ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY  
DEPT. OF WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES  

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN  
WSTD 3800-01/POLS 3930-02  

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Office hours: Tuesday 1-2:00, Thursday 12:30-1:30, and by appointment  

Spring 2016  
T-Th 11-12:15  

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES  
This course examines current issues and responses to the problem of gender-based violence. We will focus especially on the topics of rape/sexual assault, child sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, stalking, and sexual harassment. We will discuss ongoing controversies about the causes and effects of such violence and examine the psychological, legal, sociological, and political discourses surrounding these issues.  

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to  
• identify cultural and structural sources of gender-based violence;  
• understand how the intersections of gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity, class, and other characteristics are reflected in women’s experiences of gender-based violence;  
• apply key concepts and approaches from a variety of disciplines, including Women’s and Gender Studies, Political Science, Sociology, and Psychology, to analyze the problem of violence against women and responses to it in the U.S.;  
• propose appropriate individual and policy responses to violence against women; and  
• articulate the ways in which gender-based violence is a social justice issue.  

PREREQUISITES  
There are no prerequisites for this course.  

TEXTS  
The following required text is available in the university’s bookstore:  
• There are many additional assigned articles. Some are available on the internet and others on Blackboard.  

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS  
REQUIREMENTS:  
Class attendance: It is important to attend each class meeting so that you remain engaged with the course material and discussions. You may miss a total of two class periods during the
semester for any reason (you need not provide an excuse); additional absences will lower your grade. I strongly urge you to save your excused absences for when you are sick.

Class participation and preparation: Since the class periods will be primarily discussion based, your substantial, consistent, and thoughtful contributions to class discussion (as both a speaker and a listener) are essential. I will use participation in class discussions as a factor in deciding borderline grades for the course.

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**METHODS OF EVALUATION**

Your final grade in this course will be determined as follows:

**10% Daily reflections.** You will need to bring to class a list of five things that you learned from each day’s assigned readings (e.g., a bullet point list). These can be academic notes in the traditional sense, if you want, or they can include topics such as things that surprise you, things that do/don’t resonate with your own experience, what you have learned in other courses that is relevant to this issue, or how you might use this information in your life. We will use these as a basis for some class discussions, and they should also assist you when you study for your exams and write your papers for the course. Your individual entries need not be full sentences, but feel free to include longer reflections if you want. Include some indication of which readings prompted each entry. Please write/type each day’s reflections on a separate sheet of paper and date each sheet. Turn in each week’s reflections on Thursday at the end of class. I will grade them credit/no credit. If you turn in 90% or more of these during the semester, you will receive an A for this portion of the course; 80%-89% a B; 70%-79% a C; 60%-69% a D; and fewer than 60% an F.

**20% Short papers (10% each).** You will be required to write two 2-3 page papers. In the first one, you will analyze your state’s laws regarding its rape/sexual assault laws. In the second one, you will choose one representation of violence against women in the media and analyze it, drawing on assigned course readings (this can then be incorporated into your later media project).

**20% Take-home midterm exam.** I will give you two essay questions pertaining to the material we have covered in class. You will be asked to write a 2-3 page answer to each question, to be turned in on the date specified. You will have one week to complete the exam.

**25% Media project.** You will choose some everyday representations of violence against women in the media (e.g., news reports, advertisements, magazine articles, or episodes of a TV show) and write a 6-8 page paper critically analyzing the assumptions and expectations they promote about gender-based violence. You will also assess the extent to which these representations confirm and/or challenge the ideas we have read about and discussed during the semester.

**5% In-class presentation of your media project.** Each student will sign up to do her/his 8-minute presentation during one of the last two class periods of the semester.
20% Final exam. During the last week of classes I will give you a set of 4 essay questions from which I will choose 2 questions for you to answer during the scheduled in-class final exam period (closed-book). The topics will span the entire semester.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

TRIGGER WARNING
This class contains a lot of information that may be triggering to people who have or have not experienced violence. If the material becomes emotionally overwhelming at any point during the semester, please talk to the instructor and/or seek the support of formal or informal resources that can help.

Academic Integrity and Honesty
The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student’s own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

Any clear violation of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. Possible sanctions for violation of academic integrity may include, but are not limited to, assignment of a failing grade in a course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University. Students should review the College of Arts and Sciences policy on Academic Honesty, which can be accessed on-line at http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml under “Student Resources” or in hard copy form in the Arts and Sciences Policy Binder in each departmental or College office.

Nondiscrimination Policy and Human Diversity
Saint Louis University has a strong and active commitment to promote human diversity and to ensure that all aspects of educational programs are carried forth without discrimination on the basis or age, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, or political orientation. A specific University goal is to foster “respect for diversity, other cultures, and belief systems.”

Students with Special Needs
In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

• Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to www.slu.edu/success. Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 314-977-8885 or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Writing Center
I encourage you to take advantage of the writing services in the Student Success Center; getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels. Trained writing consultants can help with any writing, multimedia project, or oral presentation. During the one-on-one consultations, you can work on everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. These services do fill up, so make an appointment early! For more information, or to make, change, or cancel an appointment, call 977-3484 or visit http://www.slu.edu/writingservices.xml.

COURSE OUTLINE
This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to accommodate instructional and/or student needs. Any changes will be announced at the beginning of the regularly scheduled class periods.

Class Schedule and Readings
(Blackboard items are indicated with an asterisk.)

January 12: Introduction to the course
In class video, Jackson Katz’s TED talk. “Violence Against Women: It’s a Men’s Issue.”
Available online at
https://www.ted.com/talks/jackson_katz_violence_against_women_it_s_a_men_s_issue

January 14: Rape history and law
Assignment for Short paper #1 handed out

January 19: Rape and trauma


January 21: Trauma and interventions

January 26: Anti-rape activism

January 28: Survivors who are often neglected

February 2: Rape on college campuses
**Short paper #1 due**

St. Louis University Sexual Assault Policy. Available on SLU website.
St. Louis University instructions for Reporting Sexual Assault. Available on SLU website.

February 4: Campus judicial responses
**Guest speaker** from SLU’s Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity.


February 9: Sexual violence in the military
Watch the film, “The Invisible War.”

February 11: Child sexual abuse
*Generation Five, "10 Frequently Asked Questions about Child Sexual Abuse"
February 16: Intimate partner violence: History, backgrounds, and contexts

February 18: Intimate partner violence and the civil justice system
*Sample Order of Protection

February 23: Intimate partner violence and the criminal justice system

February 25: Intimate partner violence and the criminal justice system
Take-home midterm exam handed out

March 1: Intimate partner violence: Women as survivors/Survivor-defined advocacy

March 3: Intimate partner violence: The clemency movement
Take-home midterm exam due
Assignment for Short paper #2 handed out

March 8 and 10: SPRING BREAK
No class.

March 15: Intimate partner violence and children and their mothers

March 17: Men and women who batter

March 22: Battered women’s movement: Critiquing systems
**Short paper #2 due**
March 29: Facing multiple oppressions

March 31: An intersectional analysis of family violence

April 5: Facing multiple oppressions

April 7: Stalking
Stalking Resource Center. “The Problem of Stalking” (pp. 1-12) and “Responses to the Problem of Stalking” (pp. 17-24). Available online at http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/RIC/Publications/e12032163.pdf

April 12: Stalking

April 14: Sexual harassment


April 19: Sexual harassment


April 21: Restorative justice

**Media projects due**


April 26 and 28

**In-class presentations of media projects**

Tuesday, May 10, noon-1:50

**In-class final exam**
Media Project

Be on the lookout for everyday representations of violence against women in the media. For the purposes of this project, these representations should come from print media (magazines, newspapers), television, or from readily available web-based sources made available to a wide audience during the last year.

The argument(s) you construct for this paper should be informed and supported by relevant readings from our syllabus. To what extent do these representations you have identified confirm and/or challenge the ideas we have read about and discussed this semester?

There are two general ways to approach this project:

1) Single topic or issue/Multiple media
For this version of the project, you explore how a particular example or story of violence against women (a particularly famous case, scandal, etc.) gets represented in a select number of media, keeping a critical eye out for how the story or the emphasis of the story changes according to the source. For example, you might compare how a single court case gets portrayed in a paper like The New York Times and one like The Post-Dispatch (a local/regional paper). No matter which version you choose, your goal will be to assess the representation of the violence (whether it is non-fiction or fictionalized) in light of the scholarship about the violence. That is, your argument needs to focus on the choices that reporters and media figures make in explaining the case to the public rather than on the facts of the case themselves (since it is very likely that we will never know the “truth” of any case).

2) Single media source/Multiple issues
For this version of the project, you examine the ways that multiple forms of violence against women (and indeed, the very idea of violence against women) emerge in a single media source. You could, for example, analyze the way Seventeen Magazine represents violence against women in a set number (say, two or three) of its issues, looking carefully, for example, at which issues it chooses to discuss, what the goals of the articles are, how the issues are framed, etc. Or you could examine a few episodes of a TV show like Law & Order: SVU, focusing on its producer’s choices about which forms of violence to depict as well as on the subtle (or not-so-subtle) choices made in the process. How do these choices fit in with and/or contradict the arguments about violence in the scholarship?

Keep in mind that your primary goal is to analyze these representations with the ultimate aim of deciding on the kinds of assumptions and expectations our media currently promotes about violence against women. These assumptions and expectations will not be the same everywhere (or even in all newspaper accounts or TV shows, etc.), and a sophisticated analysis will seek to reveal such contradictions or ambivalent responses.
It is important to keep in mind that not all media—or even most media—does a bad job all the time in representing violence against women. Be prepared to talk about positive as well as less ideal examples when they arise.

The final project will include a portfolio of 8-10 images/representations and a 6-8 page paper that comes to some conclusions about the kinds of messages that the media sends about violence against women.

Some analytical questions to ask of each image/representation*
- How simplistic or complex is the image?
- What is the message being sent by the image or representation?
- Who is the target audience for the representation? (How do you know?) How might the target audience relate to the message(s) that is/are communicated by the image?
- What or who gets left out of the image or representation?
- Whose interests are (and are not) served by this image or representation?
- How do the facts as presented resonate with the facts about this issue from class readings?
- How do the underlying assumptions endorsed by this image/representation resonate with the scholarly readings we have done?

Some analytical questions to ask of the collections as a whole (after collecting your images)*
- On the whole, how accurate are these images in communicating the problems related to violence against women? Which, if any, myths emerge?
- Are there any groups of women who systematically get ignored?
- Are some kinds of women more consistently represented as victims than others?
- Are some kinds of men more consistently represented as victimizers than others?
- Are some kinds of media, in your opinion, more responsible in their representations than others?
- Given your knowledge of the subject and the reading you have done this semester, what kinds of issues are favored by the media when it comes to violence against women? Which are more or less ignored?

Remember to frame your paper around an argument (or series of arguments) that addresses the relationship of media representations to the realities of violence against women as you have come to understand them. Do not organize your paper by discussing one image at a time; rather, integrate your discussions of individual representations within a larger argument that addresses one or more of the analytical questions you have asked of the project as a whole. Some images/representations may receive more attention than others—this is fine.

Include a reference list as part of your final paper. Use one of the standard citation and reference formats (e.g., APA, MLA, ASA).

*Please note that these questions are meant to help guide your thinking and should not be used as a structure for your paper.