Course Objectives

We all think we know what it means to be a boy or a girl, a man or a woman in our society, and that many of these differences are “natural” or “just the way it is.” This course will force you to rethink many of these assumptions and especially to abandon ideas about gender as “natural.” While sex is a biological characteristic, gender is undoubtedly cultural and social.

Beyond referring to female or male anatomy, gender also implies the social and cultural characteristics that define women and men’s roles and identities. Gender includes all the ways in which societies organize people into female and male categories and attach meanings to those categories. In this course, we will explore how the meanings of gender and gender differences are constructed through specific social, historical economic and cultural processes. We will challenge biologically-based notions of gender difference and analyze how gender develops its meanings in the context of culture and society.

An Important Note

Throughout this course, you will be exposed to ideas which may challenge or question your own beliefs and understandings of gender. You will also encounter readings which may contain explicit language and explore sensitive themes such as violence and sexuality. While it is understood that at times you may feel discomfort, it is expected that you will complete the required reading material and that you will voice your thoughts, opinions, and reactions to this material in a thoughtful, mature, and respectful manner.
As this is a core course, we will be looking at the sociology of gender with an eye towards the following concerns:

1) **The Perennial Questions**: Throughout the semester we will be asking questions about the gendered lives we live, questions that researchers have been asking for quite awhile. What does it mean to be “male” or “female”? What is gender and how is it different than sex? How does it differ between societies? How much of being a man or a woman is “natural” versus nurtured? How do these labels affect our sense of identity, our life choices and opportunities?

2) **Cultural Diversity**: A number of readings will address the issue of cultural diversity in 21st century society, in order to appreciate the great variety of ethnic, racial, cultural perspectives and influences on gender. We will learn about how people experience gender in different ways depending on their cultural and racial heritages. **Please note**: This course does not satisfy the official university cultural diversity requirement.

3) **Historical Perspective**: We’ll look at gender in a historical context, especially with regard to the development of biological versus cultural understandings of gender, and how gender definitions have changed over time.

4) **Methodology**: We’ll pay attention to the various ways gender can be studied, including thick description, interview, and content analysis. You’ll learn how to study gender from a sociological perspective.

5) **Writing Component**: There is a strong writing requirement in this course. You’ll be expected to react to the works we read and be able to perform your own analyses of gender, as well as integrate the perspectives considered in class.

6) **Creating a Personal Philosophy**: Throughout this course, some of your ideas and beliefs on gender may be questioned and/or challenged. You’re encouraged to develop your own philosophy about the importance and relevance of gender, both in your life and in an academic sense. It is hoped you will acquire some new lenses to view your own gender identity and culture by the end of this course.

**Course Requirements**

*Please silence your cell phones before class!*
1) **Class Attendance and Participation**: Everyone is expected to attend class and participate in discussions and exercises. I take daily attendance. More than 3 unexcused absences will affect your grade. Excused absences, including approved athletic events, medical appointments, and absences cleared by the dean will not lower your grade as long as they are properly documented (i.e. a note from health services, dean, etc.) I also expect you to arrive to class on time. Repeatedly late arrivals to class are disrespectful to everyone and will also affect your grade.

2) **Assigned Reading**: You must come to class having read all assigned material and be prepared to discuss it. You will be expected to lead discussion once during the semester. Quizzes or in-class writing assignments may be given to assess reading. I also reserve the right to ask you to read additional short pieces that are relevant to class that I may send you throughout the semester.

3) **Journal Responses**: You will be responding weekly to readings and topics by keeping a journal which will be handed in 3 times throughout the semester. More detail about the structure of the journal will be provided.

4) **Papers**: There will be 2 essay assignments assigned during the semester. These will be an opportunity for you to critically connect concepts introduced in class with your own experiences, and to conduct research. More detailed assignments will be given out when the time comes. Late papers will be penalized.

5) **Exams**: There will be an in-class mid-term and final exam which will cover the core material of the course.

**Grading**

Your grade will be based on the following elements:

1) Class Attendance and Participation 10%
2) Journal Responses 25%
3) 2 essays/exercises (4-5 pages) 15% each
4) Mid-term Exam 15%
5) Final Exam 20%
Total: 100%

**Academic Honesty**

You are responsible for adhering to the statement of academic honesty in your Student Handbook and at [http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html](http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html). I take plagiarism very seriously and the discovery of any violations will be reported and will likely lead to failure of the class.

**Disability Statement**

If you have a disability, please let me know about it at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate accommodations can be made.
Keeping in Touch with Me

I encourage you to drop by during my office hours if you have any questions about the readings, assignments, or concepts in general. I can also make appointments outside of these hours if you check with me. The best way to contact me is through my email listed at the beginning of the syllabus. I check my email frequently and will get back to you as soon as possible.

Required Readings

- Online Course Reserves
  - (*) Indicates reading is in the library’s online course reserve system
Course Schedule

Part I: The Social Construction of Gender

Introductions

W Jan 19  Introductions

F Jan 21  What is a sociology of gender?

M Jan 24  Biological vs Social definitions of gender

W Jan 26
- *Fausto-Sterling: “The Biological Connection,” from Myths of Gender

F Jan 28  Patriarchy
- Disch 10: Allan G. Johnson, “Patriarchy, the System: An It, Not a He, a Them, or an Us,” p. 98

M Jan 31  Cultural Constructions of Gender & Sexuality
- Disch 7: Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” p.78
- Disch 9: Mohanty, “Under and (Inside) Western Eyes: At the Turn of the Century,” p.88
- *Herdt: “Coming of Age and Coming Out Ceremonies Across Cultures,” from Same Sex, Different Cultures
  - Journal 1 due

W Feb 2  Intersectionality & Feminisms
F Feb 4
- **Disch 2**: Zia, “From Nothing, a Consciousness,” p. 44
- **Disch 8**: Shaheed, “Controlled or Autonomous: Identity and the Experience of the Network, Women Living Under Muslim Laws,” p. 83

M Feb 7  
**Socialization**
- **Disch**: “Gender Socialization,” p. 107-111
- *Journal 2 due*

W Feb 9  
**Education**
- **Disch 41**: Sadker and Sadker, “Missing in Interaction,” p. 362
- **Disch 42**: Kimmel, “What About the Boys?” p. 369

F Feb 11
- **Disch 43**: Barres, “Does Gender Matter?” p. 383

M Feb 14  
**Masculinity & Sexuality**
- **Disch 12**: Messner, “Boyhood, Organized Sports, and the Construction of Masculinities,” p. 112
- *Journal 3 due; Journal Submission 1*

W Feb 16
- **Disch 15**: Due, “Growing Up Hidden,” p. 147
- **Disch 16**: Kimmel, “Masculinity as Homophobia,” p. 149
- **Disch**: “Sexuality,” p. 262-269

F Feb 18
- **Disch 30**: Jensen, “A Pornographic World [What is Normal?],” p. 270
- **Disch 33**: Rust, “The Impact of Multiple Marginalization,” p. 289
- **Pascoe**: *Dude, You’re a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*, Chapter 1, p. 1-24

M Feb 21  
**“Dude, You’re a Fag”**
- **Pascoe**: *Dude, You’re a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*, Chapters 2-3, p. 25-83
- *Essay 1 due*

W Feb 23
- **Pascoe**: Ch. 4, p. 84-114

F Feb 25
- **Pascoe**: Ch. 5, p. 115-155
M Feb 28
  • Pascoe: Ch. 6 and Appendix, p. 156-193
  • Journal 4

W Mar 2
  • Mid-term Review

F Mar 4
  • Mid-term Exam

**********March 7-11: SPRING BREAK**********

Part II: Gender and Structured Inequality

M Mar 14  Gender in Media & Popular Culture
  • Disch, “Communication,” p. 221-224
  • Disch 26: Petrie, “Real Men Don’t Cry...And Other ‘Uncool’ Myths,” p. 230

W Mar 16
  • Disch 29: Zimmerman, “Where are the Women?” p. 257

F Mar 18  Embodiment
  • Disch, “Embodiment,” p. 156-164
  • Disch 17: Jeffreys, “Making Up is Hard to Do,” p. 165

M Mar 21
  • Disch 20: Staples, “Just Walk on By: A Black Man Ponders His Power to Alter Public Space,” p. 204
  • Journal 5
W Mar 23  Families
• Disch, “Families,” p. 297-303
• Disch 35: Collins, “Bloodmothers, Othermothers, and Women-Centered Networks,” p. 318

F Mar 25
• Disch 36: Gerson, “Dilemmas of Involved Fatherhood,” p. 325
• Disch 39: Graff, “What is Marriage For?” p. 345

M Mar 28  Employment, Work and Inequality
• Disch, “Paid Work and Unemployment,” p. 413-420
• Disch 47: Crittenden, “Sixty Cents to a Man’s Dollar,” p. 433
• Journal 6; Submission #2

W Mar 30  The US Welfare State
• Disch 46: Marchevsky & Theoharis, “The End of Welfare as We Know It,” p. 421

F Apr 1  Gender in the Workplace

M Apr 4  Globalization: Genders in Production
• Salzinger: Genders in Production, Ch. 1-3, p. 1-50

W Apr 6
• Salzinger: Ch. 4, p. 50-74

F Apr 8
• Salzinger: Ch. 5, p. 75-100

M Apr 11
• Salzinger: Ch. 6, p. 100-127
• Journal #7

W Apr 13
• Salzinger: Ch. 7, p. 128-151
F Apr 15
- Salzinger: Ch. 8, p. 152-171

M Apr 18 *Patriot's Day—No classes*

W Apr 20 Violence and Crime
- Disch, “Violence at Home and Abroad,” p. 496-503
- Disch 55: Katz, “Eminem’s Popularity is a Major Setback for Girls and Women,” p. 517

************Apr 21-25: EASTER BREAK************

W Apr 27
- Journal #8; Final Journal Submission

F Apr 29 Movements for Change
- Disch 64: DeLorey, “Health Care Reform- A Woman’s Issue,” p. 603
- Disch 68: Wright, “To Be Poor and Transgender,” p. 622

M May 2 Visions for the Future
- Essay #2 due

W May 4
- Review for Final

FINAL EXAM: Sat, May 14 12:30pm