

# GENDER AND SEXUALITY: HISTORY, DISCOURSE, GAMES

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# AGENDA

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- Introduction to Gender and Sexuality Discourse
- Establishing Classroom Best Practices
  - Language and Terminology
- History of Feminism, and women's and LGBTQ Rights in US
- Feminist and Queer Discourse Today
- Ideologies of Femaleness and Queerness
- Gender / Sexuality in Video Games
  - Tropes
  - Design

# CLASSROOM BEST PRACTICES

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- Respect and sensitivity for peers' positions, even and especially if those differ personally and/or politically;
- Care of language / rhetoric;
- Everyone in this room has a right (and one might argue: responsibility) to speak on gender/sexuality discourse and oppression;
- Personal experience is an important and valuable aspect, but it is not a trump card;
- Aim to ground critique in theory / history / ideology;
- Focus on cultural / systemic issues, not individual ones;

# REMEMBER:

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1. To articulate and critique the gendered, sexist, misogynist, homophobic, or transphobic elements of gaming/games/games culture is NOT mutually exclusive to enjoying gaming/games/games culture;
2. To articulate and critique the gendered, sexist, misogynist homophobic, or transphobic elements of (American) culture and/or (American) ideology is NOT to dismiss, hate, or reject men, cisgendered or heterosexual folk, or others that occupy positions of historical privilege

# LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY (1)

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- “gender” — term by which you identify yourself; often articulated in terms of male, female, or non-binary; performative and fluid, though historically reduced to a male/female binary determined by reproductive organs
- “cisgender” — term for those whose gender assignment at birth (usually due to biology / reproductive organs) matches that with which they identify
- “transgender” — term for those whose gender assignment at birth (usually due to biology / reproductive organs) does not match that with which they identify
- “non-binary” / “genderqueer” — term for those who identify as neither exclusively male or female; can also be described through lens of androgyny

## LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY (2)

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- “sexuality” — a term to describe desire, often of another person;
- “normativity” — a term to describe a kind of assimilation with cultural norms; not necessarily reducible to hetero- or homosexuality; may be heteronormative or homonormative
- “queer” (adj.) — existing, in some way, outside of gendered or sexual normativity; may include gender identities, or sexualities
- “to queer” (vb.) — to approach a text, or work through a system (or play/design a video game) in a way that resists binarized thinking, and similar structures of normativity

# LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY (3)

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- “feminism” — range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that advocate women’s rights on the basis of gender equality;
- “white feminism” — throwback to second-wave feminism, which reduced the struggle of women to all women, failing to account for differences of class, sexuality, and race/ethnicity; also “middle-class feminism”;
- “intersectional feminism” — feminism that aims toward greater inclusivity in response to white feminism; takes into account the intersections by which class, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and ability will affect a woman’s experience;
- trans-exclusive feminism — subset of feminism that believes only those born with vaginas are “real women” (in terms of the struggle)
- trans-inclusive feminism — counter to trans-exclusive; a form of intersectional feminism that recognizes a shared struggle for cis- and trans-women

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS, FEMINISM, AND LGBTQ RIGHTS IN THE US

*Note: Each slide is labeled per a feminist movement, to highlight connectivity/synchronicity. The LGBTQ movement is separate from Feminist movements, and should be understood as such.*

**FIRST-WAVE FEMINISM:  
POLITICAL MOVEMENT  
FOR EQUAL RIGHTS**

# FIRST-WAVE: PRE-19TH CENTURY

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- **1630s:** Anne Hutchinson challenges Puritanical male hegemony, teaching women and men in her home, and writing/preaching sermons; will be banished;
- **1659:** Mary Dyer takes up Hutchinson's cause, and is executed for preaching gender equality;
- **1776:** Abigail Adams urges husband, John Adams, to include women's rights in constitution;
- **1782:** Deborah Sampson takes her late brother's name, dresses up, and fights in American Revolution; is eventually discovered and honorably discharged;

# FIRST-WAVE: 19TH-CENTURY

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- **1848:** Seneca Falls Convention drafts “Declaration of Sentiments”
- **1861-1865:** American Civil War
- **1869:** Susan B Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton form National Woman Suffrage Association
  - December: Wyoming (territory, not state), passes first women’s suffrage law
- **1896:** National Association of Colored Women is formed

# FIRST-WAVE: 20TH CENTURY

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- **1914 - 1918:** US in World War 1
- **1916:** Margaret Sanger opens first US birth-control clinic in Brooklyn; is arrested
- **1919:** Federal Women Suffrage Amendment (written by Susan B Anthony and originally introduced to Congress in 1878) passes House and Senate;
- **1920:** 19th Amendment to the Constitution signed, granting women the right to vote throughout the country
- **1921:** Margaret Sanger founds American Birth Control League; eventually becomes Planned Parenthood Federation of America in 1942

**First-Wave Feminism “Ends”**

**A PERIOD OF EVENTS, BUT  
NO FORMALIZED FEMINIST  
“MOVEMENT” PER SE**

# BETWEEN FIRST- AND SECOND-WAVE FEMINISM

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- **1924:** Society of Human Rights in Chicago formed; country's earliest known gay rights organization;
- **1929:** Stock Market Crash leads to Great Depression;
- **1933:** lowest point of Great Depression (15 million unemployed; half of banks have failed)
- **1935:** National Council of Negro Women founded by Mary McLeod Bethune;
- **1936:** Birth control and contraceptive information no longer labeled "obscene"; may be distributed;
- **1939:** Great Depression Ends; World War 2 Begins
- **1941-1945:** US in World War 2

# BETWEEN FIRST- AND SECOND-WAVE FEMINISM

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- **1948:** Alfred Kinsey publishes “Sexual Behavior of the Human Male”
- **1951:** Mattachine Society founded; first national gay rights organization formed by Harry Hay
- **1952:** Women admitted to Georgia Tech
- **1955:** Daughters of Bilitis, first lesbian group in US is founded

**SECOND-WAVE FEMINISM:  
SOCIAL MOVEMENT WHERE  
“THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL”**

# SECOND-WAVE FEMINISM, 1960S

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- **1960:** FDA approved birth control pill
- **1962:** Illinois becomes first state to decriminalize homosexual acts between consenting adults in private;\*
- **1963:** *The Feminine Mystique* (Betty Friedan) published; June: Congress passes Equal Pay Act
- **1965:** *Griswold v. Connecticut* — SCOTUS strikes down remaining law prohibiting contraceptives use by married couples
- **1966:** National Transsexual Counseling Unit established in San Francisco;\*
- **1967:** Affirmative Action expands to include discrimination by gender;
- **1968:** SCOTUS rules gender-segregated job ads illegal;
- **1969:** Stonewall Riots\*

\*NOTE: LGBTQ rights events included for temporality; NOT part of second-wave feminist platform

# SECOND-WAVE FEMINISM, 1970S

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- **1972:** title IX bans gender discrimination in schools
- **1973:** Roe v. Wade establishes women's right to safe and legal abortion; American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from official list of mental disorders\*;
- **1976:** First Marital Rape law enacted; Harvey Milk appointed to Board of Permit Appeals in SF\*;
- **1977:** Miami passes civil rights ordinance making sexual orientation discrimination illegal in Dade County\*
- **1978:** Pregnancy Discrimination Act; Harvey Milk becomes member of SF Board of Supervisors; Milk assassinated, Nov. 27\*
- **1979:** 75,000 people participate in National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay rights; is largest gathering in support of LGBT rights in country to date\*

**LATE-70S, SECOND-WAVE  
FEMINISM BREAKS UP, SPLIT ON  
INTERSECTIONAL ISSUES LIKE  
CLASS, RACE, AND SEXUALITY**

**THIRD-WAVE FEMINISM: “INDIVIDUAL  
FEMINISM” OR “POST-FEMINISM”;  
BACK-LASH TO SECOND-WAVE, AND  
LACK COHESIVE MOVEMENT**

# THIRD-WAVE FEMINISM: 1980S

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- **1980:** Democratize party takes official stance in support of gay rights;
- **1981:** Sandra Day O'Connor becomes first woman SCOTUS Justice; first cases and deaths of what will become known as AIDS seen in gay men
- **1982:** Wisconsin becomes first state to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation;
- **1983:** AIDS reported in female partners of men with disease; realization HIV can be passed via heterosexual sex
- **1984:** Berkeley, CA becomes first city to offer domestic-partnership benefits;
- **1985:** Rock Hudson dies of AIDS
- **1986:** sexual harassment found to be an illegal form of job discrimination;
- **1989:** reported number of AIDS cases in US reaches 100,000

# THIRD-WAVE FEMINISM: 1990S

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- **1990:** Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination against those with disability, including those living with AIDS;
- **1991:** “Riot Grrrrl Manifesto” published; Earvin (Magic) Johnson announces that he has HIV and retired from basketball; weeks later, Freddie Mercury announced that he had AIDS and died a day later
- **1993:** Military institutes “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”; 800,000 - 1 million people March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, Bi Equal Rights and Liberation in response;
- **1994:** Violence Against Women Act passed
- **1996:** all-male Virginia Military School required to admit women to continue receiving public funding; DOMA appears
- **1999:** WHO announced that AIDS is fourth biggest cause of death worldwide; estimated 14 million people have died since epidemic

**THIRD-WAVE FEMINISM IS  
SUBSUMED INTO “FOURTH-  
WAVE,” MILLENNIAL,  
POST-9/11 FEMINISM**

**FOURTH-WAVE FEMINISM HIGHLIGHTS  
USE OF WEB PLATFORMS TO BRING  
ATTENTION TO PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN  
IN MEDIA, DOMINANCE OF MEN IN  
CULTURE INDUSTRIES**

# FOURTH-WAVE FEMINISM: 2000S

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- **2000:** Vermont becomes first state to legally recognize civil unions between gay or lesbian couples;
- **2003:** SCOTUS rules sodomy laws unconstitutional;
- **2004:** same-sex marriage becomes legal in Massachusetts
- **2005:** Title IX (prohibits discrimination based on gender) extends to prohibit disciplining someone for complaining about gendered discrimination;
- **2007:** House approves bill ensuring equal rights in the workplace for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals
- **2008:** California Supreme court rules same-sex marriage legal; Nov: ruling is repealed as voters ratify Proposition 8; FL and AZ pass measures to ban same-sex marriage; AR passes measure to prohibit gay men from adopting children

# FOURTH-WAVE FEMINISM: 2010S

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- **2010:** DC legalizes same-sex marriage in DC; Proposition 8 is repealed in CA; Don't Ask Don't Tell is repealed;
- **2013:** ban on women serving in combat roles (enacted in 1994) is lifted; SCOTUS deems DOMA unconstitutional;
- **2015:** SCOTUS rules that same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry and states cannot reserve marriage for heterosexual couples;
- **2016:** TX law imposed on abortion clinics is unconstitutional; Obama provides legislation that says students may use bathroom according to self-identified gender;
- **2017:** upwards of 3 million people turn out for the Women's March to advocate for Womens' Rights; marks one of largest and most peaceful protests in US history

**END HISTORICAL OVERVIEW  
NOW: IDEOLOGIES AND  
DISCOURSE**

# LIMITS OF “RIGHTS” DISCOURSE

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- Promotes assimilation narrative
- Relies on a Western, male, cis-gendered, heterosexual default
- Stops / ends with equality written into law, not necessarily enacted in the world
- Fails to articulate fluidities / subtleties of ideologies about gender and sexuality

# FEMINIST/QUEER DISCOURSE TODAY: POP DISCOURSE

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- Discourse of privilege
- Micro-aggressions and embedded sexism
- Body Positivity and breaking down/highlighting unfair standards of beauty
- Destigmatization of mental health
- Aims for intersectionality, especially along lines of race, class, and ability
- Rejecting / challenging male default and binary thinking
- Highlights continued systemic inequalities (often as a result of male-dominated culture / political industries)
- The era of “Bad Feminist”
- Re-claiming previously non-feminist activities / zones for feminism

# FEMINIST DISCOURSE TODAY: ACADEMIC

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- Rejects binary thinking
- Gender is performative
- Intersectional
- Embrace of affect

# QUEER DISCOURSE: ACADEMIC

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- Futurity and world-building
- Queer temporalities
- Performativity of gender
- Rejection of and resistance to binaries
- Rejection of and resistance to normative mores
- Embrace of affect
- Thinking beyond equality / assimilationist discourse

# THINKING BINARY: MEN VS WOMEN

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- Men are rational; Women are emotional (hysterical)
- Men are thinking; Women are feeling
- Men are analytical; Women have intuitive
- Men are straight-forward; Women are evasive
- Men are providers; Women are carers
- Men are leaders; Women are followers
- Men are big; Women are small
- Men are bound by their minds; Women are bound by their bodies
- Men take pleasure; Women give pleasure
- Men are agents; Women are objects

# THINKING BEYOND A BINARY

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- In feminism: becomes a way to think/conceptualize/imagine being woman without reliance on contrast to man
  - eg: creating space for affect, rather than rejecting/tamping it down; pregnancy/motherhood as radical feminist move;
- In queer modes of thought: also means thinking beyond normative structures/systems/rules
  - eg: outside of system of marriage as a limits of love, instead space for polyamory;
- Allows for holding otherwise contradictory thoughts together

# APPROACHES TO QUEER/FEMINIST GAMES:

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- Queer / feminist narrative
  - World-building beyond a binary
  - Futurity beyond normative structures
  - Story from history / personal experience
  - Queer / Female playable characters
- Queer / feminist mechanics
  - Slow game
  - Game without a goal/UI/inconsistent rules
  - Game with predetermined narrative / movement
  - Simulation
  - Glitchy games

# BEWARE COMMON TROPES

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- Damsel in Distress
- Woman without agency
- Woman who exists to save a man
- Sexuality morality tale
- Woman as background decoration
- For more, see Sarkeesian's series

# FURTHER READING: QUEERNESS AND FEMINISM AND GAMES

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- Adrienne Shaw, “Putting the Gay in Games,” *Games and Culture*, 4.3 (2009);
- Bonnie Ruberg and Adrienne Shaw (eds), *Queer Game Studies*, Univ of MN Press (2017);
- *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, Technology*, Special Issue on Feminist Games Studies, No. 2 (2013). Available: <http://adanewmedia.org/issues/issue-archives/issue2/>
- Elizabeth Losh, “Hiding Inside the Magic Circle: Gamergate and the End of Safe Space,” *boundary 2*, (2016). Available: <http://www.boundary2.org/2016/08/elizabeth-losh-hiding-inside-the-magic-circle-gamergate-and-the-end-of-safe-space/>
- Various Articles in *First Person Scholar*