

**Chesapeake Project: Integrating Sustainability Across the Curriculum**  
**Dr. Psyche Williams-Forsen**  
**AMST 628D - Feminist Cultural Criticism of Diasporic Texts**  
**Fall 2010**

**Theme: Sustainability and Trauma**

This course examines how migrations, movement, etc. have shaped the meaning of social identities for women in terms of race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and a host of other variables. We will also examine how their lives as producers reflect and inflect their worlds as citizens and consumers. The global migrations that gives life to these products makes this discussion national and transnationalism inviting us to consider the politics of their cultural production. What are the ways in which women confront institutional, personal, and societal barriers in their daily lives and creative spaces as they re(defined) and/or self-defined.

Necessarily, this course places a special emphasis on cultural production—music, literature, visual and material culture, film, and English translations of literary fiction as interpretive frames to consider the lives of these female cultural workers and the broader society around them. Performative forms of narration such as storytelling, film, music, museum exhibitions, and the Internet will be incorporated.

At its core, the term sustainability is defined as “the capacity for being continued; to endure; renewable.” However, there are equally as many definitions that speak to sustainability as one of the most theoretically and practically vexing issues of our times. The definitions are various and expansive involving far more than simply turning off lights and recycling. The implications are more overarching including a question like the one posed for the 2009 American Studies Association—What is sustained [when discussing citizenship and belonging], and how is power enacted, in the rituals and practices of individuals and institutions? And what does sustainability mean when we think about how and what we produce and consume; how we treat the land, sea, air, and atmosphere; how we approach our health and well-being, and more? The challenge of sustainability is its profoundly crosscutting nature; as such, none of these questions can be addressed without consideration of the others.

When we combine this vexing concept of sustainability with that of trauma our discussion is further expanded, redefined, and made more complex. What is trauma? In what ways does memory—past and present—relive the traumatic experience? And, why are the prevailing theories of trauma studies concerned primarily with history rather than the present? Drawing from a broad interdisciplinary theoretical base and the lens of feminist cultural criticism, this course will intervene on the prevailing discourses of terms like to “sustainability” and “trauma” to consider, among other things, resilience, justice, environments, hazards, transformation, and cultural/Earth work.