

**Women, Culture, and Difference:
An Introduction to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WST 103)**

Professor Lisa Diedrich

Spring 2016 | M/W/F 12:00-12:53 | Lecture M/W | Friday recitations with TAs

Email: Lisa.Diedrich@stonybrook.edu

Office Hours: M 1-3 and W 2:30-3:30 (or by appointment)

Office: 2050 Humanities Bldg.

I imagine good teaching as a circle of earnest people sitting down to ask each other meaningful questions. I don't see it as a handing down of answers.

—Meridian to Truman in Alice Walker's *Meridian*

One might simplify this by saying: men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman is herself as male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.

—John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

It often goes unacknowledged that the Black diaspora has survived, resisted, and developed in exploitative hostile environments which threaten physical and psychological destruction. It has been our history and past struggles which have offered us the rejuvenating substance of struggle, to carry our fight forwards. This is just one story; there are many like this to be told. Migration, like slavery, could not and will not silence our voices and kill our spirit.

—Claudette Williams, "Gal . . . You Come From Foreign"

This introductory course takes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the social construction of sex, gender, and sexuality. We unpack the assumptions that underlie popular and academic discussions about sexed bodies, gendered identities, and sexual desires, and we examine the ways in which scholars and activists attempt to dismantle dominant power structures and enact lasting social change and justice. The first part of the course explores the gendered regulation of bodies in relation to the rise of western science and the invention of sexual and racial difference. In the second part, we foreground questions of gender as we investigate examples of historical and contemporary social movements and forms of belonging. The third part tackles issues of gender and globalization. In addition to analyzing the transnational circulation of gendered representations, we also study processes of production and consumption within local and global markets. Although the syllabus is divided into three distinct parts, these units are designed to complement each another. Students will be expected to draw connections between the sections and to relate material assigned at the beginning of the semester to what follows. As a whole, this course aims to give students a sense of the diverse topics, methods, and questions that are central to women's, gender, and sexuality studies.

* Background artwork: Adrian Piper, *Decide Who You Are*, Anita Hill, 1992