

**what are you  
gonna do  
with that?**

(WOMEN & GENDER STUDIES DEGREE)

**Thank You**

PROFESSOR GINGER  
MUELLER-TESTERMAN

SFSU  
WGS 690 CLASS  
SPRING 2023

# Hello readers! Welcome to our zine!

We are the seniors of the Women and Gender Studies Department. You might be wondering, “What in the heck is Women and Gender Studies?” –a question we get all the time. To that we answer, there is no set definition. Women and Gender Studies can be defined in many ways and its meaning depends on the person defining it.

To Kitty it means, “an interdisciplinary field of study that examines and challenges the relationships between gender and political, economic, and socio-cultural power”.

To Claire, “the freedom to study that which directly impacts me and to learn everything I possibly can about why things are the way they are and how we can leave this place better than how we found it”.

To Lin it means, “an interdisciplinary field of study that examines the ways that gender alongside other social categories such as race, class, sexuality and ability affect our lives”.

To Adrianna it is, “incorporating methods of resistance of the past to current social justice movements; especially if the issues relate to race, gender or sexuality”.

To Emma, “the connection of many different studies in a beautiful and unique way. The incorporation of social justice, sexuality studies, feminism, resistance movements, and many other studies all intersect together to create the field of WGS!”.

To Azzedine it is, “a place where we learn about the glass ceiling, patriarchy, neo-liberalism and more. Where we can express concern, as well as new information from people with different backgrounds, ethnicity and more. Where no one is scared of being wrong or scared of speaking up”.

Zariah defines it as, “a deep dive on the way society was created involving many social categories and defining factors like race, gender, class, sexuality, or economic and political factors and how they all intersect”.

Lorde, Audre. *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*. Penguin Books, 2018. Accessed 9 May 2023.

Malley, Nisha. “Sonya Renee Taylor Speaks to Radical Self Love at MCC.” *The Daily Nexus*, 17 February 2022, <https://dailynexus.com/2022-02-17/sonya-renee-taylor-speaks-to-radical-self-love-at-mcc/>. Accessed 10 May 2023.

National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda. “Reproductive Justice – In Our Own Voice.” *National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda*, 2023, <https://blackrj.org/our-issues/reproductive-justice/>. Accessed 5 May 2023.

Newman, Kathleen, and Emily Ruane. “Reclaiming Audre Lorde's Radical Self-Care.” *Refinery29*, 28 May 2021, <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2021/05/10493153/reclaiming-self-care-audre-lorde-black-women-community-care>. Accessed 10 May 2023.

Oxford Languages. “Capitalism.” *Google Search*, 23 February 2022, <https://www.google.com>. Accessed 25 April 2023.

Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights. “Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights.” *Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights- Legal Abortion Nationwide Now!*, 2023, <https://riseup4abortionrights.org/>. Accessed 3 May 2023.

Taylor, Sunsara. “Forced Motherhood Is Female Enslavement Make Roe's Reversal a Rallying Cry for a Real Revolution! | revcom.us.” *Revcom.us*, 18 January 2023, <https://revcom.us/en/forced-motherhood-female-enslavement-make-roes-reversal-rallying-cry-real-revolution>. Accessed 5 May 2023.

U.S. Census Bureau. “National Poverty in America Awareness Month: January 2023.” *Census Bureau*, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/stories/poverty-awareness-month.html>. Accessed 25 April 2023.

## Works Cited

Bradbeer, Harry, director. "Fleabag." Fleabag, created by Phoebe Waller-Bridge, season 2, episode 6, Amazon, 16 May 2019. Amazon Prime Video, [https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B0875W9DJ2/ref=atv\\_hm\\_mys\\_c\\_4I2SRv\\_2\\_1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B0875W9DJ2/ref=atv_hm_mys_c_4I2SRv_2_1). Accessed 26 April 2023.

BrockBank, James. "Revealed: The World's Best Value Theme Parks." Family Vacation Guide, YouTube, 23 February 2022, <https://www.thefamilyvacationguide.com/travel-guides/the-worlds-best-value-theme-park%20s/>. Accessed 10 May 2023.

Brown, Adrienne Marie, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha. *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*. Chico, CA, AK Press, 2019.  
Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Tenth Anniversary Edition*. Taylor & Francis, 1999. SFSU Library. Accessed 26 April 2023.

Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. Taylor & Francis, 2004. SFSU Library. Accessed 26 April 2023.

Dar-Nimrod, Ilan. "Do you think you're exclusively straight?" The University of Sydney, 20 August 2021, <https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2021/08/20/do-you-think-you-re-exclusively-straight.html>. Accessed 12 April 2023.

Fitzsimons, Tim. "Lesbians more accepted than gay men around the world, study finds." NBC News, 28 January 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/lesbians-more-accepted-gay-men-around-world-study-finds-n1118121>. Accessed 12 April 2023.

Lorde, Audre. "Audre Lorde: Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power THERE ARE MANY kinds of power, used and unused, acknowledged or otherwise." Squarespace, 25 August 1978, [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e7cf4825b02c00b6a142f0c/t/5f4bee98ceb27e4afe99bd7c/1598811800640/audre\\_lorde\\_cool-beans.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e7cf4825b02c00b6a142f0c/t/5f4bee98ceb27e4afe99bd7c/1598811800640/audre_lorde_cool-beans.pdf). Accessed 10 May 2023.

Women and Gender Studies focuses on a vast amount of important topics that all intersect in some way, shape, or form. We have all taken different classes and experienced different things. Maybe we've even interpreted some of the topics in contrasting ways; however, one thing remains the same: we are all Women and Gender Studies majors. This is our field, this is the experience we share. In that experience, we go through the routine questions that all college students go through: "What is your major and what do you plan to do with it?". These two questions are something we all dread answering, not because it has no definition or that we do not know the answer, but because it is hard to fit the boundless subject into one explanation. Whenever we try to explain it, we get different responses. Sometimes they are positive, such as Adrianna's experience with her activist friends who make connections between her major and real world issues. Or Emma's experience with people thinking it's interesting. There are neutral ones like Kitty's, where queer femmes and sapphics have said that majoring in WGS is hot, or people asking Azzedine what she plans to do with that, or even Claire's experience with small nods of feigned interest. And sometimes we get negative reactions like Zariah's experience with every person in her life without a college degree expecting her to explain her major to them and then putting zero effort into understanding it, or Lin's encounter with some guy who sighed and then sarcastically told them, "Good luck with finding a job".

Nevertheless, we have persevered through the good and bad responses. We have endured through the multitude of questions that mean well-but can often be more annoying than anything-and we made it through to where we are all graduating in either the Spring or Fall of 2023. Therefore, we'd like to send this message to our naysayers, to the ones who supported us, and to those interested in what our major entails. We hope by the end of this zine, you will have identified with one of our definitions of WGS - or formed your own definition of it - and that we have answered your questions about our major that knows no bounds. Now, let us show you what we can do.

**Sincerely,**  
**Dream Zine Team** 😊

**Intersectionality:** A term for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or oppression sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that are not always understood within conventional ways of thinking about anti-racism, feminism, or any kind of social justice advocacy.

- The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group; regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

**Liberation:** A commitment to a social transformation, to freeing our communities, and to a goal of equity, justice, love and pleasure.

**LGBTQIA+:** LGBTQIA+ is an all-encompassing abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity (Gay Center).

**Nonbinary:** A term used to describe a gender identity that does not fit within the traditional binary system of male and female. Nonbinary individuals may identify as having a gender that is a combination of male and female, neither male nor female, or a gender that is completely separate from the binary gender categories.

**Normativity:** The quality or condition of being in accordance with a set of norms, standards, or values. It is the idea that certain behaviors, actions, or beliefs are deemed as "normal," "appropriate," or "morally right" in a given society or culture.

**Oppression:** Using power to control in unjust ways, usually implemented and maintained through social systems.



# Glossary

**Asexual:** A term that may describe someone who does not feel sexual attraction to others. Asexuality is a spectrum, much like gender and sexuality.

**Capitalism:** The economic system that prioritizes private ownership, and profit over all else. Many issues we face today are hard to undo due to capitalism and the way profit has been prioritized over all else.

**Fascism:** A mass political movement that emphasizes extreme nationalism, militarism, and the supremacy of both the nation and the single, powerful leader over the individual citizen.

- **Christian fascism:** A term which is used to describe a far-right political ideology that denotes an intersection between fascism and Christianity.
- **Christian fascist:** An individual who is a follower of christian fascism.

**Gender:** "the ways culture and society reinforce what is masculine to go with the male sex and what is feminine to go with the female sex" (*Introduction to Transgender Studies* by Dr. Ardel Haefele-Thomas).

**Gender expression:** "outer appearance in public, which often focuses on clothing choices, cosmetics, hairstyle, and gender identity" (*Introduction to Transgender Studies* by Dr. Ardel Haefele-Thomas).

**#greenforabortion:** The Latin American abortion rights movement, also known as the "green tide" or "green wave"; has roots in Argentina, leading to its legalization on December 30, 2020 after more than 30 years of struggle. Marta Alanis, founder of Catholics for the Right to Decide, proposed wearing a green scarf as a "symbol of hope, health, life" at the 18th National Women's Meeting in Argentina in 2003. The "green wave" has made its way to US abortion rights movements.



## **Gaps in Knowledge**

Emma Newcomb

The first time I encountered Women and Gender studies ideology was in my second semester of college, and it was not even in a Women and Gender studies class. I was taking Sociology 1 at my community college, simply because I needed credits and I had never been exposed to the area of sociology before—I barely even knew what it was. I remember learning things that seem so baseline now, diving into topics such as the prison industrial complex, intersectionality, and the general topics of oppression and power. These things have come up in normal discussion in nearly all of my women and gender studies courses, but at the time, I had never truly been exposed to these subjects before. Discussions like the ones I have had in my Women and Gender studies classes were never brought up throughout my entire high school education. Being the eighteen year old I was, fresh out of high school, I did not follow along with the news very well (not that these topics receive much media coverage anyway). I remember feeling so upset and ashamed that I had not learned about these things earlier, and so confused as to why. Finding out the true history of this country and realizing that reforms throughout the years have not fundamentally changed anything in a lasting way was shocking and changed the way I see everything.

## **Zariah White**

Zariah Whites's major is Women and Gender Studies. She aspires to make a change in the world and to make a big impact in a positive way everywhere she goes. As a student at SFSU, she has made the Dean's list consecutively since her second semester here, is a soon-to-be Summa Cum Laude graduate, and has an internship at Dress for Success, a non-profit organization that helps women with finding their work wardrobes. Her interests include reading, music, sleeping, and eating. A fun fact about her is that she has a youtube channel, Pairissx, so she also enjoys talking to her camera.

# Claire Satuito

Claire Satuito is a fourth-year transfer student at San Francisco State University majoring in Women and Gender Studies. As an active member in the SFSU community, Claire is involved in several departments on campus including the student-led food pantry Gator Groceries, volunteering as a Health Promotion and Wellness Ambassador, and her Filipino cultural organization called PACE (Pilipinx Academic Collegiate Endeavor). Claire also made the Dean's List in the Fall 2022 semester. When Claire is not in class, she enjoys blogging and writing in her journal as well as going for long walks in the city or short hikes with her mom, dad, and her beloved dog, Churro.

That feeling stuck with me and motivated me to learn more and more, and this educational journey took me from changing my major of Sociology to deciding to pursue my degree in Women and Gender studies.

In the future, something I truly hope to see change in our federal education system is an emphasis on the discussion of social issues—especially ones that impact marginalized groups. Some examples would be bringing up the subjects of current and past discrimination, abuse, and uncovering truths that are often hidden in history. Like Black Wall Street and how it was purposefully and brutally destroyed to ruin its thriving economy. Like the complete genocide of Indigenous people that is still actively continuing today. Like how college used to be free until after the Civil Rights movement. Already, there is a lot of crucial information left out of the history that is taught in high schools across the country. If the history taught to all young people was fully accurate, I think we would see many extreme changes in the way that our society exists. I never understood why topics related to sociology and women and gender studies were never considered essential enough to include in the core subjects of high school such as math, english, science, etc. Learning about the way that our country and our government has treated women and marginalized groups, as well as the way that they are treated now, is incredibly essential and could add so much more understanding and awareness to the collective knowledge of the U.S., which would create a better and safer society for everyone. The ignorance that this gap in knowledge leaves is desired and intentional, especially when considering the amount of power that is held by the oppressors. If these subjects and this information was more widespread and more commonly discussed, then there is a risk that this power would be taken away. It is worth noting how much power can be held through knowledge, as well as in the withholding of it.

One of the many authors that heavily influenced my knowledge and perspective is Audre Lorde, who has so many transformative pieces. Lorde was a radical feminist, a Civil Rights activist, an incredibly influential author and teacher, and a Black lesbian woman. The speech that often comes to mind is "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House". Of this phrase specifically, Lorde explains, "They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support." Lorde's ideology is quite applicable in the discussion of Women and Gender studies topics in federal education. The governmental system in the U.S. is the root of a lot of the issues that are examined in Women and Gender studies, so it is not reliable to leave it to the government to take the responsibility of spreading awareness of these issues. It would actually be counterproductive and even harmful to the government itself, as it would expose how corrupt it actually is. So, how can we trust the government to solve these issues and fill in these gaps? Or, considering the former part of Lorde's statement, maybe the government itself should not be viewed as our main source of support, at least as it exists currently

One thing about Women and Gender studies is that it holds great potential to radically change the way you see the world around you. In some ways it is extremely discouraging when I realize all of the subtle ways injustices appear in all areas of life, especially realizing that oppression is engrained so deeply within our system and society that addressing it requires an entirely new system. In other ways, I am incredibly grateful that I am aware and that I have the opportunity to do whatever I can to change and to help..

## Lin Pellegrini

Lin Pellegrini is a senior at San Francisco State University majoring in Women's and Gender Studies with a focus in Queer and Trans Studies and Sexuality Studies. They currently work at the Health Promotion and Wellness Center on campus as a Sexual Health Education Assistant. Prior to attending SF State, Lin studied at City College of San Francisco where they obtained two Associate's degrees in Social Justice: Feminist, Queer, and Trans Studies and Social Justice: Gender Studies. Outside of their studies, Lin enjoys playing video games, going on walks, and cooking new recipes. They believe some of the best time is spent in deep conversation with loved ones and strangers alike.

# Kitty McNeill

Alexandra McNeill, known as Kitty, rekindled their educational pursuits in 2018 after several years of working in San Francisco. They attended City College of San Francisco and received their Associate degree in Queer, Trans, and Feminist Studies. They transferred to San Francisco State University in 2021 as a student of the Women & Gender Studies department. Kitty has enjoyed diversifying their research through the Human Sexuality Studies and Queer Ethnic Studies minors' programming.

Outside of college, Kitty manages a queer-owned tattoo business in the East Bay. They produce events in the Bay Area queer nightlife scene and perform in cities across the U.S. Their longest-running production, HEX, received the runner-up award for 48Hill's Best Burlesque in 2022. They look forward to investing even more of their time in fostering generative spaces for the queer performing arts community after graduation.

Learning about Women's and Gender studies topics and all that comes with it is something so valuable to me, and the more I learn, the more I realize that all areas of life include these subjects. No matter what field you go into, there will be some sort of social issue that must be addressed because of the way our society functions. It is everywhere, in every system within our society, every job field, all of history, which is why it is so impactful and important to learn about at a young age. Most young people only learn these subjects briefly if at all, maybe as an elective in college. But I hope to see the day where women and gender studies topics are required as core classes in high school education. So many valuable things are present in this subject, such as the exploration of gender and sexuality, the relearning of history, the roots of oppression and how it manifests in our present world, and much more. I think it could monumentally impact the way our world functions if everyone knew about these things and if discussions around them were normalized. Through radical changes, I think a world could exist that is full of true equality, peace, and justice. I am forever grateful for the knowledge I have gained through studying this topic as my major, and I am more than ready to continue my education and build a career through applying this knowledge in the world around me.

# Azzedine Taka



Azzedine Taka is a transfer student and a senior at San Francisco State University majoring in Women and Gender Studies. As a student majoring in Women and Gender Studies, Azzedine volunteered her time at Asian Women Shelter in the youth department, helping with tutoring, art and making food for the youth at Asian Women Shelter. Azzedine is a bilingual speaker, a fluent native Indonesian speaker with English as her second language. When Azzedine is not in class or volunteering, she spends her time calling her cats, doing makeup, reading books and spending 2 hours on the phone with her sister or her mom who lives in Indonesia.



# Adrianna Washington

BA in Women and Gender Studies, Minor in Women's Health Issues

Adrianna was born in San Francisco, California in 2000. Initially growing up in the bay view hunters point neighborhood, she and her family moved to Valencia Gardens apartments after the split of her parents in 2007. Since then she and her family have lived near the Mission District.

Adrianna began her college career as an undergrad at SF State in fall 2019 after graduating from Gateway High School. She first pondered if she should focus on a nursing major but she eventually settled on Women and Gender Studies based on the title and description alone.

Adrianna has been involved with the bay area chapter of RiseUp 4 Abortion Rights, a nationwide activist group whose goal is to protect and restore access to legal and safe abortion. After seeing a flyer near campus about an upcoming protest at 24th and Mission. Out of curiosity she went and was immediately intrigued by the energy and the cause the group was fighting for.

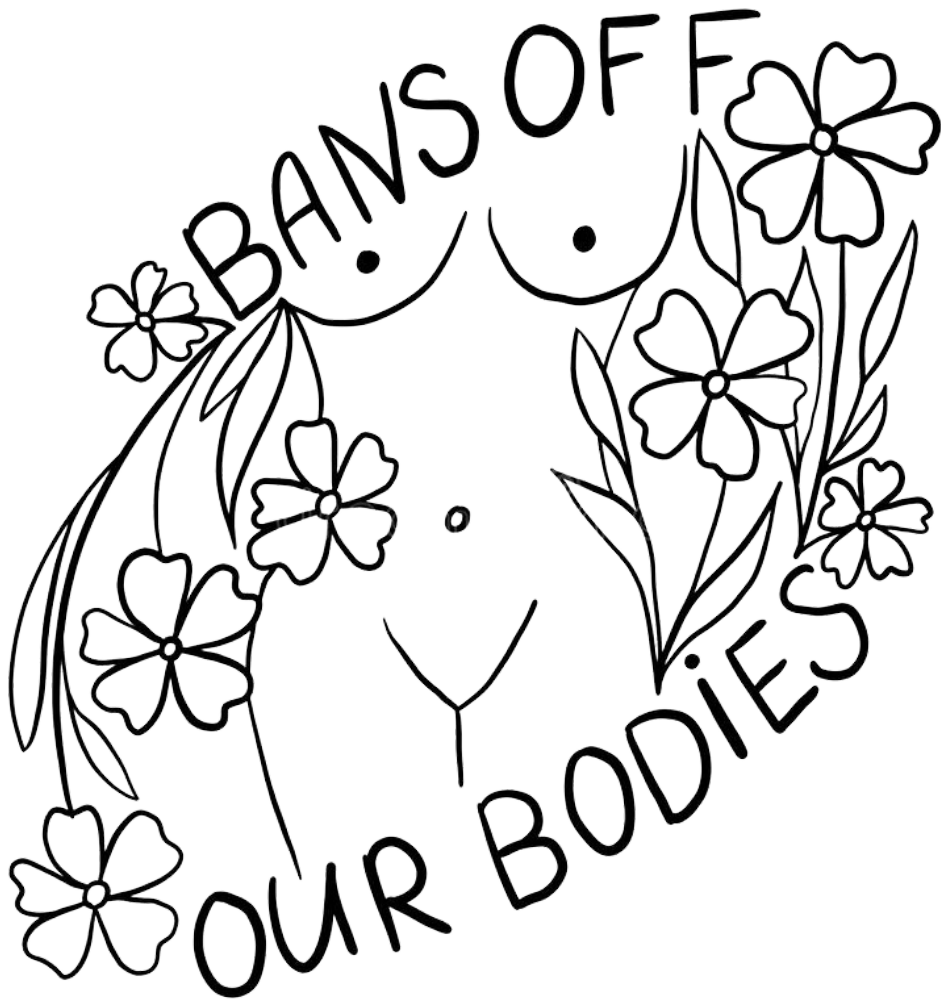
Achievements:

1. Honor roll student since middle school
2. Has been on the dean's list for the college of liberal arts multiples times
3. Has been an organizer for RiseUp 4 Abortion Rights (Bay Area chapter) for almost 9 months
4. An active member of The Revolution Club (Bay Area chapter) for 1 month

## A response from Azzedine to Emma

Women and gender studies...what is it? None of us had heard of it until we went to college; 18 years old and being the only one learning about it was something all of us and Women and Gender Studies majors can relate to. Only learning about what it is in university is something that is so common. Everyone thinks our major is talking about gender and women, and that's it. It's much more than that. It's about the impact society and the history of this country have on women. The history of this country has been towards BIPOC, we talk about intersectionality, we talk about the glass ceiling. Important things that are swept under the rug during our early education. My question is, why do we only learn about it now? Why does it seem like our studies are not important? Why are most people who major in Women's and Gender studies... women? Why don't we make Women and Gender studies a major course in high school? Unlike science and math, Women and Gender studies is a subject that is used every single day, so much so that it is important to be discussed. You mentioned, "The governmental system in the U.S. is the root of a lot of the issues that are examined in women and gender studies". Let's talk about it. Let's talk about how the governmental system not only in the U.S., but around the world is the root of ALL the issues our major has examined since our first semester at university. Let's talk about how the glass ceiling is something that is caused by the government. Let's talk about how the pay gap is still there due to the government.

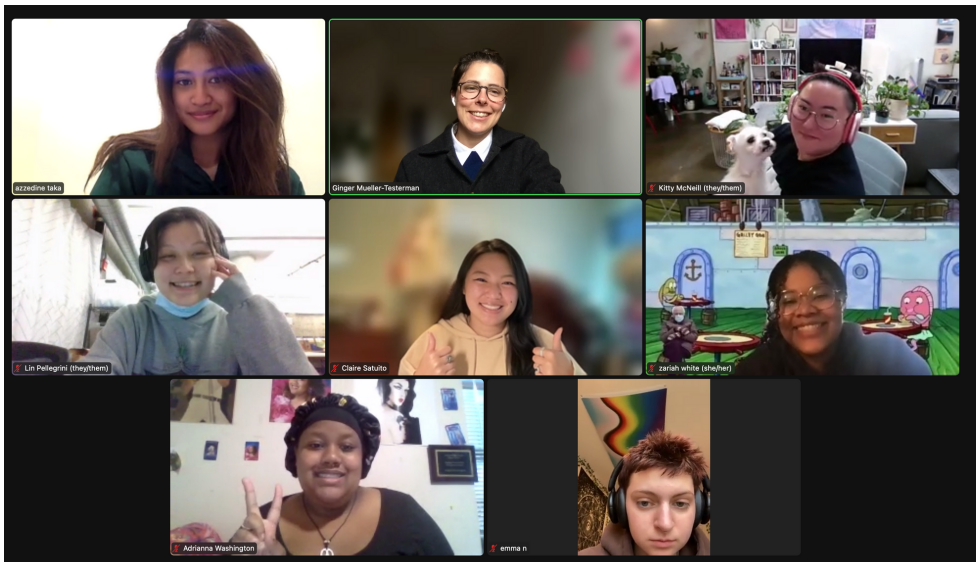
# Emma Newcomb



Emma is a senior at San Francisco State University, in their 4th year of college. They are about to graduate this semester with a Bachelor's degree in Women and Gender Studies! Emma began their college education at a community college in their hometown of Visalia, CA and completed their first two years of college at that institution, ending up with an Associate's degree in sociology. Emma went into college with an incredibly open mind and a strong passion for learning. Through taking sociology classes, Emma discovered their passion for the closely related field of Women and Gender Studies! What Emma appreciates most about this field is the value of learning from a multitude of perspectives, the application of related knowledge to almost every area of life, and the incredible beauty and diversity that exists within this subject. Emma is looking forward to the many opportunities that can be explored in relation to Women and Gender Studies! Along with this, Emma is very excited to catch a break because these past four years have been amazing but at the same time exhausting! Emma is super grateful for the knowledge that they have gained from studying Women and Gender Studies, and is ready for whatever the future may bring!



# WGS 690 Senior Seminar



SPRING 2023

## Reproductive Justice and WGS: The Current State of Abortion Rights

Adrianna Washington

To me, Women and Gender Studies means incorporating methods of resistance from the past to current social justice movements—especially if the issues relate to race, gender or sexuality. I have been able to incorporate the knowledge I gained from studying WGS into the social justice movements I'm a part of. For me, social justice means standing up for what's right and challenging the disparities that have become normalized in our society. Everyone should be entitled to equal opportunities regardless of race, gender or socioeconomic level. No one should have to worry about having their rights taken from them.

One of the ways I take part in social justice is by organizing with an abortion rights activist group. Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights (RU4AR) is a nationwide abortion rights organization whose goal is to protect the legal access to abortion, including procedures, clinics and medication ([riseup4abortionrights.org](https://riseup4abortionrights.org)). Last summer, I joined the bay area chapter after seeing a flier near campus. It was my first time being a part of a protest. The energy and the cause interested me because a few months earlier a draft leaked revealing a plan to overturn Roe V. Wade.



(Me & my fellow Rise Up comrades after a die-in at the chase center on june 5th)

The weeks leading up to the overturning, I was involved in many different actions to help spread the word: rallies, speak outs, fundraising, flyering, die-ins (mostly watching from the sidelines), and marching and chanting. Sunsara Taylor is the co-founder of RU4AR and she is an important figure in demanding legal abortion be restored. She strongly declares that “The fury of millions of women and everyone who cares about justice—your fury—needs to be unleashed now, in the streets, in mass struggle to demand LEGAL ABORTION ON DEMAND AND WITHOUT APOLOGY NATIONWIDE. Draw inspiration from the brave women and the people of Iran! A society that enslaves women should not be allowed to function as ‘normal’” (Sunsara Taylor).

## A response from Lin to Zariah

Oh, the woes of capitalism. It has held us all captive to a cycle of suffering, promising that if you just pick yourself up by your bootstraps, you too, can become a cog in the capitalist machine. But at least you’ll have riches, right? My question is, how are we defining “riches”? Are riches the money we have, the property we own, and the luxury we can afford? Are riches the material items we can acquire by participating in capitalism as a laborer and a consumer? If these are truly what riches are, I do not want them. Riches mean nothing if they are served on a silver platter of pain and shattered dreams. I would argue instead that riches are the moments of pure pleasure we feel in our lifetimes. A kiss on the forehead, playing on swings at the park, dancing wildly to music and feeling your body sway with the sounds. Nodding at a stranger as you pass them by on the sidewalk, holding hands with your lover, breathing the fresh air and feeling the breeze against your skin. Remembering that we are all here and that we are all alive. These are the things that I would call “riches”. You point out that you think the Black Panthers believed in pleasure as a means of freedom and that pleasure activism can be a source of liberation from the shackles of the U.S. State. The Black Panthers were onto something and that is why many of its members were silenced, whether that be through hush money, being forced out of the country, or assassination. However grim it feels, they demonstrated that there is hope and there is freedom on the other side. I believe that at the core of liberation is the prioritization of our pleasure and our joy as humans who are social, loving, and caring beings. Beginning to redefine what riches mean to you is just the start.



Through Rise Up we've done collaborations with another activist group called the Revolution Club: a human rights nationwide organization whose goal is to make the world a better place through a real revolution. They speak out against issues like women's rights, police brutality against Black people, and ways to overthrow the current system through a communist mindset. I am able to bring my work from WGS into the social justice movements by incorporating my feminist mindset into discussions on releasing our society from patriarchal fascist control. We cannot keep letting the male dominated supreme court decide what's best for the women population when they don't have our organs. This system needs to consider the people's feelings and well-being instead of imposing their own personal beliefs into bans.





(me holding a RiseUp banner on the freeway on June 24th, 2022:  
the day Roe v. Wade was overturned)

My activism really opened me to all aspects of reproductive justice: the human right for people to have control over their sexuality, gender and reproduction. This movement has always been associated solely with women's right to abortion, but it is more than just abortion. The three core values of reproductive justice are the right to have a child, the right to not have a child, and the right to parent a child or children in safe and healthy environments (Home - Reproductive Justice).

I think this quote is impactful because she's talking about how the movement was bigger than fighting for a seat at the table but the dismantlement of the idea of a table altogether. In terms of capitalism, I take it to mean that, like the Black Panthers, we should shatter the capitalistic system we live in, because in it we will never be honestly free. This is why I believe the Black Panthers believed in pleasure as a means of freedom.

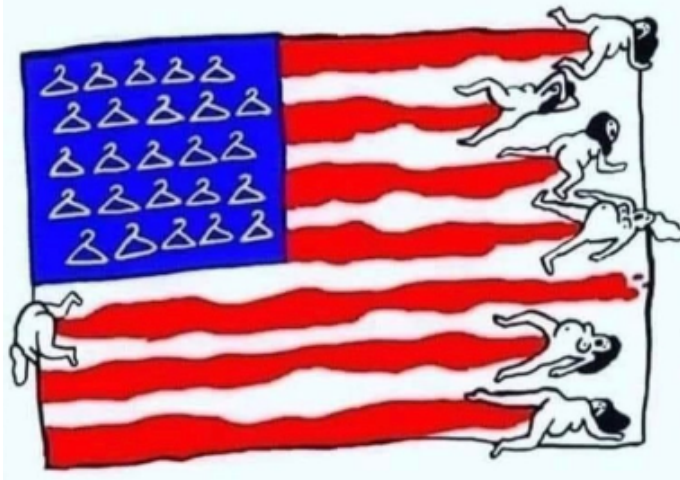
Go back to a moment in time that you remember being truly free. Remember how you felt, what you were doing, and how much pleasure and joy it brought you. Now imagine that being ripped away from you, being forced back into a cage where you are shackled and unable to escape, this is capitalism, this is what capitalism does. Adrienne Maree Brown discusses pleasure activism in her piece titled by the same name. She defines pleasure and activism and describes how the two coincide with each other and defines it as, "the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions; and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy" (7). This is relevant because capitalism is what we as a society are being oppressed by and it is asserting its supremacy everyday by monetizing our pleasure. In order to resist this capitalist oppression I believe we need to be pleasure activists. Pleasure is a means of freedom, and we must reclaim it in order to open the shackles that is capitalism, because we hold the key.

We must follow in the footsteps of the Black Panthers and help everyone around us, help suppress the oppressor, and help each other seek pleasure as a means of freedom. We must dismantle the table altogether instead of fighting for our seats. We must educate ourselves to rid our minds from the delusions that were our whitewashed history from our K-12 education. Capitalism is not sufficient and we see it daily in everything we do, it sucks the happiness from existing, it binds us, it cages us, and in it there is no pleasure. Do we not deserve to experience pleasure? Do we not deserve to be happy?

The problem with living in a capitalistic society is that once you're involved in it long enough, you start to realize your worth as a human is being disregarded by that same government who put this society into place, you open your eyes to the damage this society has caused, you wake up from a dream where capitalism is taking you by the hand and dragging you further and further down into the darkness it creates. A person who is aware they are being controlled, can no longer be controlled. This is why the U.S. still spreads that belief of the "American dream", the belief that people can come here and find happiness and wealth and can have their white picket fenced houses. Every group of people who is not a white, cisgender straight male in the U.S. knows that those who don't check those boxes are not and never have been the people the "American dream" is pandered to. The "American dream" is just that, a dream, and what is preventing anyone from reaching it, other than the fact that it does not exist, is capitalism and the capitalistic society the U.S. perpetuates. Capitalism only benefits those who fit in the white cisgender straight male box, and every single other person, including the ones who convince themselves they can fit into that box are not who benefit from it.

The Black Panther Party realized that and made it their life goal to disrupt capitalism at its roots. They exhibited that capitalism as the U.S. government models it, is not sustainable. They were too "woke," too socially aware to be controlled any longer, this is why they were snuffed out in every way shape and form, including being whitewashed from the history books. The Black Panther Party believed in freedom, they worked towards removing the struggles you face in everyday life from your plate. Angela Davis, a revolutionary, and affiliate of the Los Angeles chapter of the Black Panther Party, said, "The freedom movement was expansive. It was about transforming the entire country. It was not simply about acquiring civil rights within a framework that itself would not change."

Reproductive justice is important to me because I strongly believe that abortion is healthcare-without safe legal abortion, women die. With Roe V. Wade overturned, women and young girls will resort to unsafe abortions either by themselves or by "doctors" in motel rooms. I advocate for all women and people with uteruses to have the right to have control over what they do with our bodies. Women need to be trusted to make important decisions, like bringing children into the world. The male dominant supreme court justices don't have the right or ovaries to dictate when and if a woman can have a baby. We were not put on this earth to only be incubators, we were put here to live our lives to the fullest. That can include having kids and starting a family, but it needs to be up to women to make that decision. They shouldn't be forced or pressured into parenthood, especially if they are not fit for it. Reproductive justice relates to WGS because it relates to gender equality, something that is a big factor in WGS. Reproductive justice allows individuals to make their own choices regarding their reproductive life and to have access to reproductive health services. I strongly believe that women should be involved in reproductive justice movements because we need to fight for our basic right to healthcare, our right to have control over our bodies and reproduction, and stand up against this patriarchal system that is trying to force us into this fearful post-Roe society.



(The aftermath of the overturning, the reality of being in a post roe society)

I strongly believe it's important for men to be involved in reproductive justice movements. Men need to show their support for the health and well being of women and young girls. From my time with riseup and rev club, there have been plenty of men who have come to protests regarding the overturning of Roe V Wade. they always came in support of the decision being unconstitutional to women's rights. Some speak passionately about how women should have control over their bodies; when they want to have babies and having access to birth control. Their support doesn't come off as fake or territorial, it comes off as a genuine reaction to the illegitimate decision by the trump-packed, male dominated, fascist supreme court (Sunsara Taylor). At a demonstration at union square, an older black man came up to the mic and shared his own personal story about his mother died during childbirth. He also said he didn't want any other women or young girls to die giving birth, especially if they're giving birth in a society that forces them to have children against their will. Men need to advocate for the right for women to have control over their own bodies.

How could they when a mere 1 followed by as little to two to as big as 5 zeros could buy that medicine they need, could pay for that treatment they need, could pay next month's rent, or catch them up on late fees, late payments, gas, a car note, car insurance, health insurance, life insurance. That money could pay for groceries or their water or electricity or gas bill. Nobody in poverty is happy, and that is a lot of people when you consider that 37.9 million Americans are living in poverty. The thing that is keeping us unhappy is financial hardship which keeps us from putting money towards the things that bring us pleasure.

All of the things that could possibly bring you pleasure, are monetized. Games, movies, books, amusement parks, even fun has been monetized. The name is literally "amusement parks," a park to seek amusement, where you go and spend an exorbitant amount of money on food, games, and rides that are fun. These things are supposed to bring you pleasure, right? They are supposed to make you happy, so why do they cost money? Why does someone need to profit off of it? Capitalism. I mean Disneyland is one of the most popular amusement parks in the world, if not the most popular amusement park. What is Disneyland marketed as? "The happiest place on earth." Happiness comes at a price. The U.S. has nine of the ten most expensive theme parks in the world, (The Family vacation Guide). None of the theme parks in the United States made it to the list of the cheapest parks, which is just further proof that this country's capitalistic

system exploits its people and offers no pleasure. The things that we deem "fun" that we are able to access through payment have specifically been shaped by capitalistic goals before we had access to them. What is even available to us as consumers is already a product of the same.

I realized that the people who taught me about how capitalism works, and the people who taught them and so on and so forth, have already had their self-realization moments. But the key to an “aha!” moment, the kind of “aha” moment that wakes you up to the way society was formed and the secrets it thrives on, is kept at a collegiate level. That is why college is so expensive; the government is safeguarding the key to waking up the only way they know how, through capitalism. Our government knows its people are surviving, not living. And they know that living in a capitalistic society and being at the bottom of the barrel is depressing! Living to work and working to live is an impossible feat that takes a toll. We try to take pleasure in the little things, but capitalism is so intricately woven into the foundation of our society, that it controls even that.

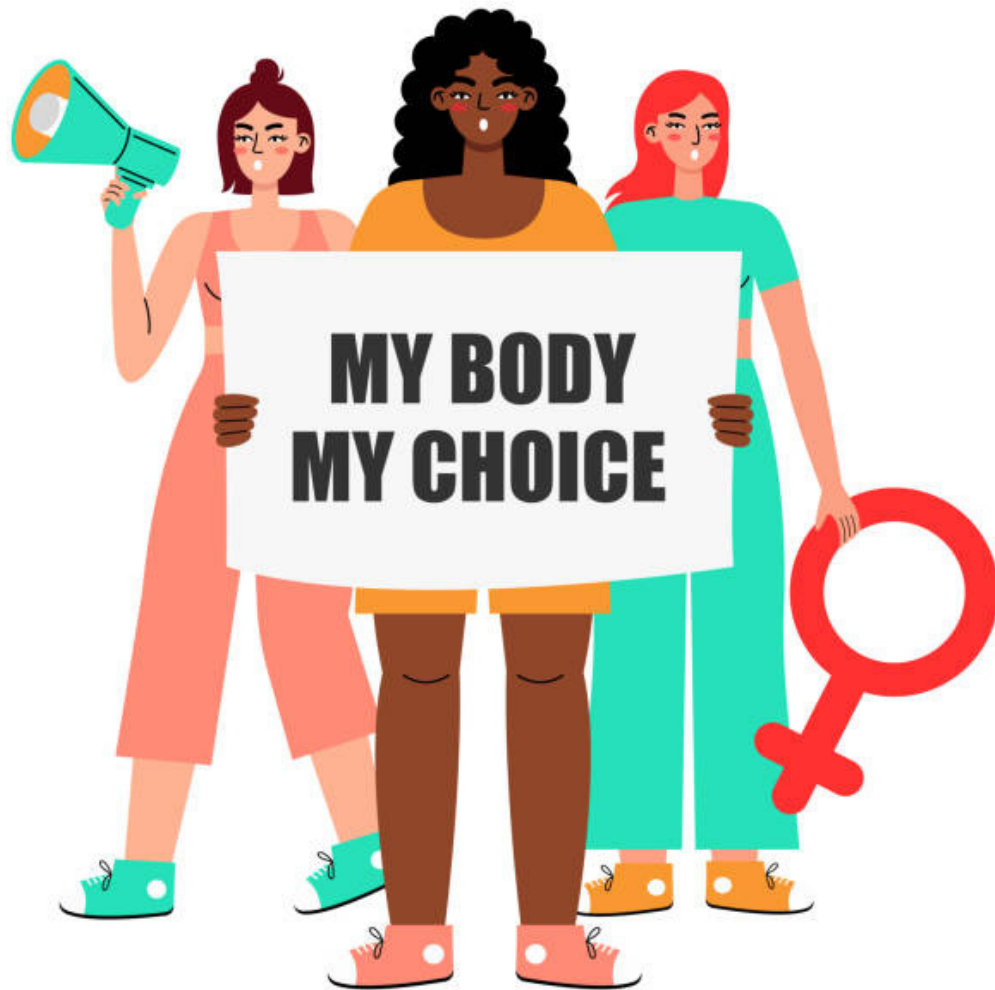
Capitalism does not want you to experience pleasure unless it can be profited off of. For example, the self-care industry. Things like face-masks and spa-days that were meant to relax you are priced high, not everyone can afford a self-care day when they have to work to live. Society has shaped itself to dictate who can receive pleasure. Those who have money, who are living instead of surviving, are worthy of those pleasures. Those who don't have that money, who live paycheck to paycheck, are unworthy of the pleasure. Money can't go to spa-days or a face-mask when you need to make rent, or pay the bills, or feed yourself. The Capitalistic system is made of roadblocks that are meant to slow you down and keep you from ever leaving the endless rat race. You don't have time for yourself when you're supposed to be making the government and the 1% money.

We have all heard of the saying, “money can't buy you happiness.” The only people saying this are rich people, more specifically rich white people. I can assure you no one in poverty has ever said that and truly believed it.

In conclusion, Women and Gender Studies to me means incorporating methods of resistance of the past to current social justice movements. Especially if the issues relate to race, gender or sexuality. How I plan on using my bachelors degree in WGS to continue partaking in social justice movements to stand up for our basic rights to protection, safety and privacy. Whenever there is a piece of legislation that attacks the LGBT community, when the fascist supreme court proposes bills to criminalize women for seeking abortion care and when there is another fatal act of police brutality I will be there with my picket sign in hand.







From the constant inflation of application and tuition fees, prices of the required standardized testing, housing fees and more, higher education has become an industry of capital gain, indebting low-income students to the government. Although it does not demonstrate the school-to-prison pipeline in an austere physical manifestation, it represents it through an austere financial manifestation. The metaphorical goalpost of success in the capitalistic society of the U.S. is constantly moving. 30-40 years ago, to be financially successful and eligible to qualify for most living-wage jobs, you only needed a high school diploma. Today, a bachelor's degree is the minimum education requirement to be considered for living-wage jobs. In that context, capitalism maintains itself through both physical and financial exploitation. Where K-12 represents the prison industrial complex in the social welfare display of education, higher education demonstrates and maintains the financial display.

Despite all of this, I had no idea what capitalism truly was or how it operated and how the prison industrial complex helps fund it until college. It wasn't until I got here and changed my major from Business Management to Women and Gender Studies that I had my self-realization moment and where I became radicalized.



If you expand on that or start to wonder why you're giving so much of your time to get so little, you will realize that capitalism as it stands, wants us to focus on being a worker rather than a critical thinker. If the whole country is filled with critical thinkers, they will notice that capitalism as the US government models it is not sustainable, and if that happens the people who benefit from it lose money. Capitalism only functions properly when someone is scraping the bottom of the barrel trying to make ends meet, while the people at the top of the barrel are thriving and have enough money to scratch their ass with. White men, the people in power, built this country on the backs of marginalized communities to build a capitalistic system that puts those same communities at risk of homelessness, starvation, depression, and death. Under Capitalism, the government doesn't see us as people, they see us as profits.

The prison industrial complex is the manifestation of the United States accruing capital from the imprisonment and the exploitation of incarcerated labor. Within the context of the prison industrial complex, the school-to-prison pipeline functions as a mechanism for its maintenance. Often, K-12 is discussed as the focal point of the school to prison pipeline, but higher education fits the concept as well.

## A response from Kitty to Adrianna

Thank you so much for sharing your story. It has really touched me. I'm honestly at a loss for words, so instead I want to share something meaningful to me. Here are a few photos from the drag and burlesque show I produce at OASIS in San Francisco. My wonderful friend and creative collaborator, Cheetah Biscotti, is an incredible performance artist. I was very lucky to be held with empathy and tenderness by them while processing the pain that washed over me as Roe v. Wade was overturned. I was also very lucky to witness my dear friend turn their emotions into a fierce and vulnerable performance piece.

Photography by Violeta Gonzalez



## **It All Leads Back to Capitalism**

Zariah White

Capitalism is defined as an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit. This is the kind of government system the U.S. operates on. Growing up in America, we learn about all kinds of things that have been whitewashed by the government in our history books. From Christopher Columbus "discovering" America, to the pilgrims bringing food instead of weapons and disease, Abraham Lincoln freeing the slaves, to the Black Panther Party being erased from the history books save an honorable mention of a "radical" Malcolm X. We have been lied to. America's government covers up their extensive horrendous past and plethora of genocides. Why? Because of Capitalism. A whitewashed education perpetuates the exploitation of the working class under capitalism because the disinvestment of studies and topics that challenge our perception of society and ideologies and instead investing in studies that sharpen "working" skills is to help benefit capitalism. It keeps you submersed in the need to work, work, work, and keeps you ignorant to the plethora of revolutions where people revolted against just that.



## Sexuality and society double standard

Azzedine Taka

Sexuality is a ridiculously hard topic to talk about. Especially in today's conversation. A lot of people would constantly mistake sexuality for gender expression. Or sometimes sexuality to someone's sex/gender. According to the Oxford dictionary, sexuality is defined as "the feelings and activities connected with a person's sexual desires." Or for example is when someone comes out as gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual or asexual. That is sexuality. While people often mistake sexuality to someone's gender. Often than not, people will say "of their sexuality is transgender" which is mistaken, since transgender is someone's gender identity.

In this society, we have a huge double standard when it comes to someone's sexuality. When a man comes out and states that they are gay or homosexual, often than not people who heard will tear them down or will use slurs to put them down. Which is something that is not new at all for people in the gay community. For them, to be safe they must act "straight" and masculine amongst cisgender heterosexual men. Being gay in this society is not safe. Even when there are people who state, "this society is very accepting now." The only part of society that is accepting are the current generation or known as gen-z.



At the same time this society will be so “accepting” of women who come out and state that they are lesbian. And this is due to the cisgender men who love to sexualize lesbian women for their own sick fantasies of being able to “turn them straight.” With these sick fantasies, society can accept mostly lesbian women just for the sick of it. When you can be the fixated fantasy of a cisgender heterosexual man, you can be far more accepted than if you are not.

There is another sexuality that is often forgotten, which is asexual. Explaining asexuality is difficult. Since there is far less research done on them. Asexuality is when someone has a lack of sexual attraction to others. But it does not mean they cannot be in a relationship. When a person is asexual, they can simply be in a relationship without having to have any intercourse or any intimate relations with somebody.

With asexuality, since it is a new finding for researchers, there is no research done about it. But asexuality is far more accepted in the LGBTQIA+ community than bisexuality. This is due to asexuality, having less experimental backgrounds than bisexuality. There are no negative assumptions towards asexuality, while as bisexuality negative assumptions are often due to young people claiming to be a part of the community while only “experimenting” for fun. Not realizing the kind of negative impact, they are giving towards a community that has been a minority for a long time in both LGBTQIA+ community and the patriarchal society itself.

When we talk about sexuality and society. We cannot forget about bisexuality too. Bisexuality is when a person is interested in more than one gender. In the United States, bisexuals are invisible, they are the minority of the LGBTQIA+ community. When you are bisexual, people will always state that you are experimenting, erasing your existence from the world itself.

## **A response from Adrianna to Claire**

Claire's essay was a page turner! The topic of her essay was interesting to read and I liked the deep dive you took us through. I never thought of self-care being a selfish act to do for yourself. I've been doped into thinking that self-care was some fancy trend everyone does and encourages us to take care of ourselves. Personally, I don't think it's selfish to do self-care once in a while; it's important to make time to take care of your needs before taking care of others. There definitely is a capitalist gain from the self-care industry that takes advantage of its customers who are looking for a quick affordable fix.



This is due to the straight girls who claimed to be bisexual and then claimed they are now straight and ignored a part of their past into experimenting. What a lot of people and society do not understand is that sexuality is on the spectrum. And when you are on a spectrum, it does not just go in one flow. You tend to change your sexuality as you grow older. This is why there are a lot of people who come out as homosexual, lesbian, pansexual or asexual in their 30s or 40s. "A new University of Sydney study suggests that people's reported sexual orientation can change after reading about the nature of sexual orientation." (Dar-Nimrod)

A study was done across the world for homosexual and lesbian acceptance across the world. ""We found that gay men are disliked more than lesbian women in every country we tested," according to the study, which was conducted by three New York University psychologists and published in the December issue of the journal Social Psychology and Personality Science." ("Lesbians More Accepted than Gay Men around the World, Study Finds.")

This is due to the society being mostly controlled by the patriarchy; "a society, system or country that is ruled or controlled by men." When a society is controlled and ruled by men, everything that fits into their wet dreams or fantasies is instantly an acceptable norm. Due to the society being ruled by patriarchy, even countries that claimed it is illegal to be a part of the LGBTQIA+ community will simply accept it.

"The study's findings also suggest that "men are more likely to be both the targets and perpetrators of sexual prejudice"." ("Lesbians More Accepted than Gay Men around the World, Study Finds".) This is not surprising at all, we see so much hate towards gay men around the world, and less towards lesbian due to the constant fantasies our society has.

it is a serious thing

just to be alive

on this fresh morning

in this broken world.

Sexuality is more than just what you are attracted to. When I talk about sexuality, I am also talking about how women's sexuality is truly sexualized and controlled by men every single day. When a woman is open and controls their sexuality as they please, we often get a lot of names thrown at us. Names like "easy lay," "cheap," "she is for the streets" that is made popular by the nastiest man in the music industry Future, or one of my favorites "a whore/slut." Simply for having a body count of more than five.

Women sexuality and pride has always been doctored by this society since we have always been placed in a box to be conservative. But these names and doctoring does not only come from men, but other women too. I hate to admit it, but there were times when I was younger where I found myself being so misogynistic towards other women. Where I caught myself slut-shaming women or judging how women present themselves. I often caught myself saying things like "well maybe if she isn't that loud people will like her" which truly disgusts me. I also caught myself judging a woman's job back when I was a teenager, hating on women for being a sex-worker or embracing their sexuality.

And when it comes to women's sexuality, there are a lot of factors that cause it. Such as religion, pride, views as well as patriarchy. With religion women sexuality has been suppressed to only "pleasing your husband" and making it like women who pleases or embraces their sexuality to be evil. ""Wisdom will save you also from the adulterous woman, from the wayward woman with her seductive words." (Proverbs 2:16) Not only in the bible but we also see these in the Qur'an "Wicked women are for wicked men, and wicked men are for wicked women. And virtuous women are for virtuous men, and virtuous men are for virtuous women. The virtuous are innocent of what the wicked say. They will have forgiveness and an honorable provision." (Al-Qur'an 24:26)

Self-care and self-love are the same thing. To me, at least. And in the words of a TV show, I have yet to watch, "Love isn't something that weak people do" (Fleabag Episode 6 18:57). Love, in all of its different forms and verbs, is what we give to ourselves...

And so to answer the question at the beginning of this zine...What am I going to do as a WGS major and a soon-to-be degree holder? I am going to do whatever I choose and I am going to take good care of myself while doing it. I am going to learn how to live and I am going to have stories worth writing about and everything in between.

When I think about the concept and capitalization of self-care—especially when sustained through the realm of social media—I see the aesthetic, Instagram-worthy posts and videos of skinny-fit people drinking iced matcha lattes with oat milk or water with perfectly sliced lemons, stretching and doing pilates in matching yoga outfits and hustling on the computer, being an entrepreneur or influencer, working for themselves and selling affiliate links to their courses or merch (or both) and I feel exposed because I am a consumer of it all. It's also super ironic to note that I also contribute to this digital self-care capitalist machine that pumps out self-care tips in the form of a blog that I've been neglecting for more than a month now. As a personal project I started at the beginning of this year, I wanted to create a space where I could talk about all of the things that I enjoy: skincare, self-care, and going on adventures as a young college student learning how to live.

I think it's safe to say that self-care has become a more mainstream practice in recent years. I strongly believe the pandemic, and its consequences, accelerated the process of spreading the message of self-care on a larger scale. It's awesome to see workshops dedicated to mental health and self-care tips. The concept of self-care is so versatile that it can be expanded into our communities and reworked to sustain our individual selves.

For women, these kinds of things have been planted inside of every living person's brain and way of life. And often, we realize that they love to cherry pick things from the holy books. Picking things that support their patriarchal view of life, and ignoring the ones that prove them wrong. In the same Bible it states "The image of God is found in the human being as male and female (Genesis 26- 27) This proves that men and women are made to be equal. Yet the churches have always been known to be patriarchal since the beginning of the 8000-3000 BC.

While as for Islam, the patriarchy has started since the 7th century. With this, it makes it easier for men to be able to have and gain power against women and their home. The power of patriarchy controls everything, from the way women behave to the way women are perceived. The patriarchy is the cause of the control for women, from how we present ourselves to how we embrace our sexuality. The double standard for men and women has been going on for centuries, and will not go away until everyone joins in.

Sexuality, who we love and how we embrace it is particularly important for everyone. How we love others is especially important to be seen and how we embrace it is equally important. The conversation for sexuality in this society is valuable for our future generations of children, leaders, doctors, and more. When we ignore the importance of this conversation, it is problematic for everyone involved. We have seen it from the protest of people not supporting the LGBTQIA+ community, to the people who protest against women rights and reproductive justice to how women are labeled disgusting names in holy books to simple slangs until this very day.



When I was signing up for classes this semester, I saw a WGS elective worth 1 unit titled, "Feminism and Self-Care." I didn't have to think too much about adding it to my class schedule because I care very much about feminism and self-care and was interested to see how the professor would combine both practices together. In the class, we defined both terms for ourselves. For me, self-care is the intentional and selfish act of prioritizing your basic needs above all others. Feminism is the freedom to choose what you want your life to look like at the end of the day. I remember sharing in class that self-care is the only real job that we have on this Earth. We have been exposed to various mediums of holistic feminist practices through blog posts, podcast episodes, and the occasional wellness worksheet the professor found for free on the internet. I really enjoy the space this class has created where every single one of my peers, both WGS majors and outside of the department, is open-minded in learning about self-care through a feminist lens. Even on Friday mornings when the class is scheduled, my peers are interested and engaged to the best of their ability to share what self-care practices they implement in their own lives such as journaling, practicing gratitude, and exercising. They also share their struggles of the intimate relationship self-care and feeling selfish has on their soul and how they continue on in spite of the nagging guilt. The idea is that we must be productive all hours of the day or else we are not worthy of any of the good things life has to offer is straight capitalism.



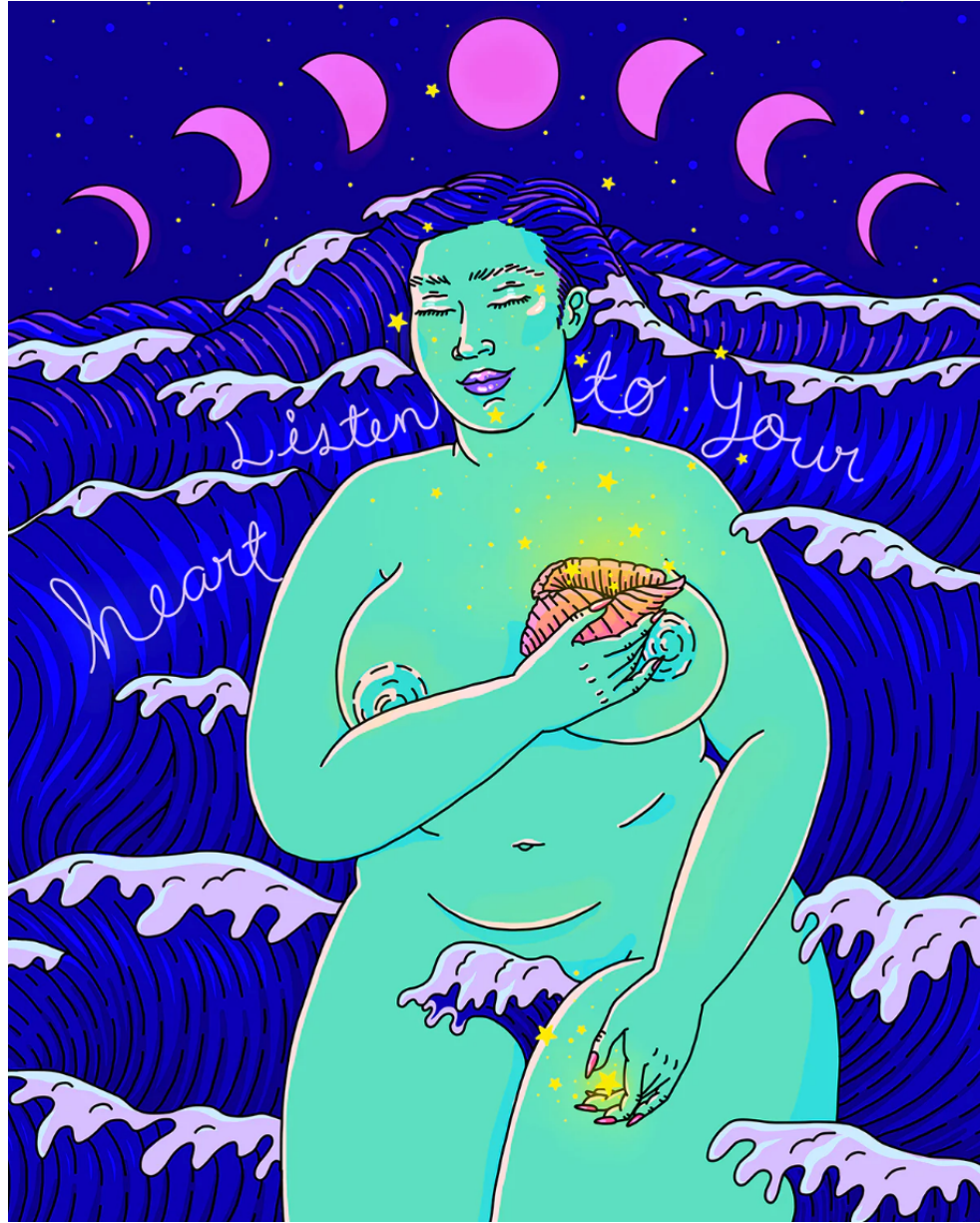
## **The Selfishness of Self-Care**

Claire Satuito

To be completely honest with you, I ended up as a Women and Gender studies major entirely by accident. I mean that when I was applying to any school that would take my community college GPA and trying to get into a nursing program, WGS was my second choice at San Francisco State. I didn't even hesitate to click that little box before I submitted my application because I was desperately in need of a degree. Months later I was accepted and I was just so happy and grateful to be back in school full-time after spending the last couple of years at home working, and realizing that an undergraduate degree was going to get me a little bit farther in the life that I want to live than without one. To my surprise, I found out that I'm quite good at being a WGS major. So much so that I made the Dean's List my first semester here and realized that I should've done this years ago. For me, becoming a WGS major was the first step in finding my place at SFSU and helping myself pursue something that I truly care about in and outside of the classroom. One could say that becoming a WGS major was a form of self-care or "self-preservation" in the words of Audre Lorde. Lorde describes this...

## **A response from Emma to Azzadine**

The conversation of sexuality and sexual double standards is a complicated one, and Azzadine, you address these subjects in a bold and confident way that challenges social norms that have been in place for centuries. Each subsection of the LGBTQIA+ community has faced it's own struggles, as you brought up in your essay when discussing the specific issues that gay men, lesbians, bisexual, and asexual people face. Another important point you brought up is the common lack of understanding of the difference between sexuality and gender identity, something that is often viewed as a generational difference of mindset. It is important to look into the roots of generational discrimination and lack of understanding/knowledge, which usually relates closely to legal and social treatment of the LGBTQIA+ community. Sexuality and gender identity need to be discussed more, normalized, and decriminalized in our society. Along with this, the sexual double standard needs to be addressed. As you pointed out, men are held to different sexual standards than women are, and women are constantly criticized for things that men would never be criticized for. Sexuality and double standards are huge topics to address, and you made several strong points within your essay that bring up the essential arguments within these topics. These subjects need visibility and awareness!



PYLADES I'll take care of you.

ORESTES It's rotten work.

PYLADES Not to me. Not if it's you.

## **A response from Zariah to Lin**

Wow. What a powerful, yet prominent piece. You talk about how practicing courage is a frightening experience, and how you can make it into a pleasurable experience. I want to say that even though you viewed it as frightening, you are testing your courage by even opening up about this. You are courageous for writing down your powerful message, even though it isn't necessarily spoken out loud. This is something we can all relate to in one way or another. I am glad you are beginning to test your courage, even if it did take you twenty-four years. You mention how the fear of what will come from being courageous, comes from your internalized "extreme people-pleasing". People pleasing in small increments is not as harmful, but in the extreme amounts you discuss might be detrimental to the way you view your courage. I feel the need to be remarkably cheesy by saying, dare to be you, while also throwing it back to an older time where we referenced, "Y.O.L.O", as a means to express freedom. You only live once, Lin, and I wish for you to spend the rest of the time you have alive not focused on pleasing other people. At the end of day, we all have our own timelines on life, and it is never too late to get into a game you make yourself. <3

## **Gender Studied**

Kitty McNeill

The blur of college during COVID makes remembering what I learned and when consistently out of grasp. I've amassed a PDF graveyard of great feminist writers. Among them, you can find bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and many of their must-read contemporaries. They have been my companions as I desperately hammered at my keyboard to meet yet another dreaded Sunday night 11:59pm deadline. They stood stalwart on my desktop as I questioned why I even considered going back to college in the first place. We all knew that the only thing keeping me from dropping out, again, for the fourth time, is the fact that everyone else in the world is also having an existential crisis.

In one of my many droopy-eyed readings for some online class some semester ago, Judith Butler dished about the trouble with gender. I had been questioning my gender identity for about as long as I was given a gender in the first place, but that clearly had nothing to do with my academic pursuit of gender. Though that night, or maybe afternoon, what she was positing started to make sense.

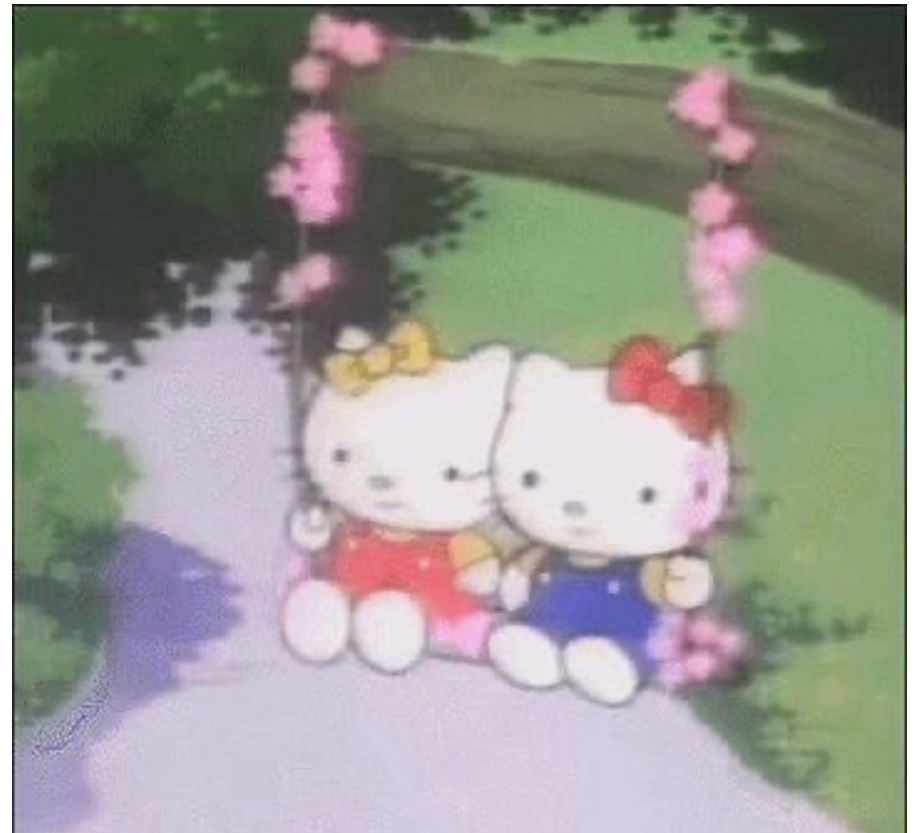
She divulged what felt like a long-kept secret - "Gender is a routine, a ritual, a set of acts that we perform over and over again, until they become normalized and taken for granted" (Gender Trouble pg 140). I was suddenly given permission to address the elephant in my existence. My ritualistic practice of "woman" ceased when shelter-in-place began. I left an entirely performative way of being perceived at the door. I was given the time and space to just be.

Butler describes gender as a verb, rather than a noun. She wrote, "It is an act that one puts on, a performance, a doing," (Undoing Gender pg. 33). The gender I was doing for so long was done, and there was a logical next step. Butler proposed that the "undoing" of gender requires challenging gender expectations and subverting normativity. My assignment, outside of my actual homework, was to destabilize the rigid binaries within myself because the reward was massively more impactful than any grade could be.

Deconstructing gendered socialization from the inside out meant realizing there were infinite new possibilities for expression. My identity began to feel abundant, even more genderful than ever before. My work has only been set in motion.

We have to make justice the  
most pleasurable experience  
humans can have.

—adrienne maree brown



I do not think that I have fully found my courage yet, but as I am faced with situations that test me, I am learning to step into courage and away from fear. My experience throughout these six years has been a whirlwind. The lessons my major has taught me about the conditions of being a human on this earth and how to change them are ones that will stick with me for the rest of my life. I hope to not only hold them close to my heart, but to incorporate them into the work I do post-grad. When I am happy, I am able to welcome new experiences, ideas, and people into my life with open arms. When I am happy, it is good for the world.

Nonbinariness isn't a stopping point. Rather than passing across a threshold from one destination to another, I was leaping off a diving board into the gender expanse. As Butler said, "gender is a performance that is never fully complete but is always in the process of becoming, always being done and redone," (Undoing Gender is pg. 3). I have been traversing a series of queerer possibilities and it is absolutely messy. There are few days where I feel the same way consecutively. What is one day's euphoria is the next day's bane of my existence. But this ongoing exploration, this constant doing and redoing, will be the legacy of my degree.

The question "What are you going to do with your degree?", for me, only scratches the surface of what I have thus far undone. I've undone over 20 years of forced expectations and undue disappointments. I've undone the mysterious knot in my stomach that formed every time someone called me a girl. I've undone the invisible locks that barred me from living fully and authentically, even if I don't know what that's going to look like tomorrow.



**BLESSED ARE THE SISSIES  
BLESSED ARE THE BOI DYKES  
BLESSED ARE THE PEOPLE OF COLOR MY BELOVED KITH AND  
KIN  
BLESSED ARE THE TRANS  
BLESSED ARE THE HIGH FEMMES  
BLESSED ARE THE SEX WORKERS  
BLESSED ARE THE AUTHENTIC  
BLESSED ARE THE DIS-IDENTIFIERS  
BLESSED ARE THE GENDER ILLUSIONISTS  
BLESSED ARE THE NON-NORMATIVE  
BLESSED ARE THE GENDERQUEERS  
BLESSED ARE THE KINKSTERS  
BLESSED ARE THE DISABLED  
BLESSED ARE THE HOT FAT GIRLS  
BLESSED ARE THE WEIRDO-QUEERS  
BLESSED IS THE SPECTRUM  
BLESSED IS CONSENT  
BLESSED IS RESPECT  
BLESSED ARE THE BELOVED WHO I DIDN'T DESCRIBE, I  
COULDN'T DESCRIBE, WILL LEARN TO DESCRIBE AND  
RESPECT AND LOVE  
AMEN**

---

- Mark Aguhar, "Litanies to my heavenly brown body"

I've thought about this pleasure activism principle in the context of courage, asking myself how courage plays into happiness and pleasure. How can practicing courage be a pleasurable experience for me, even though it is frightening? Though I can be headstrong, I have struggled to find the courage to speak up; to use my voice. I think a lot of the fear of what will come if I am courageous comes from the extreme people-pleasing I have internalized throughout the years.

As an impressionable preteen, I learned from a brick-and-mortar education that certain people were the authority, and that authority should never be questioned. The messages I received told me that I was not to stir up any conflict and that I should avoid drawing attention to myself in what could be perceived as a negative way. Fly under the radar, do your work, and do not question it. The nine-year-old Lin that marched to the beat of their own drum in the third grade had been snuffed out and replaced with a mechanical puppet, controlled by the strings of capitalistic values of production.

At twenty-four years old, six years into my college education, I am finally beginning to test my courage once again. Learning courage is an important aspect of my happiness because to me, a large part of being courageous is standing up for myself and my loved ones. It is a way of preserving not only my joy, but the joy of those around me. Being able to be courageous will not only aid in my personal growth, but it will foster deeper, healthier, and more pleasurable relationships with those around me.

When my teacher asked why I didn't write a story, I simply responded that I preferred to write a poem. My decision to focus my studies in WGS heavily weighed on the fact that I felt personally connected to the subject, and I now feel a responsibility to share and expand on the knowledge and lessons WGS offers.

A particular concept that I have been mulling around in my mind over the past few months comes from adrienne maree brown's *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* (2019). If you are unfamiliar, pleasure activism "is the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy" (brown, 7). Pleasure activism believes that our social structures must reflect and prioritize the fact that we all need and deserve pleasure. To put it simply, pleasure activism is learning to make liberation and justice deeply pleasurable experiences for all of us. I highly recommend reading this text if you haven't before, as it offers new perspectives on principles of life, activism, and liberation.

For the purpose of this essay, I want to focus on one of brown's *Pleasure Principles* that reads: "When I am happy, it is good for the world" (brown, 8). Although simple, this idea has lingered in my headspace since I first read it. I have struggled since I was a kid to see my happiness as something that is valuable and important. Maybe it was the amount of depressing Tumblr posts I consumed in my teens that made me believe my angst and sadness were what made me worth something. But to rely on the negative as a source of purpose is not how I want to live my life. If I choose to prioritize my joy, my happiness will soak into my work and relationships like the warm sun soaks into skin on a hot day. I do not have to walk a path of self-doubt, pain, and victimization; there are other paths, other roads to make my way down. Ones that are full of learning, playing, pleasure, and fulfillment.

## **A response from Claire to Kitty**

The short answer of my response to Kitty's final draft is pure adoration. You know when they say that you become a better writer by reading a great writer's work? That is exactly how I feel after having read and absorbed Kitty's ability to describe the many different things that they experienced at the intersection of a post-pandemic world and being a college student studying gender.

The first sentence hooks, lines, and sinks you into the world Kitty illustrates with the world many of us lived through at a time of great uncertainty; where our own futures weren't even promised. Being transported back to that particular time in all of our young lives and reliving the moments of meeting midnight deadlines and responding to two classmates' discussion posts was definitely uncomfortable, but necessary to experience and relate to the essay.

The connections Kitty drew upon throughout their essay with Butler's "Gender Trouble" and "Undoing Gender" was integral to telling their story and traveling on their journey of self-discovery during the pandemic.

Even though this response was written for an unfinished essay, I cannot wait to read the rest of Kitty's story. Their writing style is magnetic and clear and precise and beautifully relatable and filled with subtle humor. I am inspired by Kitty's work and I hope that they know that they are brilliant at what they do.



## Pleasure Activism and Becoming Courageous

Lin Pellegrini

When I began my freshman year of college, I decided to follow in my mother's footsteps and major in Sociology. Freshly eighteen and excited to learn, I enrolled in my very first Gender studies course at a small liberal arts school in Salem, Oregon. Unfortunately, the class was taught by a professor who was extremely insensitive to trans experiences and led the class into a debate that became personally offensive for a lot of the students in the room. Despite the poor instruction, I was able to meet several beautiful trans and non-binary folks who helped me come into my gender identity as genderqueer and non-binary. It was during that year when I buzzed my hair off for the first time and began dressing for myself rather than for who I thought I was supposed to be. I really began exploring what gender meant to me. Since then, I have occupied many bodies; many versions of myself that express who I am, who I have been, and who I am becoming. The thing I love most about being non-binary is that I am able to shapeshift into whomever I want to be on any given day. The ability to do so is liberating, and I have to remind myself of that whenever I feel detached from my body and self.

Establishing my connection to gender was only the beginning of my journey as a WGS major. I have always been someone who needs to feel deep value and connection to the work I am doing in order to put my energy into it. When I was in third grade, my teacher asked us to write a story as an assignment. Instead of writing a story, I defiantly wrote a poem.