WS 101-3: An Introduction to Women’s Issues in Canada

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Lectures: Thursdays, 1:30-3:20

The introductory Women’s Studies course examines the work, status, and lives of Canadian women. It is an interdisciplinary course that examines the social and cultural construction of gender, and the way this shapes systems of knowledge, social institutions and social policy. We will examine the interconnections of gender with race, ethnicity, class and sexuality, address how women’s lives and identities are shaped by the intersection of oppression and privilege, and locate the nature of feminist activism.

This course will help students to develop critical and analytical skills by investigating popular stereotypes and assumptions about sexual difference and the effects that such assumptions have had within social institutions, such as law, politics, work, religion, media and the family. We will study popular and controversial debates that have been central to the development of women’s studies and the equality rights movement, including topics such as pornography, cultural representations of women, sexual violence, and human rights. Students will be expected to analyze how Canadian women have been affected by individual and institutional power relations.

Required readings:
Margaret Atwood, The Handmaid’s Tale (Seal Publishing, 1998) (any edition will do)
Custom courseware package, available at the University booksore

Recommended

Course Requirements and Grading Structure:
10% Essay Proposal and Annotated Bibliography
25% Essay Research
15% Mid-term test
25% Final Exam
15% Seminar Participation
5% Reading Responses: choose 5 of 9 possible responses
5% Participation in two debates (during tutorials)

The Department of Women’s Studies encourages clarity of thought and expression and good writing. Students will be evaluated on these skills in all courses given by the Department.