

WGST 2301-903: Intro to Women's & Gender Studies

Tuesdays (online), Fall 2026

Professor Contact

Dr. Alexandria Castillo

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Office Hours: CAB 318A, (in person) Mon/Wed 11:00am-12:00pm
(via Zoom) by appointment

Course Description

Historical and cross-cultural perspectives on women's roles in culture, the workplace, the family and other socio-political institutions; the social construction of gender, sexuality, and racism; intersectional feminism; social control mechanisms and ideologies.

Course Objectives

The main objective of this course is for you to practice skills that are key to scholarly research (**critical thinking, analytical reading, writing, effective communication, and collaboration**) while also introducing you to methods of analysis. Therefore, this course is designed to help you develop reading, analytical, and communication skills. Written assignments will help you improve your writing and research skills, while in-class discussion activities and presentations will help you learn to communicate effectively and collaborate with your peers.

Required Texts

All assigned readings will be provided **on the Blackboard course page**.

Grades

Attendance and Class Participation.....	30%
Primary Source Document Share 1.....	10%
Primary Source Document Share 2.....	15%
Reading Response Paper 1.....	20%
Reading Response Paper 2.....	25%

Course Assignments

Attendance and Class Participation are not only required but imperative in this course. One of the benefits of smaller classes is the opportunity for more one-on-one interactions between instructor and student and between students; therefore, each class will center on discussions of the assigned material for that week. The aim is to facilitate a collaborative learning environment where concepts and events can be openly discussed and placed within broader contexts.

Primary Source Document Share 1 & 2 will be conducted **in class during Weeks 4-5 & Weeks 12-13**, respectively. There are no assigned readings for these weeks. Instead, you must come to class prepared to share a specific primary source document of your choice. Your primary source document must be related to the Americas, written before the year 1900, and cannot be the subject of an assigned reading. **NO TWO STUDENTS** can present the same document, so you will need to submit a full Chicago Style Citation of your chosen document (via the related Discussion Boards in Blackboard) to reserve your choice. If you do not have a primary source document, you do not post your citation to the Discussion Board before class, or you are not prepared to share the information listed below, you will receive a zero for this assignment. Be prepared to provide the following information: a description of the document (author, date, content summary, etc.), how it relates to our course, why you chose to present this document, your original interpretation/analysis of this source, as well as any additional questions from your peers/professor post-Share. (See Week 4 and Week 12 modules in Blackboard for more details.)

Reading Response 1 is a short response to a specific writing prompt related to the assigned reading for Week 9. This is an individual assignment **due in Blackboard before class starts on Week 9 (Tuesday, Oct. 20)**. This assignment is an opportunity to practice your writing, critical thinking, and analytical reading skills, as it requires you to work with primary source documents (i.e. documents written during the past time period in question). For example, the provided reading will serve as the evidence to support the paper's argument, or thesis. Your RR must be submitted in Blackboard as an uploaded file (doc/pdf) attachment. (See Week 9 module and the Reading Response Writing Guide in Blackboard for further details.)

Reading Response 2 is due during Week 15. While formatted the same as RR1, you may utilize any assigned primary source documents from the semester (other than Week 9) as evidence to support your answer to the provided writing prompt for RR2. This is an individual assignment **due in Blackboard by the end of the day Tuesday, Dec. 1**. This assignment is an opportunity to practice your writing, critical thinking, and analytical reading skills, as it requires you to work with primary source documents (i.e. documents written during the past time period in question). Your RR must be submitted in Blackboard as an uploaded file (doc/pdf) attachment. (See Week 15 module and Reading Response Writing Guide in Blackboard for further details.)

Late Submission Policy

This policy governs the submission of all assignments, projects, and papers for this course. Please read it carefully.

All assignments are due on the date and time specified in the course syllabus and/or on the learning management system (Blackboard). Timely submission is a fundamental professional expectation and a critical component of success in this course. To maintain fairness and ensure the timely progression of the course and grading, you are expected to plan your time accordingly and submit all work by the designated deadline.

Late assignment submissions will not be accepted and there are no resubmission opportunities in this course.

A late submission will **only** be considered in **rare, exceptional, and unavoidable circumstances** that are beyond the student's control. (Example: documented medical emergencies, bereavement, etc.) Technical issues (e.g., a computer crash, internet failure, or poor time management) are **not** considered rare or exceptional circumstances and will not warrant an extension.

Blackboard

Students access Blackboard through the [JagWire Portal](#). You will then use your Student User ID and network password to login. Once logged in, click on the Blackboard link. The course card will appear on your Dashboard. Blackboard is where you will access the syllabus, course readings, other relevant course materials, and course grades, so make sure to login to Blackboard early and often!

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken each in-person class meeting. You are expected to arrive on-time. Documentation (doctor's notes, coaches' notes for athletic events, instructors' notes for school-related events, etc.) will be required for an absence to be considered an "excused absence." Mental attendance is also required. You cannot effectively participate if you are asleep, texting, listening to music, etc. Also, you must come to class prepared, specifically regarding the assigned readings. Assigned readings must be completed prior to class time (see the weekly reading schedule included below). If this becomes an issue, you will be marked absent and be ineligible for any class participation/attendance points for the day. The "Attendance and Class Participation" grade is the easiest way to get points in this course, do not waste this opportunity!

Academic Misconduct & Plagiarism

The written assignments will require you to work with primary and secondary sources, and you will need to specify where you're getting your information. **When in doubt, cite!** Turning in someone else's work/ideas as your own will not be tolerated and will result in an F on that particular assignment, as well as a report to the Department Chair, Dean of the College, and the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. We will go over how to properly cite sources early

in the course, but if you have any questions about how to cite your sources, please ask me! If you are unsure if your behavior is academically dishonest, ask! If you have any questions concerning the definition of “academic misconduct” at TAMU-SA, please review the Student Handbook: <https://www.tamusa.edu/studentengagementsuccess/documents/studenthandbook2021-2022.pdf>.

Also, as stated on Page 1 of the syllabus, writing and critical thinking are key learning outcomes of this course, therefore all written assignments should be prepared and created by you! Developing these skills is an important step in your professional development and vital for an increasingly competitive workplace. All work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. **Use of any AI-generated content is not allowed in this course.**

Important Student Services

- The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center: The Writing Center offers a variety of free appointment-based support sessions to help you with your writing such as real-time online sessions, assignment reviews, in-person tutoring, and presentation/speech help. In-person sessions will be held in either CAB 208 or Classroom Hall 304. Make appointments either by email (WLDCC@tamusa.edu) or online via the Student Services tab in JagWire.
- The Office of Disability Support Services (DSS): If you have a documented disability or chronic illness that could impact your participation in this course, you are strongly encouraged to contact DSS to ensure you are provided the necessary accommodations. You can contact DSS by phone (210-784-1335), email (dss@tamusa.edu), or in-person (CAB Suite 210) to schedule an appointment.
- Student Counseling Center (SCC): This center provides free, confidential counseling services to enrolled students by trained and licensed staff. This includes individual therapy, group therapy, and/or utilization of the Virtual Relaxation Room, or a referral to a community provider. Walk-in appointments are accepted any time Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM (Modular C, Room 166). Call (210-784-1331) or email (stucounseling@tamusa.edu) to schedule an initial appointment.

WEEKLY CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: Course Introduction

Introductions, Syllabus, Schedules, & Course Requirements

Reading(s): no readings

Week 2: Cultural Traditions in the “Old” World and the “New”

The Cultural Legacy of the Spanish *Reconquista* vs. Pre-Columbian Mexico Society

Reading(s): The *Periculoso* & Susan Kellogg, “The Woman’s Room”

Week 3: European “Discovery” & Expansion in the New World

Conflicting Concepts of Gender in European-Native Relations

Reading(s): *Letter of Christopher Columbus to Luis de Santángel*

Week 4: Primary Source Document Share 1

Class time will be dedicated to PSD Share presentations

Discussion Board post of document citation must be submitted before class starts (Sept. 15)

Reading(s): no readings

Week 5: Primary Source Document Share 1, Cont.

Class time will be dedicated to PSD Share presentations

Discussion Board post of document citation must be submitted before class starts (Sept. 15)

Reading(s): no readings

Week 6: Conquest and Colonization in the Americas: The British Example

Establishing British Colonies: American Solutions to English Problems

Reading(s): *Edward Waterhouse Declaration* & *Roger Williams Observations of New England Indians*

Week 7: “Protecting” Women and Protecting Orthodoxy: Spanish America

The Spanish Inquisition as a Sociocultural Tool

Reading(s): *Marina de San Miguel’s Confession*

Week 8: “Protecting” Women and Protecting Orthodoxy: British America

The Vulnerability of the “City on a Hill”

Reading(s): *The Trial of Anne Hutchinson*

Week 9: Constructing Spanish Colonial Identity: Gender, Race, and Honor

Calidad in Spanish America: Caste, Class, and *Limpieza de Sangre*

Reading(s): *Don Manuel Protests His Daughter’s Marriage*

****Reading Response 1 due before class starts (Oct. 20)****

Week 10: Considering *Powerful* Women in Colonial Society

Gendered Definitions of Heretics, Witches, & Spiritual Healers

Reading(s): *Maria de la Candelaria Accusation of Michaela de Molina & Testimony Against Bridget Bishop*

Week 11: The Atlantic Slave Trade & African Experiences in the Americas
Slave Societies or Societies with Slaves?

Reading(s): *Excerpts from Former American Slaves' Autobiographies*

Week 12: Primary Source Document Share 2

Class time will be dedicated to PSD presentations

Discussion Board post of document citation must be submitted before class starts (Nov. 10)

Reading(s): no readings

Week 13: Primary Source Document Share 2, Cont.

Class time will be dedicated to PSD presentations

Discussion Board post of document citation must be submitted before class starts (Nov. 10)

Reading(s): no readings

Week 14: NO CLASS THIS WEEK

Week 15: Constructing Citizens in the Early United States

The Impact of Enlightened Ideas & the Limits of American Democracy

Reading(s): *Sarah Grimke Letters I-II*

****Reading Response 2 due by the end of the day (Dec. 1)****

Final Exams Week (Dec. 5-11): NO FINAL EXAM