GSWS 0100: Introduction to Gender, Sexuality, & Women’s Studies

Instructor: PJ Patella-Rey
Email: paprey@pitt.edu
Office: 402B Cathedral of Learning
Office Hours: Online by Appointment

Section: 1100 (26413)
Class Meetings: Monday/Wednesday 9:25am - 10:40am
Class Location: 402 Cathedral of Learning
Course Attributes: Writing Requirement Course; DSAS Diversity Gender Education Requirement; DSAS Social Science Gender Education Requirement; Gender, Sexuality & Women’s Studies

Course Description

What is sex? What is gender? What is sexuality? How are these concepts related to culture? To nature? To help you answer these important questions, this course will introduce you to the exciting field of gender and sexuality studies. We will use a range of interdisciplinary concepts, tools, and methods to understand and analyze sex, gender, femininity, masculinity, and sexuality. Through readings, multimedia, and class discussion, we will study how gender, sex, and sexuality are socially and culturally constructed. In addition, we will consider how gender and sexuality intersect with other identity categories such as race, class, ethnicity, nationality, age, and ability. Because we all have a gender and a sexuality, this course is crucial for any profession and for understanding the world around us. Taught in discussion-based sections, it is also a great opportunity for you to develop your written and oral skills. Also, you will learn to apply the critical vocabulary used in gender and sexuality studies to other fields of study. This course is open to all students regardless of background and has no prerequisite.

Textbooks

Required:

- All other course readings will be made available online.

Optional:
Course Objectives

- Demonstrate an introductory understanding of the field of gender, sexuality, and women’s studies, and utilize a range of interdisciplinary tools and methods for understanding and analyzing sex, gender, and sexuality in culture
- Develop a rich comprehension of both feminist and queer approaches to the social and cultural construction of gender, sex, and sexuality
- Construct and enhance a critical understanding of intersectionality, including an awareness of gender and its complex intersections with other social, cultural, and biological categories, including but not limited to sex, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, sexuality, ability, and age
- Cultivate a language framework for thoughtfully articulating the critical vocabulary in the field of gender, sexuality, and women’s studies
- Improve reading and writing skills through effective synthesis of written material and, subsequently, the ability to convey course concepts clearly and concisely both verbally and in writing
- Develop a skillset to think critically and thoughtfully about the self and others through a deepened understanding of how social, cultural, and biological categories shape our lives, and our understandings of the world

Topics To Be Explored

- Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies as an academic discipline
- Theories of the “nature” of gender and sexuality, including the influences of biology, social constructions, and socialization
- Portrayals of masculinity, femininity, and transgendered bodies as they are mediated and communicated to children and adults
- Gender roles in society in the realms of family, education, religion, healthcare, politics, and the workplace
- The concept of sexual orientation, its history, and its critics
- Intersections of ethnicity, socio-cultural differences, race, class, geography, culture, ability, neurodiversity, and more
- Cross-cultural definitions of gender, sex, and sexuality
- Historical shifts in these concepts and the language used to convey them
- Gender, sex, and sexuality as sites of privilege, oppression, power, and stigma
- Consent, its meaning, and its limits
General Expectations

The study of gender, sex, and sexuality poses questions for which there are few simple answers. Rather than seeking definitive truths, the goal of the course is a deeper understanding of the social structures that shape dominant assumptions about gender, sex, and sexuality as well as greater awareness of, and sensitivity for, people whose lived experience doesn’t neatly fit these expectations. If we are successful, this awareness is something that will inform the interactions you have with people across many facets of your life.

Our course readings and discussions will often focus on mature and potentially difficult or challenging topics. Readings/assignments may sometimes trigger strong feelings, and we may sometimes have emotional responses to the way others understand and discuss these topics. In some cases, conversations or materials that we cover may be sexually explicit in ways that would be problematic in other contexts. Before embarking on this course, you should take an honest personal inventory and make sure that you are ready to spend the semester engaging with this subject matter. That said, if you think one or two of the readings/topics might be especially challenging or unsettling for you, you can excuse yourself and let me know that you have done so for personal reasons.

All of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. Be open to seeing things from different perspectives, and be mindful of the ways that our identities may position us differently both in the classroom and in life more broadly. While we should strive to hold each other accountable (me included), we should all give each other the benefit of the doubt and recognize that each of us must undergo our own personal growth process. We all misspeak and have misunderstandings. What makes a classroom unique is that it is a safe place to make mistakes and to learn from them.

I expect everyone to come to class prepared to discuss the readings in a thoughtful and respectful way—in fact, the course depends on it. Before sure to read the syllabus and ask questions ahead of time. Similarly, if you are struggling to keep up with the course for personal reasons, be proactive and contact me (as well as the counseling center); it is much easier to make accommodations while the course is ongoing than to attempt to fix things after the fact.
If you commit to engaging in this manner, I am certain we will learn a great deal from one another and that the course will be an opportunity for both personal and intellectual growth.

## Assignments and Evaluation

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Participation and Professionalism</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Media Share</td>
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<td>Short Essay</td>
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<td>Book Review 1</td>
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<td>Book Review 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis Statement and Annotated Bibliography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Research Paper Draft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper Presentation</td>
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<td>Long Research Paper</td>
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**Attendance (10%)**: Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class (whether students are remote or in-person). Students will be marked “late” and receive only half credit if they arrive after their name is called. Given the difficulties associated with the global pandemic, reasonable accommodations/excuses will be made. You are encouraged to contact me in advance if you anticipate any issues.

**Participation and Professionalism (10%)**: This is a discussion-based course; therefore, familiarity with assigned readings and active participation are essential.

Students are expected to come to class ready to summarize the main claims of each reading in 1-2 sentences. Additionally, students should be ready to share a passage from each reading that they feel is particularly illuminating, controversial, or resonant. *The instructor may randomly call on students to share this information.*

Professionalism involves communicating in a timely and respectful manner. The instructor will generally respond to email messages within 2 business days, and you should endeavor to do the same. If unforeseeable circumstances create a need for an urgent message, please begin that message with
“Urgent:”; however, there are no guarantees that the instructor will be available on weekends or in less than 48 hours.

Professionalism also involves demonstrating awareness of the requirements set out in the syllabus, being prepared, and being proactive when accommodations are needed.

**Media Share (5%):** At the beginning of most classes, a student will give a short 5-7 minute presentation on a piece of media (e.g., a song, video clip, news article, poem, etc.) to initiate a discussion with the class. Be sure to address the following questions:

- Why is this relevant to course? (Does it relate to any of the previous conversations/readings?)
- Why do you find this interesting, or why did it resonate with you?
- What are three related questions that you have for the class to discuss?

**Short Essay (10%):** Pick any topic related to GSWS that interests you and write either:

1. A *news brief* that summarizes and synthesizes three recent news articles on a single topic. (The articles don’t necessarily need to cover the same event or “news peg” but need to be about the same general topic.)

2. A *personal essay* that connects three articles or other media to your own GSWS-relevant experience(s).

This assignment is an opportunity to get some initial feedback on your writing and to practice using APA style citations. Follow these formatting guidelines:

- 600-750 words (roughly 2.5-3 double-spaced pages)
- 12-point Arial font, double spaced
- Title and byline at top of first page
- No title page or abstract
- Otherwise, follow [APA style](#)
- Submit via CourseWeb in PDF format
- Refer [here](#) and [here](#) for information on reputable news sources

**Book Review 1 (10%) and Book Review 2 (10%):** This semester will feature book talks with Tina Horn, author of *SFSX*, and Raechel Anne Jolie, author of *Rust Belt Femme*. Your reviews are due before these talks. Reviews should include:

1. A brief (no more than one paragraph) summary of the plot.
2. A discussion of its connections to GSWS topics.
3. Your thoughts and reactions to the text and why you feel this way.
4. What you want to know more about and questions you have for the author.
These assignments are an opportunity to get more feedback on your writing and to further practice using APA style citations. Follow these formatting guidelines:

- 500-625 words (roughly 2-2.5 double-spaced pages)
- 12-point Arial font, double spaced
- Title and byline at top of first page
- No title page or abstract
- Otherwise, follow APA style
- Submit via CourseWeb in PDF format

**Thesis Statement and Annotated Bibliography for Research Paper (10%):** This assignment is your first step in developing a final paper; it is an opportunity to explore a GSWS-related topic that interests you. The topic does not have to be something we specifically covered in class but should fall within the themes of the course.

A thesis statement expresses the main idea of your paper in 1-2 sentences. A good resource for constructing clear and specific thesis statements can be found here.

Your annotated bibliography will identify four sources you plan to use in your short topic paper and include 1-2 paragraphs for each explaining how they will support your thesis. Information on constructing an annotated bibliography can be found here. Follow these formatting guidelines:

- 375-750 words (roughly 1.5-3 double-spaced pages)
- Include at least 6 sources (4 must be peer-reviewed/academic)
- 12-point Arial font, double spaced
- Title and byline at top of first page. No title page or abstract.
- Otherwise, follow APA style
- Submit via CourseWeb in PDF format

**Short Research Paper Draft (10%):** This paper will develop from your thesis statement and annotated bibliography. The paper must be between 1,000-1,250 words (roughly 4-5 pages long), and should cite a minimum of 4 sources. It should also include a Bibliography (this should be on its own page, that is not counted in the page count).

- 1250-1500 words (roughly 5-6 double-spaced pages)
- 12-point Arial font, double spaced
- Title at top of first page. No title page or abstract
- Divide paper into logical sections with subtitles. Consider including “Introduction” and “Conclusion” sections.
- Otherwise, follow APA style.
- Include at least 6 sources (4 must be peer-reviewed/academic)
- Make sure to have a clear argument that fits with the theme of the course
Submit via CourseWeb in PDF format

**Final Topic Paper Presentation (5%)**: Each student will give a presentation that is roughly five minutes in length. The presenter will concisely summarize the main points of their paper highlighting their conclusions and the sources used to support these conclusions.

- 4-5 minutes (be sure your presentations meet these time limits!)
- Make slides for paper title, thesis statement, and anything else you think might be helpful or engaging (you can be creative)
- Summarize the claim(s) you make in the paper and the evidence/argumentation you use to support these claims
- Having a well-organized paper broken up into sections that each have a distinct purpose should help make it clear how to organize the presentation
- Practice, practice, practices

**Final Research Paper (20%)**: This paper is a revision of your short draft, expanding and improving on the previous version. This paper should incorporate comments from the short topic paper. This paper should be between 7-8 pages long. To substantively address the topic, the paper should have a minimum of 7 sources. It should also include a Bibliography (this should be on its own page, that is not counted in the page count).

- 1750-2000 words (roughly 7-8 double-spaced pages)
- 12-point Arial font, double spaced
- Otherwise, follow [APA style](#).
- Title at top of first page. No title page or abstract
- Divide paper into logical sections with subtitles. Consider including “Introduction” and “Conclusion” sections.
- Include at least 10 sources (7 must be peer-reviewed/academic)
- Make sure to have a clear argument that fits with the theme of the course
- You may use “I statements” and draw from your own experience but only situate your perspective as an author, but only in the introduction
- Submit via CourseWeb in PDF format

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**Grading Scale:**

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<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98-100 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-97.9 %</td>
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<td>88-89.9 %</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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University and GSWS Program Policies and Statements

Cell Phone and Laptop Policy:

Electronic devices are not permitted to be used in class without permission from the instructor. A laptop, PDF reader, or other assistive device may be approved for note-taking, but these devices are solely to be used for class-related purposes.

Cell phones are not permitted to be used during class. If you are expecting an emergency call, or if you have any other reasonable reason for needing to have access to your phone during our scheduled meetings, please inform the instructor before class.

Using electronic devices for purposes not related to classroom activities will count against your participation grade.

Disability Resources and Services:

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890 as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. For more information, visit https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/drs/.

Writing Center:

The writing center is an excellent, free resource on campus that can help students better develop writing skills: writingcenter.pitt.edu

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz, exam, or paper will be imposed. For the full Academic Integrity policy, go to: http://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html

Violation of the Academic Integrity Code requires the instructor to submit an Academic Integrity Violation Report to the Dean’s Office.
The instructor will use Turnitin or other plagiarism checking software to ensure originality of student work.

**Classroom Recording Policy:**

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student’s own private use.

**Email Policy:**

Students are expected to read email sent to their University (username@pitt.edu) account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. Students that choose to forward their email from their pitt.edu at their own risk.

**Non-Discrimination Policy:**

As an educational institution and as an employer, Pitt values equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic and cultural diversity. Accordingly, the University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, disability, or status as a veteran. For more information, visit: [http://cfo.pitt.edu/policies/documents/policy07-01-03web.pdf](http://cfo.pitt.edu/policies/documents/policy07-01-03web.pdf)

**Gender-Inclusive Language Guidelines:**

Aspiring to create a learning environment in which people of all identities are encouraged to contribute their perspectives to academic discourse, the University of Pittsburgh Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies Program provides guidelines and resources regarding gender-inclusive/non-sexist language (gsws.pitt.edu/node/1432). Following these guidelines fosters an inclusive and welcoming environment, strengthens academic writing, enriches discussion, and reflects best professional practices.

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (e.g. first-year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

These guidelines fulfill the best intentions of the University of Pittsburgh’s Non-Discrimination Policy: [https://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/07/07-01-03.html](https://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/07/07-01-03.html).
Sexual Misconduct, Required Reporting, and Title IX:

The University is committed to combating sexual misconduct. As a result, you should know that University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence, to the University’s Title IX office so that the victim may be provided appropriate resources and support options. What this means is that as your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me, or of which I am somehow made aware.

There are two important exceptions to this requirement about which you should be aware:
A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here: http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report/confidentiality

An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as part of an academic project, classroom discussion, or course assignment, are not required to be disclosed to the University’s Title IX office.

If you are the victim of sexual misconduct, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:
* Title IX Office: 412-648-7860
* SHARE @ the University Counseling Center: 412-648-7930 (8:30 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F) and 412-648-7856 (AFTER BUSINESS HOURS)

If you have a safety concern, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Police, 412-624-2121. Other reporting information is available here: http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report

Flex@Pitt Class Format

Our class has been adapted to the Flex@Pitt guidelines in the following manner:

- This syllabus is designed to be compatible with Pitt’s different operational postures. Please review these postures as well as the COVID-19 Standards and Guidelines.

- In particular, note that the university-wide policy is for all classes to meet remotely during the first week and that in-person class meetings will only be permitted if/when the university shifts to a “guarded posture.”

- We will coordinate and revisit plans together throughout the semester. We may have to make small adjustments to the schedule to accommodate the both the needs of the class and external circumstances. These will be decided in advance with an opportunity for group discussion.

- I will lecture remotely all semester but (depending on operational posture) students may have some opportunities to interact in-person if you choose.
● The class will have a combination of synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (at your own pace) elements.

● The synchronous portions of the class will be a combination of real-time interaction (via Zoom), book talks with authors (via Zoom), and some (possible) in-class workshopping and discussion sessions.

● The asynchronous elements of the course will include: recorded slides/lectures and group chats, as well as the typical reading and writing assignments. We will also discuss the option of collective note-taking as an additional asynchronous resource.

● No student is required to attend any in-person sessions and may opt to take this class entirely remotely; however, students are expected to participate in all synchronous learning components of class in some manner (unless excused by the instructor).

● The university Zoom session recording requirement has been waived for our class to facilitate a safe environment for open discussion.

● The physical classroom will be arranged to ensure that each student in attendance can maintain the recommended safe distance from others; however, given the relatively small size of the classroom, these social distancing requirements do not allow for everyone to be present in class on the same day. We will decide as a class on attendance options so that everyone who wishes to can participate in any in-person components.

● All of course materials (except the required books) are available in Canvas and all assignments may be submitted via Canvas.

Course Schedule

Introduction

8/19: Course Introductions & Syllabus Overview

Unit 1: Core Concepts and Language
8/24: GSWS Language and Definitions

Read:

- Chatham University. (2019). “Sex and Gender 101.”

Reference:

- Genderbread Person (v4.0)
- American Psychologist.“ (n.d.). American Psychological Association Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People”

8/26: Privilege and Oppression

Read:


8/31: Intersectionality and Stigma

Read:


Writing Workshop

9/2: Workshop Day: Writing a Research Paper

[Short essay assignment due before class. Be ready to briefly discuss.]

Reference:
Unit 2: Sex and Bodies

9/7: The Social Construction of Sex

Read:


Listen:


9/9: Intersex Medicine

Read:

- Sharon E. Preves. “Intersex Narratives: Gender, Medicine, and Identity.”

9/14: Body Image & Eating Disorders

Read:

- Ty. (2019). “This is Your Brain on an Eating Disorder.”

9/16: Fat

Read:
● Kate Harding, SGS, “How Do You Fuck a Fat Woman?” [pp. 199-203]

Reference:


9/21: Dis/ability

[Watch In class: Astra Taylor's *Examined Life with Judith Butler & Sunaura Taylor*]

Read:

● Eli Clare, SGS, “‘Naming’ and ‘Losing Home.’” [pp. 147-155]

Reference:


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**Writing Workshop**

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9/23: Thesis Presentations and Discussion

[Thesis Statement and Annotated Bibliography Due]

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**Unit 3: Gender**

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9/28: Learning Gender

● Simone de Beauvoir. (1949). Excerpts from *The Second Sex.*

9/30: Gender Narratives I
[Watch in class: Real Boy documentary (cw: self-harm)]

Read:

- Raechel Anne Jolie. (2020). Rust Belt Femme. [cw: sexual assault]

10/5: Gender Narratives II

[Finish and discuss Real Boy documentary in class]

Read:


10/7: Rust Belt Femme Book Talk

[4:30pm book talk with Raechel Anne Jolie via Zoom. Book Review due before talk.]

Finish Reading:


10/12: Beyond Binaries

Read:

- Suzannah Weiss, Teen Vogue, “9 Things People Get Wrong About Being Non-Binary.”
- Sonya Bolus. “Loving Outside Simple Boundaries.”

10/14 Student Self-Care Day (no classes)

10/19: Gender Across Cultures

Read:

- [Watch in class: A Place in the Middle (2015) documentary]

Read:

- [Scan] PBS’s, “A Map of Gender Diverse Cultures.”
- Andrew Matzner. “O Au No Keia: Voices from Hawai’i’s Mahu and Transgender Communities.”
Unit 4: Sexualities

10/21: Sexual Socialization

Read:

- Nicholas Solebello and Sinikka Elliott. "We want them to be as Heterosexual as Possible: Fathers Talk about Their Teen Childrens Sexuality."
- Amy Schalet, MedGenMed, “Must We Fear Adolescent Sexuality?”

10/26: Sexual Difference & Cultural/Historical Situatedness

Read:

- Gayle Rubin, excerpt on “Benign Sexual Variation” from “Thinking Sex” (1984) [CourseWeb]

10/28: Bisexual, Asexual, Queer Identity

Read:

- Shiri Eisner. "What Is Bisexuality?"
- Rachel Hills and Frank Kobola, Cosmopolitan, “Three People Open Up About What it is Like to Be Asexual.”
- Alexander Cheves. 9 LGBTQ+ People Explain How They Love, Hate, and Understand the Word "Queer." them.

11/2: Hookup Culture & Consent

Read:


Listen:

- Hidden Brain, “Hookup Culture: The Unspoken Rules Of Sex On College Campuses”

11/4: Sex Work
Read:

[Watch Juno Mac’s “The Laws That Sex Workers Really Want” TED Talk]

- Charlotte Shane, *Tits and Sass*, “Getting Away With Hating It: Consent In the Context of Sex Work”

**11/9: SFSX Book Talk**

[4:30pm book talk with Tina Horn via Zoom. Book Review due before talk.]

Finish Reading:


**11/11: Dating & Discrimination**

Read:


**11/16: Student Presentations**

**11/18: Student Presentations**

[11/20: Last day for undergraduate day classes]

[12/5: Last Day of the Undergraduate Fall Term]