



**THEORIZING INTERSECTIONALITY (GWS 547)**  
**Spring 2025**

**Instructor:** Professor Keisha Lindsay

**Email:** [knlindsay@wisc.edu](mailto:knlindsay@wisc.edu)

**Canvas URL:** <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/447619>

**Meeting Time and Place:** Tuesday, Thursday 9:30 am - 10:45 am  
Sterling Hall 2335

**Office Hours:**

Tuesday 11:00 pm -12:00 pm (virtual and in-person)

Wednesday 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm (virtual and in-person)

**Credits:** 3 credits

**Regular and Substantive Student-Instructor Interaction:**

Substantive student-instructor interaction will take place via at least two of the following: direct instruction, providing feedback on student work, providing information about course content, and facilitating discussion of course content or other substantive interaction. Regular interaction is: predictable and scheduled interaction with students consistent with the course length (usually at least weekly but more often in a course of short duration). Regular and substantive student-instructor interaction, as defined by the US Department of Education (Within [34 C.F.R. §600.2](#)), is always a requirement of UW-Madison for-credit learning activities. Click [here](#) for more information including examples of regular and substantive instruction.

**Course Description:**

The aim of this course is to critically examine important issues, questions, and debates regarding intersectionality or the notion that race, gender, sexuality, and other terrains of difference are mutually constructing. GWS 547 is interdisciplinary in its approach. Course materials include texts, films, and other multimedia resources drawn from an array of disciplines including gender and women's studies, sociology, critical race theory, history, political theory, and cultural studies.

Section one of the course explores classic conceptualizations of intersectionality including how scholars understand the relationship between intersectionality, on the one hand, and feminist theory and practice, on the other. We move on to analyze specific tensions and debates in intersectional theorizing regarding: 1) who qualifies as an intersectional subject; 2) the strengths and limitations of examining intersectional privilege and 3) whether intersectionality can be used for anti-feminist ends. The third final section of the course contextualizes intersectionality. Our goal is to explore how scholars use intersectionality to understand disadvantage within specific social, economic, and political spheres including the family, the state, and the labor force. In this section and throughout the course, we pay particular attention to the notion that intersectionality is both an analytical tool and a distinct form of subjectivity.

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

1. Identify the relationship between intersectionality and theorizing in gender and women’s studies. (Undergraduate and Graduate)
2. Examine how scholars use intersectionality to understand systemic advantage and/or disadvantage within specific spheres including the family, the state, and the labor force. (Undergraduate and Graduate)
3. Explore key debates in the theoretical literature on intersectionality. (Undergraduate and Graduate)
4. Identify key “gaps” and tensions in the theoretical literature on intersectionality and complete an original research project that critically interrogates one or more of these “gaps” and tensions. (Graduate Students Only)

**Course Readings:**

The following two books are required for this course:

1. Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge. *Intersectionality (Key Concepts)*. Polity Press. ISBN-10: 0745684491
2. Dean Spade. *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*. Duke University Press. ISBN-10: 0822360403

Both books are available via our course CANVAS [page](#) (click on “Home” and scroll down to the relevant class date).

**Undergraduate Course Requirements:**

1. **Class Participation (10% of total grade)** - This is a discussion-based seminar in which active participation in class is key to your success. Your participation will take the form of listening and responding to your classmates’ comments on the assigned texts. Fulfilling this portion of the participation requirement requires the following:

Participation Rubric					
Points	9+	8	7	6	5-
<b>Quality of contribution</b>	Always well-prepared for class; shows critical thought; poses questions; moves dialogue forward; stays on topic; engages with both instructor and classmates; presumes positive intentions of classmates	Usually well-prepared for class most of the time; shows effort in critical thinking; poses questions; helps move dialogue forward; often stays on topic; shows effort to engage with both instructor and classmates; usually presumes positive intentions of classmates	Sometimes well-prepared for class; makes attempts to engage in critical thought; makes attempts to move dialogue forward; sometimes goes off topic; shows some effort to engage with instructor and classmates; sometimes presumes positive intentions of classmates	Rarely prepared for class; few attempts to engage in critical thought; seldom moves dialogue forward; often goes off topic; shows little effort to engage with instructor and classmates; rarely resumes positive intentions of classmates	Almost never prepared for class; does not attempt to engage in critical thinking; does not move dialogue forward; purposes goes off topic; does not engage with instructor or classmates; never presumes positive intentions of classmates

2. **Reflection Papers (15% of total grade)** You will write **three, 250-275 word** reflection papers in which you comment on what you find contradictory, controversial, confusing or otherwise noteworthy in **each** of the assigned readings for a given class session. Your papers may seek clarification of particular terms or ideas; they may challenge the author(s)' presumptions; they may interrogate the implications of the author(s)' claims; or they may attempt to relate assigned readings to materials beyond the course. Reflection papers are intended to keep you engaged with the readings. They should not be used to provide summaries of the assigned texts:
  - a. **One** of your reflection papers should include **a meme, video clip, digital collage or other form of creative/visual expression.**
  - b. Please **end** all of your **reflection papers with two specific questions for class discussion.**
  - c. Reflection papers are **due on at 6pm on the Monday or Wednesday before class.** Please click [here](#) to find out when your specific reflection papers are due. You must be present in class to solicit responses to and receive credit for your reflection papers. If you are absent, you must write an additional reflection paper (and be present in class to discuss it) in order to receive "make up" credit.
3. **Mid-Term Essay (30% of total grade)** - You will write a **5-page paper** in which you critically analyze an advertising image that appears in a magazine/newspaper or on a website. Your mid-term essay is **due MARCH 3 at 9 AM.**
4. **Final Essay (40% of total grade)** - You will write: a) a **7-9 page** manifesto outlining why feminist activists working in a particular arena (reproductive rights, sexual violence, affirmative action, workplace discrimination, subsidized childcare for working mothers, etc.) should or should not embrace intersectionality **OR** 2) a 7-9 page essay in which you use intersectionality to analyze a major (post 1960) socio-economic or political change (rise of single parent families, the prison industrial complex, of criminal incarceration, the legalization of gay marriage, COVID-19 and its effects, etc.). Your final essay is **due on MAY 7 at 6 pm.**
5. **"Synthesis" Mini-Presentation (5% of total grade)** - In the last class of the semester, we will have a conference-style panel, where you will have opportunity to present a brief, **2-3 minute** presentation that synthesizes what you regard as the:
  - a. Key perils and possibilities of engaging in intersectionally informed research
  - b. Central concepts that should inform future, intersectionally informed research and why

**Graduate Course Assignments:**

1. **Class Participation (10% of total grade)** - *This is a discussion-based class in which active participation in class is key to your success. Your participation will take the form of listening and responding to your classmates' comments on the assigned texts. Fulfilling this portion of the participation requirement requires the following (see above rubric):*
2. **Reflection Papers (15% of total grade)** You will write **three, 250 to 275 word** reflection papers in which you will comment on what you find contradictory, controversial, confusing or otherwise noteworthy in **each** of the assigned readings for a given class session. Your papers may seek clarification of particular terms or ideas; they may challenge the author(s)' presumptions; they may interrogate the implications of the author(s)' claims; or they may attempt to relate assigned readings to materials beyond the course. Reflection papers are intended to keep you engaged with the readings. They should not be used to provide summaries of the assigned texts:
  - a. **One** of your reflection papers should include **a meme, video clip, digital collage or other form of creative/visual expression.**

- b. Please **end** all of your reflection papers with **two specific questions** for class discussion.
  - c. Reflection papers are **due on at 6pm on the Monday or Wednesday before class**. Please click [here](#) to find out when your specific reflection papers are due. You must be present in class to solicit responses to and receive credit for your reflection papers. If you are absent, you must write an additional reflection paper (and be present in class to discuss it) in order to receive “make up” credit.
3. **Abstract (25% of total grade).** You will prepare a **1,000 word** abstract outlining the main claim of your proposed research paper, the possible significance of your work, the types of materials/sources you plan to examine, and how you propose to examine them. At this stage, you may not have finalized your main argument or the types of materials you will examine. However, the point of your abstract is to narrow down your topic in a way that is intelligible to others. So, if there are aspects of your project that remain uncertain, make temporary choices or posit a claim that may be relevant or useful in the weeks to come. Your abstract is **due on April 11 at 6 pm**.
  4. **Research Paper (45% of total grade).** You will write a **3,750-5,000** word research paper on a relevant topic of your choice. Your research paper is **due on May 7 at 6 pm**.
  5. **“Synthesis” Presentation (5% of total grade).** During the last class of the semester, we will have a conference-style panel, where you will have opportunity to present a brief, **3-5 minute** presentation that synthesizes what you regard as the:
    - a. Key perils and possibilities of engaging in intersectionally informed research
    - b. Central concepts that should inform future, intersectionally informed research and why

		Student Workflow						
		Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>GWS 549 Weekly Rhythm</b>			Submit Reflect Paper		Submit Reflection Paper			
				*Class		*Class		
		Complete Required Readings						
			Office Hours Monday 11:00-12:00pm		Office Hours Wednesday 12:00-1:00 pm			
		Communications Via Email Throughout The Week						

**OTHER COURSE INFORMATION:**

Please use **phones, laptops, and their related devices** responsibly during class to facilitate a non-distracting and intellectually productive learning environment.

Papers and exams **turned in late** will be penalized by **ten (10) percentage points** for each 24-hour period after the due date.

I will respond to **student emails/communications** within a 24-hour period, Monday to Friday.

I will discuss **questions about grades** during office hours or by appointment - not over email or before/after class. If you would like to challenge your grade, please wait 24 hours after receiving the grade before contacting me. If you have questions about a grade, please speak to me first. If the question is not resolved, speak with the department Chair who will attempt to resolve the issue informally and inform you of the Appeals Procedures if no resolution is reached informally.

Final grades will be determined according to the following **official UW grading scale**: A 93-100; AB 88-92; B 83-87; BC 78-82; C 70-77; D 60-69; F below 60.

### **RULES, RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES**

-See: <https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#rulesrightsandresponsibilitiestext>

### **ACADEMIC CALENDAR & RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES**

-See: <https://secfac.wisc.edu/academic-calendar/#religious-observances>

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

**Institutional syllabus statement:** By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion. See <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/syllabus-statement/>

### **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

**McBurney Disability Resource Center recommended syllabus statement:** 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 [me] 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 [I], 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. <https://mcburney.wisc.edu/instructor/>

### **DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

**Institutional statement on diversity:** Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world. <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>

### **SEXUAL HARASSMENT & OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

As an instructor, I am committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation. UW-Madison offers a variety of resources for students impacted by sexual misconduct.

If you wish to seek out free, confidential support, there are a number of [services](#) available on campus and in the community. If you would like to report sexual misconduct to the campus, a number of [reporting options](#) are available. In addition, each department has staff members, known as Responsible Employees, who can

assist you. If you are an undergraduate student, most of the academic and career advisors you work with are designated Responsible Employees. Please note that Responsible Employees are required to report specific disclosures that you share about sexual misconduct to UW-Madison's [Title IX Office](#).

The Department of Gender & Women's Studies has the following Responsible Employees:

- Department Chair, Dr. Judy Houck ([jahouck@wisc.edu](mailto:jahouck@wisc.edu))
- Department Administrator, Jamie Gratrix ([jamie.gratrix@wisc.edu](mailto:jamie.gratrix@wisc.edu))
- Graduate Coordinator, Duachi Yang ([duachi.yang@wisc.edu](mailto:duachi.yang@wisc.edu))
- Undergraduate Advisor, Lachrista Greco ([lachrista.greco@wisc.edu](mailto:lachrista.greco@wisc.edu)).

### **PRIVACY OF STUDENT RECORDS & THE USE OF AUDIO RECORDED LECTURERS STATEMENT**

See more information about privacy of student records and the usage of audio-recorded lectures.

Lecture materials and recordings for this course are protected intellectual property at UW-Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

### **COURSE EVALUATIONS**

Students will be provided with an opportunity to evaluate this course and your learning experience. Student participation is an integral component of this course, and your confidential feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

### **Digital Course Evaluations (HelioCampus, recently known as AEFIS)**

UW-Madison uses a digital course evaluation survey tool called [HELIOCAMPUS](#). For this course, you will receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester, notifying you that your course evaluation is available. In the email you will receive a link to log into the course evaluation with your NetID. Evaluations are anonymous. Your participation is an integral component of this course, and your feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

## **Section I – Theorizing Intersectionality**

### **Introduction**

#### Jan 21:

- Syllabus Review
- Meet and Greet

### **(Re)Reading Intersectionality's Past and Present**

#### Jan 23:

- Bilge and Collins. "What is Intersectionality"
- Kimberlé Crenshaw, Sumi Cho, and Leslie McCall. "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis"
- (In-Class Film Clip) "Laverne Cox Talks about Intersectionality at Harvard"

#### Jan 28:

- Sojourner Truth. "When Woman Gets Her Rights Man will be Right"
- Anna Julia Cooper. "The Status of Woman in America"

-Bilge and Collins. "Getting the History of Intersectionality Straight?"

## **Section II – Debating Intersectionality**

### **Who Qualifies as an Intersectional Subject?**

Jan 30:

-Nikol Floyd-Alexander. "Disappearing Acts: Reclaiming Intersectionality in the Social Sciences in a Post-Black Feminist Era"

-Julia Jordan-Zachery. "Now you see me, now you don't: My political fight against the invisibility /erasure of Black women in intersectionality research."

Feb 4:

-Jennifer C. Nash. "Re-thinking Intersectionality"

-Ange Marie Hancock. "Intersectionality: Intellectual Property or Meme?"

### **The Who, What, and Why of Intersectional Privilege**

Feb 6:

-Michael Kimmel. "Masculinity as Homophobia"

-Karen Sacks. "How Jews Became White"

-(In-Class Reading) Katie Langin. "New study details many ways scientists from minority groups are disadvantaged in STEM"

Feb 11:

-Kim Case. "Beyond Diversity and Whiteness: Developing a Transformative and Intersectional Model of Privilege Studies Pedagogy"

Phoebe Maltz Bovy. "Checking Privilege Checking"

### **Co-opted Intersectionality?**

Feb 13:

-Sarah Banet-Weiser and Zoe Glatt. "Stop treating BLM like Coachella"

-Nancy Wadsworth. "Intersectionality in California's Same-Sex Marriage Battles: A Complex Proposition"

Feb 18:

-Guidroz and Berger. "A Conversation with Founding Scholars of Intersectionality"

-Bilge and Collins. "Intersectionality as Critical Inquiry and Praxis"

-(In-Class Reading) UW-Madison Housing. "Inclusive Language Series: Intersectionality"

### **Intersectionality and/as Identity Politics**

Feb 20:

-Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color"

-"Combahee River Collective Statement"

Feb 25:

*Mid-Term Essay Preparation*

Feb 27:

-Jasbir Puar. "I'd Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess: Becoming Intersectional in Assemblage Theory"

-Bilge and Collins. "Intersectionality and Identity"

**MARCH 3 at 9 AM - MID-TERM ESSAY DUE**

**Section III – Contextualizing Intersectionality**

**Embodiment(s)**

Mar 4:

-(In-Class Film) "Eisha Love: A Transwoman of Color in Chicago"

**-Emi Koyama. "Transfeminist Manifesto + Postscript"**

Mar 6:

-Shatema Threadcraft. "Introduction: Black Female Body Politics"

-E. Cole and N. Sabik. "Repairing a Broken Mirror"

Mar 11:

-Eunjung Kim and Alison Kafer. "Disability and the Edges of Intersectionality"

-Jina B. Kim and Sami Schalk. "Reclaiming a Radical Politics of Self-Care: A Crip of Color Critique"

**Family and State**

Mar 13:

-Patricia Hill Collins. "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation"

-Myra Marx Ferree. "Filling the glass: Gender perspectives on families"

Mar 18:

-LiLi Johnson. "Searching in Photographs: Photography and the Chinese Birth Parent Search"

-Dorothy E. Roberts. "Race, Gender, and Genetic Technologies: A New Reproductive Dystopia?"

**Work**

Mar 20:

-Evelyn N. Glenn. "Who Cares"

-Evelyn N. Glenn. "Neoliberalism and Globalization"

Apr 1:

-Film – "Sorry To Bother You" (Please watch BEFORE) class

**Law**

Apr 3:

-Dean Spade. "Introduction: Rights, Movements, and Critical Trans Politics" and "What's Wrong with Rights"

Apr 8:

-Dean Spade. "Rethinking Transphobia and Power – Beyond a Rights Framework" and "Law Reform and Movement Building"

**Education**

Apr 10:

-bell hooks. "Engaged Pedagogy"



-Bilge and Collins. "Intersectionality and Critical Education"

**APRIL 11 at 6 PM - ABSTRACTS DUE  
(graduate students only)**

Apr 15:

- Sri Craven. 2019. "Intersectionality and Identity: Critical Considerations in Teaching Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies"
- Paul Butler. "Black Male Exceptionalism? The Problems and Potential of Black Male - Focused Interventions"

**Social Movements**

Apr 17:

- In-Class Film Clip – Tarana Burke. "Me Too is a Movement, Not a Moment"
- Dubravka Zarkov and Kathy Davis "Ambiguities and dilemmas around #MeToo: #ForHow Long and #WhereTo?"
- Juliana Restrepo Sanín. "#MeToo What Kind of Politics? Panel Notes"

Apr 22:

- Alicia Garza. "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement"
- Cathy J. Cohen & Sarah J. Jackson. "Ask a Feminist: A Conversation with Cathy Cohen on Black Lives Matter, Feminism, and Contemporary Activism"
- Lolita Buckner Inniss et al. "Comparing the Movements: Goals, Assumptions, and Methods of Black Lives Matter and #MeToo"

Apr 24:

- Bilge and Collins. "Intersectionality, Social Protest, and Neoliberalism"
- David Spade. "Conclusion: This is a Protest, Not a Parade!"

April 29:

*Final Essay Preparation/ Course Evaluations*

**(Re)Envisioning Intersectionality's Future**

May 1:

- Bilge and Collins. "Intersectionality Revisited"
- Jasmina Tacheva and Srividya Ramasubramanian. "AI Empire: Unraveling the interlocking systems of oppression in generative AI's global order"
- "Synthesis" Mini-Presentations

**MAY 7 at 6 PM - FINAL ESSAY DUE**