WS 310-4  Special Topic: Women & Competition

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In the 2000s, issues raised by economic, technological and other changes present a growing challenge to what Helen Longino (1987) called the "ideology of competition", a normalizing description of power and resources within human societies which both valorizes the existing status quo and limits the possibilities for constructive change. In this course we will investigate the relationship between the creation of an ideal competition and the maintenance of marginalization.

This course will deal with three main themes:

1. **The Competition System**: a series of multi-reinforcing worldviews from the natural sciences (survival of the fittest), sociology (professionalization and the control of knowledge), economics, (perfect market competition), politics (social contract), and sports ("winning isn’t everything - it’s the only thing") construct an understanding of violence as not only natural, but necessary to human existence;

2. **The Mechanisms of Marginalization**: from direct physical coercion through a range of ways of exercising power over others, an ideology of competition can be used in such issues as population control, structural adjustment and sustainable development to perpetuate systems of domination;

3. **Alternatives**: feminist concepts of sisterhood, cooperation, community and caring have changed over the last thirty years to provide deeper and stronger conceptualizations of other ways of knowing and being.

**Required readings:**


**Assignments and Evaluation:**

- Participation and Attendance: 10%
- Research essay (10 – 12 pages): 30%
- Class presentation: 5%
- Article review: 10%
- Journal: 10%
- Midterm: 35%

**Prerequisites:** 60 credit hours

**Designated credit:** Students can apply this course toward 4 upper division credits in the Liberal Studies Certificate

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**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.**