

GENDER AND POLITICS

POL 335H and WS 335H

Time: Tu and Th 9:30-10:45 am

FALL 2001

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Gender systems--regardless of historical time period--are binary systems that oppose male to female, masculine to feminine...in hierarchical order. While symbolic associations with each gender have varied enormously, they have included individualism versus nurturance, the instrumental or engineered versus the naturally procreative, reason versus intuition, science versus nature, the creation of new goods versus service, exploitation versus conservation, classical versus romantic, universal human characteristics versus biological specificity, political versus domestic, and public versus private. The interesting thing about these binary oppositions is that they obscure much more complex social and cultural processes in which differences between women and men are neither apparent nor clear-cut. Therein, of course, lie their power and significance.

- Conway, Bourque, and Scott

Course Description:

(U of A catalog) Gender and Politics: Examination of politics through the lens of gender hierarchy. Emphasis on how constructions of masculinity and femininity shape and are shaped by interacting economic, political, and ideological practices. *Prerequisite: WS 100.*

This course is designed to examine **gender**, understood as a hierarchical, binary opposition of masculinity and femininity, and its intersection with power relations, understood as an expression of **politics**. We will examine how gender categories are constructed and how they shape our identities, our ways of thinking (concepts, worldviews), and our ways of acting (divisions of labor, institutions). We will examine how gender hierarchy is a *system* of differential power that intersects especially with ethnicity/race, class, and sexual orientation.

We will examine gender in the politics of personal identities, everyday activities, political participation, and social structures (language, media, education, religion, violence). Throughout the course, we will focus on exposing and moving beyond the "dictatorship of dichotomies" -- the mental habit and social practice of taking binary oppositions for granted.

Course Objectives:

The objective of this course is to sensitize students to social constructions of gender and their political implications; in other words, to explore the implications of "taking gender seriously" in our examination of "politics." The course encourages a reconceptualization of the nature of "politics" and our understanding of what constitutes political activity: a broadening of what we deem "political"--i.e., a matter of power relations--once we take seriously how gender shapes who we are, how we think and act, and what "realities" we create.

By examining power relations--politics--as gendered, the course illuminates 1) how the personal is political; 2) how we participate individually and collectively in the production, reproduction, and legitimation of power relations (social hierarchies); 3) how social hierarchies (of race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.) are interrelated; 4) how reflective, critical analyses are essential for achieving nonhierarchical social relations; 5) and how social transformation occurs, is impeded, and promoted. Because gender identities are so fundamental, course topics have particular relevance and implications for our everyday lives.

Course Requirements/Evaluation:

Students are expected to attend all class sessions, to participate actively, to complete reading assignments prior to class, and to bring to the class points or questions related to the readings and scheduled course topics. In addition, all writing assignments must evidence attention to spelling, grammar, and composition; essays must be thoughtfully organized and well-argued.

Because this is an honors course I have high expectations of your interest, classroom participation, and written work, and I am looking forward to working with you. I have identified the following as tentative assignments, but I welcome feedback from you regarding particularly creative or constructive modifications.

This course is a joint responsibility. I have taken a great deal of time with selecting materials and assignments, and preparing my own notes. I am committed to making this a thought-provoking, stimulating and enjoyable course. The success of the course also depends on each of you as individuals, and all of us as a community. If you have any questions, concerns, suggestions, or compliments, please share them sooner rather than later! If you are having any difficulty with the course make sure that you come and talk as soon as possible in the semester.

"Response Pieces"

Because class discussion is crucial and requires thoughtful reading, I will frequently ask you to respond in writing, **briefly but thoughtfully**, to questions I specify in class. You will be asked to draw upon reading assignments and your integration of classroom and non-classroom experience. **Note:** To ensure being informed of all assignments, if you miss a class you should contact another student to find out if you also missed an assignment announced during that session.

Papers/Exams

I anticipate assigning four papers and a mid-term. Most of the papers will be due as we conclude a "set" of readings. More specific instructions will be provided in class after we have discussed the assignments together.

Classroom Policies

Some of the issues addressed in class will be controversial, which raises two points. First, it is important to sustain an atmosphere of shared **respect** for the experience and contributions of all participants. No 'personal attacks' will be permitted. Second, sharing personal experiences and feelings is relevant and welcome in classroom discussions. However, personal opinions cannot substitute for thoughtful contributions and evidence of your understanding of the ideas and arguments presented in the course materials (lectures, reading assignments, films). Understanding the material does not mean you have to agree with it but does mean that you read the material attentively, be aware of its points and argumentation, and be able to discuss it knowledgeably. Once you have read the syllabus and chosen to remain enrolled in this class, I will assume that you are aware of and have accepted these 'ground rules' for the course.

Reading Assignments

Two **books** are required and are available at the ASUA bookstore.

Johnson, Allan G. 1997. *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. [Identified as AJ in the schedule]

Kimmel, Michael. 2000. *The Gendered Society*. New York: Oxford University Press. [Identified as MK in the schedule]

A number of **readings** will be posted on POLIS and available online through password access. Several of these additional readings are from a reader on difference and inequality by Tracey E. Ore, 2000. *The Social Construction of Difference and Inequality*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing. [Identified as Ore in schedule]

Course Outline

Aug 21: Introduction to course and each other. Paperwork.

- No assignment.

Aug 23: Introduction to gender and related structural hierarchies

- MK, Preface and Ch 1: Introduction

- Ore, Tracey. Maintaining Inequalities: Systems of Oppression and Privilege. In Tracey E. Ore, ed. 2000. *The Social Construction of Difference and Inequality*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing. Pp. 191-212.

Aug 28: Explanations of gender inequalities: biology?

- MK Ch 2

- Fausto-Sterling, Anne. The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough. In Ore, pp. 113-120.

- Lorber, Judith. The Social Construction of Gender. In Ore, pp. 106-113.

Aug 30: Explanations of gender inequalities: cross-cultural constructions

- MK Ch 3

- Allan Johnson. Ch 3: The Trouble We're In. In Allen Johnson, 2001. *Privilege, Power, and Difference*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing. Pp. 15-41.

Sep 4: Explanations of gender inequalities: psychological differences?

- MK Ch 4

Sep 6: Explanations of gender inequalities: social constructions

- MK Ch 5

Sep 11: Paper due

Sep 13:

- Reread Allan Johnson Ch 3 (2001)
- Stoltenberg, John. How Men Have a Sex. In Ore, pp. 150-160.

Sep 18: Gendered identities and institutions: family

- MK Ch 6
- hooks, bell. Witnessing the death of love. In Sheila Ruth, ed. *Issues in Feminism*. 5th Edition. London: Mayfield. Pp. 341-343

Sep 20: Gendered identities and institutions: learning gender

- MK Ch 7
- Ruth, Sheila. 2001. *Issues in Feminism*. 5th Edition. London: Mayfield. Pp. 445-458

Sep 25: Gendered identities and institutions: religion, health

- Sapiro, Virginia. 1999. *Women in American Society*. 4th Edition. London: Mayfield. Pp. 176-206
- Chernik, Abra Fortune. 2001. The Body Politic. In Sheila Ruth, ed. *Issues in Feminism*. 5th Edition. London: Mayfield. Pp. 289-293
- Sapiro, Virginia. 1999. *Women in American Society*. 4th Edition. London: Mayfield. Pp. 216-230

Sep 27: Gendered identities and institutions: work and economics

- MK Ch 8
- Rotella, Elyce J. 2001. Women and the American Economy. In Sheila Ruth, ed. *Issues in Feminism*. 5th Edition. London: Mayfield. Pp. 383-390
- Girion, Lisa. 2001. Wage Gap Continues to Vex Women. *Los Angeles Times* 11 February

Oct 2: Gendered culture and images

- Bordo, Susan. 1997. *Twilight Zones*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp.1-18, 107-138

Oct 4: Paper due

Oct 9: Gendered effects on private life

- Ruth, Sheila. 2001. *Issues in Feminism*. 5th Edition. London: Mayfield. Pp. 249-280

Oct 11: Gendered Interactions: Intimacies and Sexualities

- MK Ch 9
- Mohr, Richard D. Anti-Gay Stereotypes. In Paula S. Rothenberg, ed. *Race, Class and Gender in the United States*. 4th edition. 1998. New York: S. Martin's Press. Pp. 458-465
- Ochs, Robyn. Bisexuality, Feminism, Men and Me. In Tracey Ore, ed., *The Social Construction of Difference and Inequality*. London: Mayfield. Pp. 541-546

Oct 16: Gendered Interactions: Sexualities

- MK Ch 10
- Heterosexual Questionnaire (source unknown)
- Pharr, Suzanne. 2000. Homophobia as a Weapon of Sexism. In Tracey Ore, ed., *The Social Construction of Difference and Inequality*. London: Mayfield. Pp. 462-471

Oct 18: Gendered Interactions: Violence

- MK Ch 11 and Epilogue
- Easlea, Brian. 2001. Patriarchy, Scientists, and Nuclear Warriors. In Sheila Ruth, ed. *Issues in Feminism*. 5th Edition. London: Mayfield. Pp.79-91
- Mantilla, Karla. 2001. Child Violence: It's a Male Thing. In Sheila Ruth, ed. *Issues in Feminism*. 5th Edition. London: Mayfield. Pp. 92-93

Oct 23: Paper due

Oct 25: The Gender Knot

- AJ Preface and Ch 1, 2

Oct 30: The Gender Knot

- AJ Ch 3, 4

Nov 1: The Gender Knot

- AJ Ch 5, 6 (can skim pp. 138-142)

Nov 6: The Gender Knot

- AJ Ch 7, 8 (can skim pp. 194-199)

Nov 8: The Gender Knot

- AJ Ch 9, 10

Nov 13: Paper due

Nov 15: Gendered political power

- McGlen, Nancy and Karen O'Connor. *Women, Politics, and American Society*. Prentice-Hall. 1998. Pp. 60-104

Nov 20: Gendered political power

- Ring, Jennifer. "Feminist Theory as Seeing." In Lois Duke Whitaker, ed. 1999. *Women in Politics: Outsiders or Insiders?* 3rd Ed. Prentice Hall. Pp. 4-16

- Wollstonecraft, Mary. A Vindication of the Rights of Women. In Sheila Ruth, ed. *Issues in Feminism*. 5th Edition. London: Mayfield. Pp. 534-538

- Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. Declaration of Sentiments. In Sheila Ruth, ed. *Issues in Feminism*. 5th Edition. London: Mayfield. Pp. 541-543

- Whicker, Marcia Lynn and Lois Duke Whitaker. "Women in Congress." In Whitaker. Pp. 171-176

Nov 22: Thanksgiving. No class or assignment

Nov 27: Gendered political power

- Clark, Cal and Janet Clark. 1999. "The Gender Gap in 1996: More Meaning than a 'Revenge of the Soccer Moms'." In Whitaker. Pp. 68-84

- Whicker, Marcia Lynn and Hedy Leonie Isaacs. "The Maleness of the American Presidency." In Whitaker. Pp. 221-232

- Burrell, Barbara C. "The Governmental Status of the First Lady in Law and in Public Perception." In Whitaker. Pp. 233-247

Nov 29:

- McGlen, Nancy and Karen O'Connor. "Familial and Reproductive Rights and Realities." *Women, Politics, and American Society*. Prentice-Hall. 1998. Pp. 203-238

- Hoffman, Merle. Twenty-seven Years, But Who's Counting. In Sheila Ruth, ed. *Issues in Feminism*. 5th Edition. London: Mayfield. Pp. 325-328

- "Reproductive Rights Battle Continues Unabated"

Dec 4: Gendered political power

- McGlen, Nancy and Karen O'Connor. The Future of the movement. Pp. 283-293

- Ore, Tracey. Resistance and social change. In Ore, pp. 546-557

Dec 13: Final paper due