesday, February 9**
- **Watch: Surviving Progress**
- Carson, Rachel. “A Fable for Tomorrow” (1-4), “The Obligation to Endure” (5-13), and “The Other Road” (277-297). In *Silent Spring.*

**Thursday, February 11**
- Londa Schiebinger “*Why Mammals are Called Mammals: Gender Politics in Eighteenth-Century Natural History.*”
Week 4

Nature's Body: Race and Gender and the Master’s House

Tuesday, February 16
  [https://www-fulcrum-org-ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/concern/monographs/th83m010f](https://www-fulcrum-org-ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/concern/monographs/th83m010f)
- Greta Gaard “Towards a Queer Ecofeminism.”

Thursday, February 18
- bell hooks, “Black Women and Feminism”
- Audre Lorde “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”

Week 5

The Rebel(ious) Body: Saints and Witches

Tuesday, February 23
- Carolyn Merchant “Dominion over Nature”

Thursday, February 25
- Clarissa Pinkola-Estés “Joyous Body: The Wild Flesh” (103-116) and “Afterword: Stories as Medicine” (320-326). In *Women Who Run With Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman*

Week 6

Expanding the archetypes: From Gaia to Cyborg-Goddesses

Tuesday, March 2
- Carolyn Merchant, “Gaia: Ecofeminism and the Earth” in *EarthCare*
- Donna Haraway “Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century”

Thursday, March 4
- Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism”

Week 7

The Empire Strikes Back and Further Manifestos

Tuesday, March 9
- Sandy Stone “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttransexual Manifesto”
- Alyson Escalante, “Gender Nihilist Manifesto”
- In response to Alyson Escalante’s piece: [https://transphilosopher.com/2016/12/04/the.promise-and.failure.of.gender-nihilism/](https://transphilosopher.com/2016/12/04/the.promise-and.failure.of.gender-nihilism/)

Thursday, March 11
- B. Camminga “Disregard and danger: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the voices of trans (and cis) African feminists.”
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<tr>
<th>Week 8</th>
<th>Week 8 ~ Whose Land, Whose Bodies, Whose Nation? Midterms Due Monday, March 15, 2021 (by midnight)</th>
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<td><strong>Tuesday, March 16</strong></td>
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  “Bring” (post via Canvas) at least one screen shot from the film that felt particularly compelling to you. Be prepared to discuss in small groups as well as bring to a larger discussion.  
| **Thursday, March 18** | |
| • Simpson, Audra. “The State is a Man: Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty.” [https://muse-jhu.edu.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/article/633280](https://muse-jhu.edu.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/article/633280)  
  **Trigger warning:** I absolutely love this piece by Simpson. However, the brutal murder or Loretta Sanders is covered, not in detail, but it is part of the violence against Native American women in North America. |

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<th>Week 9</th>
<th>Continuing Colonizations: Homelands, Borderlands, Bodies as Frontiers Zone</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday March 23</strong></td>
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| • Zoë Todd. “An Indigenous Feminist’s Take On The Ontological Turn: ‘Ontology’ Is Just Another Word For Colonialism.”  
<p>| <strong>Thursday, March 15</strong> | |
| • Vanessa Agard-Jones “What the Sands Remember” |</p>
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<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Slow Violence and Intersectional Environmentalism</th>
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| **Thursday, April 1** | - Carol Adams. “The Sexual Politics of Meat” (47-63), and “Masked Violence, Muted Voices” (92-116). In *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist Vegetarian Critical Theory*  

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<th>Ecologies of the Aftermath</th>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td><strong>Coming Full Circle: Sky Woman, Environmental Justice, and Writing Futures</strong></td>
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**Tuesday, April 13**

**Thursday, April 15**
- Hoover, Elizabeth. “Chapter 2: Environmental Contamination, Health Studies and Mitigation Politics” (69-121) in *The River is In Us: Fighting Toxics in a Mohawk Community*.  

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<th>Week 13</th>
<th><strong>Environmental Justice, Writing/Righting Futures</strong></th>
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**Tuesday, April 20**
- Elizabeth Hoover “Chapter 3: We’re Not Going to Be Guinea Pigs: Lessons from Community-Based Participatory Research” (123-166).” In *The River is In Us: Fighting Toxics in a Mohawk Community*  

**New Directions**

**Thursday, April 12**
- Elizabeth Hoover “Chapter 4: Contamination, Convenience, and a Changing Food Culture” (167-218) In *The River is In Us: Fighting Toxics in a Mohawk Community*  
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<th>Week 14</th>
<th>Bringing it Home: Resurgence, Survivance, Ecology</th>
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<td><strong>Tuesday, April 27</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Thursday, April 29</strong></td>
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<td>- Anna Tsing “Enabling Entanglements” (vii-viii) and “Prologue: Autumn Aroma” (1-2). In <em>The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins</em>.</td>
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<th>Week 15</th>
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<td><strong>Final Papers/Projects due DATE</strong></td>
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