
INTRODUCTION TO GENDER STUDIES

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

The ironic thing about being a full-time administrator who directs a Center for Teaching and Learning is that I do not get to teach as often as I would like. At my institution, I teach as an adjunct and will, on occasion, fill in for faculty members who are on sabbatical. This may only occur every couple of years, so when I can teach I take the opportunity to try out new ideas, pedagogical methods, and new curriculum in my courses. In spring 2012, I was offered the opportunity to teach Introduction to Gender Studies, which is a twice-weekly, face-to-face course taught at the 100-level. The course is capped at 30 students and is comprised of a mix of students from all of the undergraduate levels. In addition to being one of three courses that are a required core component for the Women and Gender's Studies Minor, the course also meets a cultural diversity requirement in the general education curriculum.

I began my course design process by reflecting on questions fundamental to backward design. In backward design, "form follows function," with instructors focusing on "desired results" before looking at "content, methods, and activities most likely to achieve those results" (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005, pp. 14, 15). Thinking of my desired results first, I asked myself: What are the essential questions that I want my students to ask throughout the course? What is it that I want my students to know, do, and care about? What skills would my students need to practice throughout the semester? What kinds of assignments would help them to build those skills? And, lastly, what kinds of tools could I use to best measure my students' learning?

Based on my answers to these questions, I chose three main ways that I wanted to innovate within my course design: (1) structurally, I wanted to move beyond a course that was organized around weekly topics ("gender and work," "gender and play," or "gender and media"), a typical mode of teaching introductory courses in women's and gender studies; (2) I wanted to embed more multimedia elements alongside reflective activities throughout the course to help students connect the content with their own experiences; and (3) I wanted to create a course using principles of universal design, a philosophy of learning that I often discuss with faculty in my role as an administrator, but up until teaching this course, had not actually implemented myself in the classroom.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Knowing that I wanted students to be able to practice applying gender studies terms and ideas from the beginning of the semester, I chose to organize the course around different forms and levels of analysis. Students would begin by analyzing language, shift to visual analysis, explore language and visual analysis in combination, and end by examining discourse analysis and discourse communities—all through a lens of gender studies. I noted these different forms of analysis as our "goals" for each week on the course schedule.

An additional reason for this structural choice was to encourage my students to have an "intersectional" view of gender studies from the beginning of the course. Intersectionality, a term that refers to the "interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power" (Davis 2008, 68), is a common theme in women's and gender studies curriculum. However, intersectional curriculum can be impeded by a course structure designed around such topical divisions of "gender and race" or "gender and disability" that do not allow for the exploration of the complexity of intersectional identities. By asking students to focus on learning different forms of analysis, I knew that I could incorporate a diverse range of readings and topics that would help students engage with intersectionality in a range of ways.

Lastly, this course structure offers students the opportunity to engage with gender studies from an interdisciplinary perspective. Our course text, *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology*, edited by Estelle Disch (2009) offered a range of perspectives from psychology, history, sociology, science, and political science that augmented the analyses that students were practicing both in and outside of our class. By focusing on forms of analysis, I had more flexibility when choosing course readings and multimedia to ensure a range of disciplines were represented.

MULTIMEDIA AND REFLECTION

Once I chose forms and levels of analysis as an organizing structure for the course, embedding multimedia and reflective activities became a fun challenge. The use of multimedia and reflection within the course were built into the course schedule that students could view in the syllabus. Columns for the weekly goal, the readings, multimedia to view each week, as well as a weekly journal prompt helped students to see how each of these components were related to one another and to the students' learning of the material.

For example, in the first several weeks of the course, we looked at the lyrics of Kanye West's song "Golddigger" using literary analysis. We then examined, without hearing the accompanying sound, the music video that was created for "Golddigger" using visual analysis. Finally, we explored both the literary and visual components of the song by comparing West's music video and song with the original song that he samples from, "I Got a Woman" by Ray Charles, as well as with a version of Ray Charles's song performed by the white musician John Mayer. Because the songs offer differing messages regarding gender, sexuality, class status, and other themes, I paired our final analysis with Audre Lorde's essay "Man Child" about her reflections on raising a son in a lesbian household. Students were then asked to answer the following journal prompt: "How might Audre Lorde rewrite Kanye West's lyrics? Offer a new version based on her tone, voice, and arguments in 'Man Child'."

To further encourage reflection beyond the weekly journal assignments, I also created two "synthesis weeks" during weeks five and twelve of the semester so that students would have the time and space to make connections between readings and multimedia materials. During "synthesis weeks," students were not assigned readings; instead, students engaged in classroom activities focused on finding relationships between the articles and multimedia that we had encountered thus far in the course. Although I offered no exams during the course, these weeks served as a kind of comprehensive review for students and also allowed students to have a break from receiving more content so that they could process the materials we had already covered.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Universal design (UD) emphasizes the creation of a learning environment that varies in modes of presentation, the forms of evidence that students can provide to show their learning, and in motivational strategies. Meant to benefit the widest possible population of diverse learners, UD has been shown to increase student engagement, persistence, and completion in individual courses and degree programs (Field, Sarver & Shaw, 2003). Although originally intended for students with disabilities, universal design principles have been shown to benefit all students (Burgstahler, 2012; Durre, Richardson, Smith, Shulman & Steele, 2008) because of the range of learning preferences that students bring to the classroom given their previous educational experiences, their individual interests, and their unique motivations for learning.

The classroom activities and assignments I created to help my students engage with the Kanye West text are one example of how I attempted to integrate universal design (UD) components into my classroom throughout the semester. By using video, audio, and written text, I was offering three different methods of presentation for my students. I also tried to differ in my modes of presentation within the syllabus as well. For instance, I included a colored diagram that I entitled "Your Guide to Success in Introduction to Gender Studies" that visually outlines six steps I wanted students to complete each week in the course: (1) Know the Goal, (2) Read the Literature, (3) Attend Class, (4) Explore Multimedia, (5) Apply & Experiment, and (6) Reflect On, Check, and Share Your Learning. Rather than offered a bulleted list, I hoped this image would be more visually engaging to students.

For the final project that students would complete to demonstrate their learning, I also used UD principles. Students were asked to:

- 1) communicate a political, social, or cultural argument to a specific audience;
- 2) demonstrate their knowledge of gender studies and the intersections between gender studies and other academic/activist movements;
- 3) integrate reflections on their own abilities to create social change from a particular political, social, and cultural context.

The medium through which students completed this project was up to them. Various options such as writing a novella, essay, song, annotated bibliography, short screenplay, or set of poems; creating an art project, short video, digital narrative (audio essay with pictures), comic strip or graphic novella; designing an "app" for smart phones or a game for children or adults were offered to students; or performing a short play, interpretive dance, or monologue. Milestones with guiding questions and mini-assignments were provided throughout the semester to ensure that students stayed on track. Each milestone asked that students answer some guiding questions and complete a "mini assignment" related to their final project (the final project and milestone descriptions are included at the end of this article). By "scaffolding" this project with four reflective milestones, I was able to ensure that students did not save all of their work for the final project until the end of the semester. Thus, the projects that were submitted were the product of several weeks of contemplation and design.

SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome! Here is what the Catalog has to say about this course:

This interdisciplinary course provides an introduction to the key topics and debates that have shaped the field of gender studies, including queer studies, masculinity studies, and women's studies. Through lecture and class discussion of texts from literature, film, history, psychology, and sociology, we will examine the pervasive influence of gender on the structure of society and our everyday experiences. What role does gender play in our understanding of love, friendship, sexuality, and even violence? Topics will include biological arguments about gender and sexuality; the social construction of gender and identity; intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality; masculinity and femininity; and theories of sexual difference and the construction of sexuality (4 credits).

In our section of this course this year we will focus primarily on the intersections between gender studies and the experiences of people of color, the LGBTQQ population, poor people, and other groups.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology* edited by Estelle Disch (2009)
- Assorted assigned readings will be available online through our course's Blackboard (Bb) site

COURSE GOALS

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have developed:

- ☑ an understanding of the complexity and interdisciplinarity within gender studies
- ☑ knowledge of the intersectional relationship between issues within gender studies and the experiences of people of color, the LGBTQQ population, differently-abled bodied people, poor people, and other groups
- ☑ an increased understanding of the theoretical, political, historical, and social foundations of gender studies
- ☑ knowledge of the skills needed to examine topics of gender and feminist studies
- ☑ an increased understanding of how issues within gender studies impact and influence their own lives

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate:

- ☑ proficiency in critically thinking about gender issues
- ☑ skills for critically reading written and visual texts
- ☑ knowledge of selected theories within feminist, queer, and masculinity studies that are influenced by a variety of disciplines
- ☑ competence in utilizing methods of interdisciplinary feminist analysis that emphasize the intersectionality of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality in shaping institutions and cultures
- ☑ reflective skills for exploring the role of social diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

(Please note that each set of requirements is weighted and point values may not match overall percentages in the gradebook):

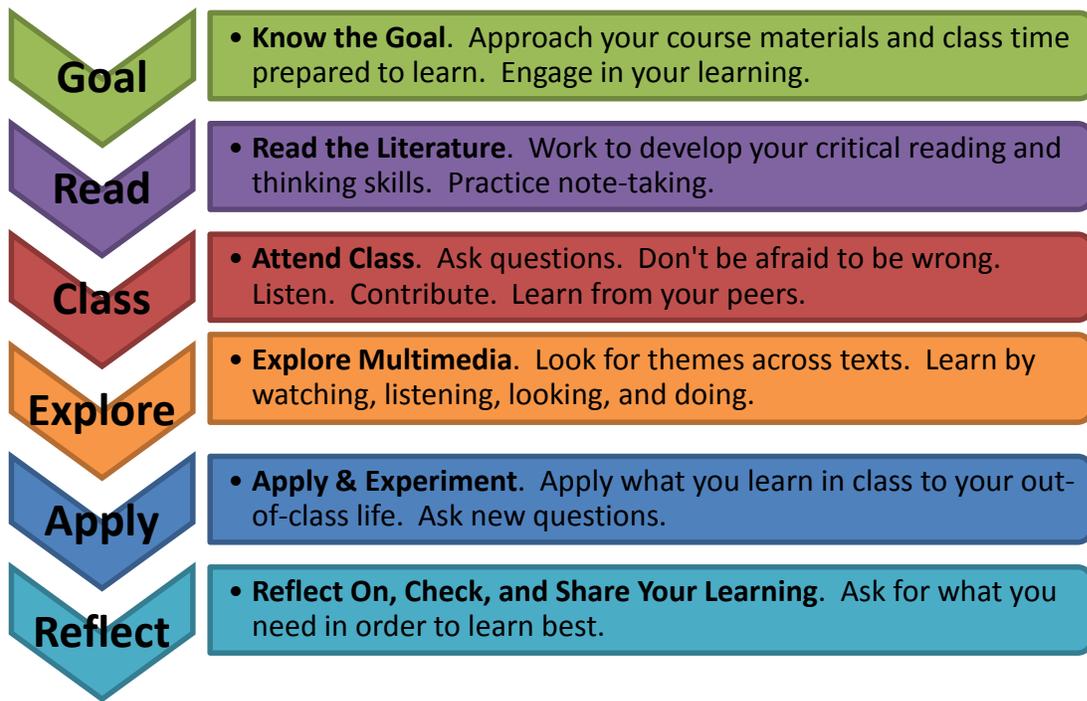
Weekly Reflections X 10	10 points each (w/ 1 dropped)	20% overall
Reading Journal Entries X 2	10 points each	15% overall
Class Participation	25 points total	15% overall
Milestones X 4	20 points each	20% overall
Final Project	100 points total	30% overall

A note on class participation

I measure class participation based on the following criteria: arriving to class on time; paying attention during short lectures; attentive watching and listening to screenings of films, songs, or other media; respectful listening when I or your peers are speaking; your ability to be fully engaged in your learning without texting, checking your phone or email, or participating in other digital distractions; your ability to stay awake, etc. If you are unable to meet the above criteria, I will take away participation points throughout the semester. Keep in mind you start the semester with ALL your points, so don't lose them! If you are distracting others in your lack of participation, you will hear from me via email or in a short face-to-face conference before or after class.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ASSIGNMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS

Each week you will be asked to do six things:



The best way to be successful in this class is to do each of these things every week. Consider the above visual "Your Guide to Success in Introduction to Gender Studies"!

As part of your reflection for the course, you will be asked to respond to a **weekly journal prompt** that will be turned in the following Tuesday (one of ten can be dropped).

Two times during the semester, you will also be asked to share a **reading journal** with the class for a day of readings. This reading journal will be posted online for your peers to read and respond to and engage with. More information on the reading journals will be given out the second day of class along with a sign-up sheet.

Lastly, you will be asked to complete a **final project** for the course that displays your ability to:

- 1) Communicate a political, social, or cultural argument to a specific audience
- 2) Demonstrate your knowledge of gender studies and the intersections between gender studies and other academic/activist movements
- 3) Integrate reflections on your own ability to create social change from a particular political, social, and cultural context

To help you prepare and plan for this final project, I have incorporated four "**milestones**" into the course. You will learn more about the final project and the milestones week two of class.

Each of your assignments will be assessed with the following scale:

GRADING SCALE

97-100 = A+	87-89 = B+	77-79 = C+	67-69 = D+	59 or below = failing grade
94-96 = A	84-86 = B	74-76 = C	64-66 = D	
90-93 = A-	80-83 = B-	70-73 = C-	60-63 = D-	

Detailed expectations for each assignment will be provided in advance so you know how you will be evaluated.

Late assignments will be docked 2% of the grade per day that they are late.

ATTENDANCE

I take attendance. If I have begun class by the time you enter, you should make sure that I counted you as present by checking with me after class. More than two absences will affect your final grade by 2% per absence, with a maximum penalty of 10%. If you know that you will be absent due to illness or a family emergency, please let me know via email and we can set up a meeting to discuss what we covered during your absence.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Any student who is discovered to have engaged in an act of academic dishonesty will receive a zero on the assignment and possibly fail the course. **Plagiarism** includes representing someone else's ideas or words as your own or failing to provide complete and accurate citations for both direct quotations and paraphrased ideas. Academic dishonesty also includes submitting work already submitted in another

class unless you have obtained my permission to revise or re-use that work. If you have questions, you are responsible for asking me BEFORE submitting assignments.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Please note that all assignments should be completed for the class date assigned. All readings come from our course text unless otherwise noted. (Bb) = the reading is posted on our course site.)

Week	Goal	Readings	Multimedia	Reflection
1	Contextualize course content and introduce structure and expectations	None.	Lady Gaga's Politics and Mission	What are you most looking forward to in this course? What do you think will be the most challenging component? The most interesting component?
	Gender Terminology and Socialization	Lorber , "The Social Construction of Gender" (112-119); Barnett and Rivers , "Men and Women are From Earth" (226-229); "X: A Fabulous Child's Story" (Bb)	Hungry Man Commercial	
2	Understand how gender and language mutually construct one another.	Crittenden , "Sixty Cents to a Man's Dollar" (433-440); Graff , "What is Marriage For?" (345-349)	Listen to Golddigger song by Kanye West	How might Audre Lorde rewrite Kanye West's lyrics? Offer a new version based on her tone, voice, and arguments in "Man Child."
	(Language Analysis)	Lorde , "Man Child" (335-341); Atkin & Rich , "JAP-Slapping" (70-73); Flagg , "Birmingham, Alabama" (Bb)		
3	Understand how constructions of gender are maintained and strengthened by the visual.	Jeffreys , "Making Up" (165-185); Byrd , "Claiming Jezebel" (248-256); Neal , "New Black Man" (633-338)	Watch Golddigger music video w/out sound	What did you learn this week about how power hierarchies are systemic? Where do you see this evident in your own life?
	(Visual Analysis)	McIntosh , "White Privilege" (78-82); Johnson , "Patriarchy, the System" (98-106); Nelson , "Who's the Fairest?" (136-140)		
4	Understand how	Rust , "The Impact of Multiple Marginalization"	Watch & Listen	Watch one of the linked videos on our course website

	combinations of language and the visual cause new constructions of gender. (Language and Visual Analysis)	(289-296); Ybarra , "I am a Man" (341-344); Barres , "Does Gender Matter?" (383-392)	Golddigger music video w/ sound	for week four and answer the questions on your "mini-assignment" handout.
		Parker , "For the White Person" (225); Collins , "The Past is Ever Present" (51-64); Mohanty , "Under and (Inside) Western Eyes" (88-97)		
5	Review and synthesize material from previous weeks (catch up week)	None	Videos from previous weeks	Milestone # 1 Project Structure
6	Understand how gender functions within discourse(s). (Discourse Analysis-Part 1)	Kimmel , "Masculinity as Homophobia" (149-155); Katz , "Eminem's Popularity" (517-529)	Eminem music videos	Offer a critical reading of one of Eminem's music videos or one of his songs (just lyrics) using arguments from either Kimmel and Petrie (or both).
		Petrie , "Real Men," (230-234); Campo , "Does Silencio" (615-621)		
7	Understand how gender functions within discourse(s). (Discourse Analysis-Part 2)	Wright , "To Be Poor and Transgender" (622-627); Zarembka , "American's Dirty Work" (451-460); Goodwin , "The Ultimate Growth Industry" (552-556)	Transgeneration clips	Offer your observations on a discourse community that we have not yet discussed in class. Describe your community of choice including observations on language, clothing, music, food culture, and other areas and make sure to include a definition of "discourse" somewhere in your reflection.
		Enloe , "Wielding Masculinity" (560-568); McGowan , "Fort Bragg" (491-495); Benedict , "The Private War" (569-576); Svirsky , "The Women's Peace Movement" (650-654)		
8	Understand how gender identity is maintained & strengthened within certain discursive	Kimmel , "What About the Boys?" (369-382); Due , "Growing Up Hidden" (147-148); Sadker & Sadker , "Missing" (362-368)	Greeting card analysis, toy commercials posted online	Milestone # 2 Project Argument
		Anderson , "Gay Athletes"		

	communities. (Cultural Analysis)	(469-474); Messner , "Boyhood" (119-135); Cahn , "Muscle Moll" (Bb)		
9	SPRING BREAK!			
10	Understand how gender identity is maintained & strengthened within certain discursive communities and how this has political ramifications. (Cultural Analysis and Politics)	Zimmerman , "Where are the Women?" (257-261); Douglas and Michaels , "The New Momism" (235-247); Gerson , "Dilemmas of Involved Fatherhood" (325-334)	Commercials for Tide and Jiff (Bb)	Compare Wallace's argument and evidence to the arguments and evidence offered in the comments following her article. What did you find effective and why?
		Acker , "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies" (Bb); Wallace , "The Sex Difference in Sex Scandals" (http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/05/the-sex-difference-in-sex-scandals/239155/); also read all comments with article	Rachael Maddow clip (Bb)	
11	Understand how gender identity is challenged and performed in alternative cultures and grassroots movements.	Hernández & Leog , "Feminism's Future" (639-642); Collins , "Bloodmothers" (318-324)	Two Spirit People clip (Bb)	What was the most "alternative" thing that you read about this week? Why was it different for you? How does it relate (or does it) to power structures that we have been talking about thus far (patriarchy, heterosexism, etc.)?
		Allen , "Angry Women," (65-69); Silko , "Yellow Woman" (201-203); Allen , "Introduction" (Bb)		
12	Review and synthesize material from previous weeks (catch up week)	None	Stanford Prison Experiment video (Bb)	Milestone # 3 Project Evidence
13	Understand that gender-related activism occurs on a spectrum.	Enloe , "The Globetrotting Sneaker" (461-468); NOMAS , "Statement of Principles" (631-632); Potter , "Chapter Seven	Jody Williams video on the necessity of activism (Bb)	Describe an activist spectrum based on what we've read and seen throughout the semester. Where do you see Lady Gaga on this spectrum? Academics?

		Hundred" (Bb)		You?
		DeLorey , "Health Care Reform" (603-606); Gozemba & Kahn , "Free to Marry" (350-352)		
14	Understand the current challenges in gender studies and explore Where Do We Go From Here?	Ulen , "Tapping Our Strength" (642-649); Arditti , "Women's Human Rights" (654-670); Reagon , "Coalition Politics" (Bb)	Video on social media and online activism (Bb)	Create a "concept map" of all of the authors we have read this semester and make sure to identify how you are categorizing them and relating them to one another. Further instructions and examples will be provided in class.
		None – Presentations	You provide	
15	Presentations	None – Presentations	You provide	Milestone # 4 Project Meta-Reflection
16	FINAL WEEK – Final Project Due Milestone # 4 Project Meta-Reflection Due			

The above schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better student learning.

MILESTONE(20)/JOURNAL(10)/REFLECTION(10) GRADING RUBRIC

	5/2.5	4/2	3/1.5	2/1
Reflection Questions, Journal Questions, Milestone Guiding Questions & Mini-Assignment	Student answers each question completely and thoroughly with thoughtful responses.	Student answers each question. Assignment is complete.	Student answers some questions. Assignment is mostly complete, but missing some components.	Student answers at least one question, but most questions are left unanswered. Assignment is incomplete and missing most components.
Inclusion of Course Materials and Concepts	The student offers clear connections to course materials and topics that are thoughtfully	The student offers clear connections to course materials and topics that show	The student presents ideas from the course, but some need to be more fully	The student presents ideas from course in a basic way. There is minimal

	articulated. Several useful connections are made with course content.	comprehension of course content, terms and ideas.	developed. The student attempts to make connections with course content.	connection to course content and/or there is a lack of comprehension of course ideas and terms.
Personal and Productive Engagement with Subject	Student not only follows the basic requirements for the assignment, but demonstrates a serious, thoughtful and studied engagement.	Follows basic requirements for the assignment. While some components may be lacking, the work demonstrates progress in central learning objectives during the course.	Only nominally follows basic requirements for the assignment, and shows a passing engagement with the assignment.	Does not follow basic requirements for the assignment, and shows little or no engagement with the assignment.
Effective Understanding and Application of Conventions	Student has carefully and thoughtfully proofread his or her work according to appropriate stylistic conventions. There should be few or no mistakes in spelling, grammar, word choice, and punctuation.	Work generally proofread, but some conventions have not been followed. There are more than a few mistakes in spelling, grammar, word choice, or punctuation, but these mistakes don't obscure the student's ideas.	Work has not been well proofread, and several important stylistic conventions are not followed. There are several distracting mistakes in spelling, grammar, word choice, or punctuation that may obscure the student's ideas.	Work has been poorly proofread, and stylistic conventions are not followed in any way. There are many distracting mistakes in spelling, grammar, word choice, and punctuation that obscure the student's ideas.
Comments:				

FINAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

<p>For your final project in this course, you are asked to demonstrate both your knowledge of gender studies and your critical reading, thinking, and creating skills.</p> <p>The medium through which you complete this project is up to you (some suggestions are below), but you must do the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Communicate a political, social, or cultural argument to a specific audience 2) Demonstrate your knowledge of gender studies and the intersections between gender studies and other academic/activist movements 2) Integrate reflections on your own ability to create social change from a particular political, social, and cultural context <p>The course is structured to help you scaffold this project through four "milestones" that occur during weeks 4, 8, 12, and 15. For each milestone (see right), I offer guiding questions to help you as you develop and shape your projects as well as short "mini-assignments" that you will turn in each of those weeks along with your answers to the questions.</p> <p>Potential Project Mediums:</p> <p><i>Write:</i> a novella, essay, song, annotated bibliography, short screenplay, or set of poems</p> <p><i>Create:</i> an art project, short video, digital narrative (audio essay with pictures), comic strip or graphic novella</p> <p><i>Design:</i> an "app" for smart phones, a game for children or adults</p> <p><i>Perform:</i> a short play, interpretive dance, or monologue</p>	<p><i>Milestone # 1 Guiding Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who is your intended audience and why? - What is your medium? - What are the opportunities and challenges of this medium? - What is the central goal of your project? <p><i>Mini-assignment:</i> draft a plan with at least 5 steps that you will need to follow to accomplish your project in the remaining time that you have this semester (assign your own deadlines for each step).</p> <p><i>Milestone # 2 Guiding Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify a strong argument in one of our texts. What makes that argument strong? - What are the top three things that make a clear argument? - How will you include these components in your project? How do you plan to make your project's argument clear? <p><i>Mini-assignment:</i> Write a one-sentence, three-sentence, and five-sentence explanation of your project's argument, adding details with length.</p> <p><i>Milestone # 3 Guiding Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What kinds of evidence are you providing to support your argument (textual, visual, personal experience, etc.)? - How do authors' arguments within our course texts support your argument? - Have you integrated course ideas from all the previous weeks? - Are each of your main points adequately supported? <p><i>Mini-assignment:</i> Create a visual map of your project's supporting evidence.</p> <p><i>Milestone # 4 Guiding Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was challenging for you about completing this project?
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	<p>- What did this project help you learn about yourself, about others, and about the world around you?</p> <p>- What is a piece of content from this course that will stick with you long-term? Why?</p> <p><i>Bonus:</i> What should I add to "Your Guide for Success" in the syllabus?</p>
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READINGS USED IN THE COURSE

- Acker, J. (2008). "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." In *The Gendered Society Reader*, edited by Michael S. Kimmel & Amy Aronson. New York: Oxford University Press. 296-309.
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- Cahn, S.K. (2003). "From the 'Muscle Moll' to the 'Butch' Ballplayer." In *The Politics of Women's Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance, and Behavior*, edited by Rose Weitz. New York: Oxford University Press. 67-81.
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