

WGS.110J/21H.108J Short Paper Guidelines

Select one of the three topics below and write a 4-6 page paper that responds to the corresponding prompt. Your paper should address the entire period covered by the first three units of the course.

1. Attempts to regulate sexuality and control gender and sexual expression have been directed at, experienced by, and resisted in different ways by different groups throughout American history. In your paper, craft an argument that addresses change over time in the ways racial, ethnic, and class-based differences have mattered to the history of gender and sexuality in the United States.
2. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries space emerged as a central metaphor for defining and policing gender binaries, and for regulating sexual behaviors and practices. Particular spaces also became important sites for individuals seeking to resist these binaries and form alternative sexual identities and communities. In your paper, craft an argument that addresses change over time in the ways space has mattered to the history of sexuality and gender in the United States.
3. Experts, investigators, authorities, and lawmakers played key roles in defining “natural”/moral/normal/acceptable gender and sexual practices and identities throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In your paper, craft an argument that addresses change over time in the ways social and political institutions (and their representatives) have mattered to the history of sexuality and gender in the United States.

Your paper should present an original argument that responds to one of the above prompts. This argument should be unique (of your own making), compelling (it should communicate an interesting idea), and clearly articulated (a reader should have no problem identifying it). In crafting your argument, you should draw on lectures, discussions, and readings, as well as your own ideas about the history of sex, sexuality, and gender developed over the course of the term. The argument in your paper should be supported by ample evidence. Evidence in support of your argument should be drawn from assigned course materials (additional research is not required or advised).

Papers should be 4-6 pages in length, double-spaced, written in a 12 point font (Times New Roman or an equivalent). They should include page numbers, properly formatted footnotes with accurate citations, and a title that reflects the paper’s argument. Late submissions from students who have not contacted me in advance will receive a penalty of one third of a grade for each day the paper is late after the official due date.

Papers will be graded according to:

- The quality of the analysis and argument presented
- The strength of the evidence marshaled in support of that argument
- The paper’s ability to chart change over time across the entire period covered in units 1-3
- The clarity and quality of written expression (this includes style, grammar, and proper citation)

MIT OpenCourseWare
<https://ocw.mit.edu>

WGS.110J / 21H.108J Sexual and Gender Identities
Spring 2016

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <https://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.