

GENDER ISSUES IN SOCIETY

SOC 224.01

FALL 2015

Meeting Time: T/Th 1-2:15pm

Location: Kennedy Building, Room 203

Professor:

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Office Hours: Monday 12:30-2:30pm; Tuesday & Thursday 10:30-11:30am; Wednesday 12-2pm; and by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What does gender want? ...If I am a certain gender, will I still be regarded as part of the human? Will the 'human' expand to include me in its reach? If I desire in certain ways, will I be able to live? Will there be a place for my life, and will it be recognizable to the other upon whom I depend for social existence?

--Judith Butler (2004) *Undoing Gender*

In these series of engaging questions, the philosopher Judith Butler invites us to consider the purpose of gender, its relationship to the human body, as well as how gender can be used to justify social inequality. Think about it: What does gender "want"? On the one hand, cross-cultural and historical analyses have found that every human society has used gender as a way to help organize the social order and provide people with an identity. Doesn't that mean there is some kind inherent biological origin to gender that resides in the human body? Said in another way, doesn't that mean gender "wants" us to stay true to our biological design?

On the other hand, these very same analyses also demonstrate the wide variety of ways gender has been used throughout human history. What it means to be a man or a woman varies across cultures and history. Does that not suggest gender is then a culturally created phenomenon that exists outside the body? Does it not suggest that gender has little to no biological basis and it merely “wants” us to use it as a way to organize our social world, provide us with a purposeful identity, and be changed as circumstances arise?

Answering the question of what gender “wants” is an important pursuit because it helps us understand one of the most central aspects of both the social order and our own identities. In this course, we will study gender as an object of empirical analysis rooted in the latest social science thinking to uncover the purpose and meaning of gender, from its relationship to our bodies to how it is infused into social phenomena. Indeed, it is through the social sciences that we can come to know gender works in the lived experience of the present as well as the extent to which it varies historically and cross culturally.

The Ubiquity of Gender in Our Lives

Consider how pervasive gender is in your life and others. While some may be more preoccupied with masculinity and femininity than others, it is something we all must deal with in our lives. When you woke up this morning did you follow some kind of gender norms? Did you subvert them? Think about how has gender been to you. Do you enjoy being identified by a particular gender? Why or why not? Do you feel uncertain about the roles of men, women, and transgendered people in a changing social world?

Over the past fifty years there have been substantial changes in gender roles in the United States. Women now work alongside men, go to college, play sports, get elected into public office and many other things that were once seen as the sole province of masculinity. We have also seen most recently the institution of marriage change from being only between a man and a woman to allowing same-sex marriages. These transformations may seem surprising to some, but by using a social science framework to understand gender we will come to understand that even traditional notions of gender have not always existed. Therefore, the very notion of change in gendered expectations may in fact be the norm.

These inquiries into gender are vast, to be sure, but we can address these grand questions better when we focus on a particular case study. In this course, we will focus on gender issues mostly in the United States and other modern societies, paying particular attention to contemporary social issues in the 21st century.

LEARNING GOALS & OBJECTIVES:

In *Gender Issues in Society*, students will be expected to:

- 1.) Understand how sociologists approach the question of gender as an empirically-based discipline to answer more philosophical inquiries about the meaning and purpose of gender.

- 2.) Become knowledgeable about the nature v. nurture debate.
- 3.) Comprehend how social structure and culture impact the development of gender.
- 4.) Consider the ethical and political implications that arise from sociological research on gender.
- 5.) Explore how other social institutions like race, class, and sexuality impact gender.
- 6.) Develop critical thinking skills, including the ability to distinguish between arguments based on personal opinion and empirical evidence, how empirical evidence is embedded in a set of underlying assumptions, and understand different points of view on social issues.
- 7.) Further develop their perspective about gender.

We will also explore the following topics:

- Gendered Bodies
- Ideas about Gender
- The Performativity of Gender
- The Institution of Gender
- The Relationship Between Gender and Class, Race, and Sexuality
- Men & Masculinities/Women & Femininities
- Work/Family Balance
- Politics
- Sexualities
- Social Change
- The Impact of Gender on Opportunity □

The intent of this course is to provide you with a better understanding of how the discipline of sociology and other social sciences approach gender, and help you further develop a well-informed opinion on gender.

OTHER POLICIES:

Plagiarism & Cheating: Assumption College has an academic honesty policy that is strictly enforced. All students at AC are expected to understand the policy. You will find the academic honesty policy on page 15 of the *Assumption College 2015-2016 Undergraduate Catalog*.

In case students are not aware of the exact meaning of cheating or plagiarism, here are the College's definitions quoted directly from the *Assumption College 2015-2016 Undergraduate Catalog* (p. 15).

Cheating—Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices in any academic exercise. This definition includes unauthorized communication of information during an academic exercise.

Plagiarism—Presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the ideas, information, etc., are common knowledge.

Any student who is found guilty of cheating or plagiarism will fail this course.

Students with Disabilities: Assumption College provides students with documented learning disabilities accommodations at the Academic Support Center. If you require accommodations, please contact Sharon de Klerk (x7500) at the Academic Support Center for help, and let me know how I may be of assistance.

Classroom Environment: Sometimes discussing gender issues can be challenging. I ask that we all make a commitment to show each other respect in the classroom. Therefore, we should be committed to carefully listening to others opinions and not interrupting. Please turn off your phones before class begins. You may use tablets or laptops in the classroom—but they can only be used for taking notes and other relevant course uses.

WARNING TO STUDENTS SEEKING A BLOW-OFF COURSE: This course is a serious academic enterprise and intended to be challenging. Students hoping for an easy class should look elsewhere. Students who take this course should be prepared to be work hard and actively participate during class time. This means putting at least two hours of work outside of the class (i.e.-reading, writing, studying) for every hour in the classroom. Not keeping up with the readings and/or only studying a couple of hours the night before a test will result in a poor grade.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Class Participation, Attendance, & 3 Reaction Papers 10%
- Test #1 (In Class) 20%
- Test # 2 (Essay) 20%
- Test # 3 (Essay) 25%
- Final Exam (Essay) 25%
- 100%

I reserve the right to alter the reading and/or assignments as the semester progresses.

Class Participation, Attendance, & Reaction Papers (10%): Students are expected to come to class regularly, and *actively* participate in class discussions and lectures. Students will also be expected to complete the assigned readings *prior* to class and be able to discuss them. You can have up to two unexcused absences for the entire semester; any additional unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your course participation score by 1/3 of a grade (i.e. A to A-) for each class missed. *Please note that periodic attendance such as only coming to class to take tests or drop off papers will not be tolerated. I reserve the right to not accept papers or allow a student to take a test if he or she does not attend class on a regular basis.* Merely being physically present is not enough for an A in class participation.

Reaction papers are designed for students to provide critical insights and opinions based on the readings. For each position paper, you will receive a question from the professor that will ask you to provide a brief overview of a reading and then offer your opinion. Students will write a total of three reaction papers over the course of the semester. Each paper will be one to two pages in length. *Late papers will not be accepted.*

3 Tests & Final Exam (90%): Students are expected to complete three tests, and hand in a final exam essay. I will hand out specific requirements for the tests and final exam as the semester progresses. The first exam will be in class and the remaining exams (including the final) will be handed in through Blackboard.

GRADING SYSTEM:

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| A 94-100 <input type="checkbox"/> | C+ 77-79 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A- 90-93 <input type="checkbox"/> | C 74-76 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B+ 87-89 <input type="checkbox"/> | C- 70-73 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B 84-86 <input type="checkbox"/> | D+ 67-69 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B- 80-83 <input type="checkbox"/> | D 64-66 <input type="checkbox"/> |

REQUIRED READINGS:

Lisa Wade & Myra Marx Ferree 2015. *Gender: Ideas, Interactions, Institutions*. New York: W.W. Norton Company.

Joan Spade & Catherine Valentine 2014. *The Kaleidoscope of Gender: Prisms, Patterns, and Possibilities*. 4rd ed. Los Angeles: Pine Forge Press. (**Abbreviated as “KG” in course outline**)

Gayle Kaufmann 2013. *Superdads: How Fathers Balance Work and Family in the 21st Century*. New York: New York University Press.

Pamela Stone 2007. *Opting Out? Why Women Really Quite Careers and Head Home*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

*Blackboard Readings

**eReserves Readings (in Blackboard)

COURSE OUTLINE: □

(I reserved the right to change the course outline as needed. This includes the possibility of adding course readings as I see fit.)

UNIT 1: UNDERSTANDING GENDER AT THE MICRO LEVEL

In unit one, we will focus on gender at the micro level. This level of analysis largely focuses on the questions of how gender relates to biology, identity, and small group interaction. The class will also come to understand the “doing gender” theory and what key scholars think about this perspective 20 years after its inception.

Week One: Course Introduction

Overview: In week one, we will become familiar with how sociology approaches the question of gender. The class will also engage in a group exercise to get students’ opinions on gender.

September 1 Course Introduction & Class Exercise—What does gender want?

September 3 Wade & Ferree *Gender*. Ch. 1 & 2

Week Two: Gendered Bodies & the Nature vs. Nurture Debate

Overview: In week two, we will read about the “gender binary” and why some scholars find the concept limiting. Students will also become familiar with the latest research on the biological impact on gender differences. Is it true that the differences between men and women can be solely explained by evolution and biological traits? The class will explore what it means to have a “gendered body” as well.

September 8 Readings 2, 3 & 6 in the KG reader

Reaction Paper #1 Due (9/8) (Hand in through Blackboard)

September 10 Wade & Ferree *Gender*. Ch 3

**Wade, Lisa (2013) “The New Science of Sex Difference” *Sociological Compass*. Vol. 7 (4): pp. 278-293

Reading 4 in the KG reader

*****Class meets at 1:30-2:20 today (9/10) due to Mass of the Holy Spirit*****

Week Three: Performativity of Gender

Overview: How is gender performed? What does it mean that we perform gender as a publically recognizable identity? What happens when we fail to perform gender in a conventional fashion? In this section, students will come to understand the “doing gender” perspective in sociology.

September 15 Wade & Ferree *Gender*. Ch. 4

**West & Zimmerman “Doing Gender” *Gender & Society* Vol. 1(2):125-151

September 17 Chapter 4 & Readings 16-18 in the KG reader

Week Four: Performativity of Gender Continued—Masculinities

Overview: We continue our exploration of the performativity of gender by focusing on the varieties of masculinities. On Thursday, September 24 students will take their first test of the semester.

September 22 Wade & Ferree *Gender*. Ch. 6

Reading 45 in the KG reader

September 24 **Test #1 (In class)**

Week Five: Performativity of Gender Continued—Femininities & the State of the “Doing Gender” Perspective

The exploration of performativity continues with attention to femininities. We will then investigate how the “doing gender” theory has fared after being used for over two decades in sociological research on gender.

September 29 Wade & Ferree *Gender*. Ch. 7

Reading 42 in the KG reader

October 1 All readings from a special issue of *Gender & Society*. (Please note these articles are short.)

**Jurik & Siemsen 2009. “‘Doing Gender’ as Canon or Agenda: A Symposium on West and Zimmerman” *Gender & Society* Vol. 23 (1):72-75

**Smith 2009. “Categories Are Not Enough” *Gender & Society* Vol. 23 (1):76-80

**Risman 2009. “From Doing to Undoing Gender as We Know It” *Gender & Society* Vol. 23 (1):81-84

**Messnershimdt 2009. “‘Doing Gender’: The Impact and Future of a Salient Sociological Concept” *Gender & Society* Vol. 23 (1):85-88

**Connell 2009. “Accountable Conduct: ‘Doing Gender’ in Transsexual and Political Retrospect” *Gender & Society* Vol. 23 (1):104-111

**West & Zimmerman 2009. “Accounting for Doing Gender” *Gender & Society* Vol. 23 (1):112-122

Reaction Paper #2 Due: 10/1 (Hand in through Blackboard)

UNIT 2: UNDERSTANDING GENDER AT THE MACRO LEVEL: GENDER AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

Unit two address the argument that gender is a social institution that creates widespread patterns in society. We will also explore how gender can be used to create and maintain inequality as well as how it works as a form of power.

Week Six: Structural Aspects of Gender

Overview: In this unit we will explore how sociologists look at gender as a social institution of gender and how the institution changes over time.

October 6 Wade & Ferree *Gender*. Ch. 8
 Reading 1 in the KG reader

October 8 Wade & Ferree *Gender*. Ch. 9
 Reading 36 in the KG reader

Week Seven: Gender in Families

Overview: In week seven we will focus on how gender organizes distinct roles in the family and how these roles also change over time.

October 13 **Columbus Day Holiday—No Class**

October 15 Wade & Ferree *Gender*. Ch. 11
 Reading 37 in the KG reader

*Coontz “The New Instability” *The New York Times*. July 26, 2014

Week Eight: Gender in Work

Overview: Week eight continues with the exploration of gender as a social institution with focus on the economy.

October 20 Wade & Ferree *Gender*. Ch. 12

October 22 Readings 32, 33 & 35 in the KG reader

*****Test #2 (Take-Home Essay) Due: FRIDAY, October 23 by 4pm (Hand in through Blackboard)*****

UNIT 3: CASE STUDY 1.0: WORK/FAMILY BALANCE AND MOTHERING IN THE 21ST CENTURY ECONOMY

Unit three addresses what has become to be know as “work/family” balance, the relationship between the economy, government policy and family. From the mid to late 20th century there was a massive increase in the number of employed mothers working outside the home. Today most mothers work outside the home, but starting in the 21st century there was a small but statistically significant increase in the number of stay-at-home mothers. Why was there an increase? In this unit we will explore structural and personal factors involved mothers who decided to opt out of work to become a stay-at-home mother.

Week Nine: Case Study in Work/Family Balance—Mothering in the 21st Century Economy

Overview: The book *Opting Out?* addresses the question of why professional women decide to leave their careers to take care of their children. We will ask if “opting out” is a good phenomenon. How is the structure of the American economy related to opting out?

October 27 Stone *Opting Out?* Introduction

*Hirshman “Homeward Bound” *The American Prospect*. November 20, 2005

*Sibert “Don’t Quit This Day Job” *The New York Times*. June 11, 2011

*Belkin “The Opt-Out Revolution” *The New York Times Magazine*. August 7, 2003

*Warner “The Opt-Out Generation Wants Back In” *The New York Times Magazine*. August 7, 2013.

October 29 Stone *Opting Out?* Ch. 1-3

Reaction Paper #3 Due (10/29) (Hand in through Blackboard)

Week Ten: Case Study in Work/Family Balance—Mothering in the 21st Century Economy

Overview: We continue our analysis of *Opting Out*.

November 3 Stone *Opting Out?* Ch. 4-6

November 5 Stone *Opting Out?* Ch. 7-9

*Sheryl Sandberg “Why we have too Few women leaders” *TED Talk*
December 2010.

*Anne-Marie Slaughter “Why Women Still Can’t Have It All” *The Atlantic*. July/August 2012

UNIT 3: CASE STUDY 2.0: WORK/FAMILY BALANCE AND FATHERING IN THE 21ST CENTURY ECONOMY

The exploration of work/family balance continues with a focus on fathering in the modern economic order. While more mothers have entered the workforce over the past 50 years, the role of fatherhood has shown signs of change as well. Fathers are more involved in household chores and childrearing than the previous generation of fathers. We have even seen a substantial growth in the number of stay-at-home fathers over the past three decades. That said, mothers continue to shoulder most of the domestic responsibilities. By focusing on modern fathers we will consider whether greater father involvement in domesticity can offer a solution to work/family balance.

Week Eleven: Case Study in Work/Family Balance—Fathering in the 21st Century Economy

Overview: In the monograph *Superdads*, the sociologist Gayle Kaufman explores the development of fathers who make significant changes in their work lives to be more involved in their family life. As with our exploration of mothering in the 21st century, we will consider the structural and personal factors involved in fathers becoming more involved in the domestic sphere and whether this change will help balance work and family life for all family members.

November 10 Kaufman *Superdads* Ch. 1

Reading 41 in the KG reader

*Parker & Wang “Modern Parenthood”

*Rampell “Lean In, Dad” *The New York Times Magazine*. April 2, 2013

November 12 Kaufman *Superdads* Ch. 2-4

*Kantor & Silver-Greenberg “Wall Street Mothers, Stay-Home Fathers”
The New York Times. December 7, 2013

Week Twelve: Case Study in Work/Family Balance—Fathering in the 21st Century Economy

Overview: We continue our analysis of *Superdads*.

November 17 Kaufman *Superdads* Ch. 5-6

November 19 Kaufman *Superdads* Ch. 7-8

UNIT 4: COMPLICATING GENDER

In our final unit of the semester will study how other social institutions impact gender,

such as sexuality, class, and race. Will also consider how we might take this material learned throughout the semester into our own lives.

Week Thirteen: Sexualities

Overview: Is our sexuality a function of personal desire? In this section we will explore how sexuality and sexual mores are essentially managed through a range of social institutions in society. We will also become familiar with how sexuality has changed across time and cultures.

November 24 Wade & Ferree *Gender*. Ch. 10

Reading 28 in the KG reader

Test #3 (Take-Home Essay) Due: 11/24 (Hand in through Blackboard)

November 26 **Thanksgiving Break-No Readings**

Week Fourteen: Intersectionality & Complicating Gender

Overview: How do the forces of race, class and sexuality impact gender identity and vary the degree of power and privilege of men and women?

December 1 Wade & Ferree *Gender*. Ch. 5

December 3 Readings 8-9 & 30

Week Fifteen: Class Wrap-Up

Overview: The course concludes by considering how we might use this semester's worth of knowledge in own lives and review for the final exam essay.

December 8 Wade & Ferree *Gender*. Ch. 14