



GNDR_ST 396 • Nicholas Davis

Capstone Course in Gender and Sexuality Studies

Having mastered a series of foundational claims, terms, and critical lineages in earlier GSS classes, students in the Capstone course will engage with current scholarship and contemporary debates across the highly interdisciplinary field of gender and sexuality studies, emphasizing the humanities and social sciences. Selections from recent books and journals—some chosen by the instructor, others by students themselves—will propel weekly seminar discussions. Participants will debate the claims driving our readings; assess their evidence, methods, and bibliographies; contextualize the scholarly, historical, cultural, and political trends that frame those arguments and how they are expressed; and articulate varying levels of agreement, disagreement, or ambivalence in relation to these texts, making sure we grasp the original writers' goals clearly enough to furnish expansions or corrections of our own.

This year's Capstone will revolve around Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). We will engage this text because it synthesizes so many ideas and arguments in gender and sexuality studies and in adjacent fields (including political science, critical race theory, environmental humanities, legal studies, and feminist art-making) and because its selection as this year's One Book, One Northwestern text creates a unique opportunity for collaborative learning across seniors and first-years. Assignments and discussions—wide-ranging though they are—will pertain directly or indirectly to key themes in Atwood's novel or to academic and public conversations that have unfolded around it and its multimedia adaptations. Student responses will manifest in short writing exercises, some longer papers, and weekly discussions that will be detailed, collegial, and fortified by existing knowledge that participants carry with them from prior and current coursework. The class will culminate in a showcase of original student research and writing about *The Handmaid's Tale* and all the gendered and sexual discourses in which the novel participates. First-year students will attend this conference as informed audiences for our highly-trained seniors, who will also pick up marketable skills of research preparation, polished presentation, and writing across multiple genres, including for the public. Enrollment will be limited to GSS majors and minors in their senior year, except where permission is granted by the instructor.

Kresge Hall 2-425 • Wed 3:00-5:00pm