

Sociology 477  
University of Wisconsin

Feminist Theory: Gender & Society  
Fall 2006  
Tuesdays 3:30-5:25  
Ingraham 223

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*The Slanted Screen: Asian Men in Film and Television PBS*

This course offers an exploration of feminist theorizing of gender relations in constructing and maintaining the social order. The object of the course is to acquaint students with the strengths and weaknesses of current theories of gender and develop the ability to contribute to analyzing and changing gender relations.

The following books have been ordered at the University Bookstore. All of the other readings are on electronic reserve.

Myers, Anderson and Risman, Feminist Foundations  
Connell, R.W. Gender and Power  
Espiritu, Asian American Women and Men  
Mink, Welfare's End  
Thorne, Gender Play  
White, Dark Continent of Our Bodies

Each week (except the first) you are expected to read all the assigned texts BEFORE class. There are approximately 100-150 pages per week of reading, some of which is theory (and requires careful attention to the argument), some of which is material to which we can apply theory. For 3 of these weeks you should also prepare a written 800-1000 word critical analysis of a main article or book section (not the case readings). Each such discussion paper should be a brief argument that constructively engages with the author's theoretical claims about gender. You should always be prepared to actively question and discuss what you have read, and many weeks at the beginning of class you will be asked to turn in a card with a question for discussion.

The list of assignments and percentage of grade assigned for each is given on the last page.

## **I. Feminist theory and the concept of gender**

- (1) September 5 Organizational Meeting
- (2) September 12 Gender stratification and the need for a gender theory

Lopata & Thorne "On the term sex roles" Signs 1978, 3(3):718-721.

Ferree & Hess "Introduction" from Hess & Ferree, Analyzing Gender, Sage 1987.

Defining terms: what is feminism? what is gender? What is a role? why gender and not sex roles? How do you understand the distinctions between "sex" and gender, and why do you think

they matter? What is the role of power, of social order, of change in our “operational theories” of gender?

Essays in Feminist Foundations by Acker (pp. 21-31), Bose (pp 70-75), Huber (pp. 83-102), Calasanti (pp. 152-158), Chafetz (pp. 159-164), Stacey & Thorne (pp. 219-239), Kanter (pp. 259-277)

By looking back at how workplace inequalities between women and men have been theorized sociologically, we can see both “facts” and “interpretations” of what these data mean about social relationships. The observer (sociologist) doing the data-gathering and theorizing is also socially and historically situated. Because social relations themselves change, the data and the observer are also both in flux. What are some of the implications you would draw from this about our/your theories of social change? What are the specific criticisms of sex role theories leveled here? From your own perspective, which seem most significant and why?

(3) September 19 - Gender theory - gendered meanings in the body and social structure  
Connell, Gender and Power, Ch. 1-5

Essays from Pat Kirkham, The Gendered Object on “interiors”(Kinchin, pp 13-29), “bicycles” (Oddy, pp.60-69), and “dolls” (Hendershot, pp. 90-102)

Connell presents his systematic arguments for understanding gender as a social structure of power and hierarchy, exercised as a process through specific practices that convey meaning, rather than as “sex differences” whether biological or “socialized.” Focus on (1) the issue of categoricism, (2) the relation of gender practices and bodies (does the biological produce the social? Vice versa? Or is there no relation?) Look at the essays that place gender meanings in social products other than people’s bodies: what “is” gender in such cultural practices? Why do people “choose” to consume gender in these ways?

(4) Sept 26 - Gender theory – theorizing gender relations as historically grounded and variable (TAL 8/5/05)

Connell, read Ch. 7 and also:

Scott, Joan. "Gender: a useful category of historical analysis" *American Historical Review*, Dec. 1986, pp. 1053-1075—

Cockburn, Cynthia *In the Way of Women*, ILR Press 1991, Ch 3, “Defined in domesticity” pp 76-104

Leonard, *Women, Technology and the Myth of Progress*, Ch 7 pp. 148-173.

How should we use history in studying gender relations? In studying class relations? Are we talking about anything real when we use terms like “women” and “men” (as if they were abstract, constant, unracialized and historically homogeneous categories)? How is the historical construction of relations of inequality (capitalism, racism) shaped by gender? How is it evident in specific practices in the home and in the workplace? How are home and work linked? When we say “historically variable” do we mean “always getting better”?

## **II. Using gender theory at different levels of analysis**

- (5) October 3 - Micro-level gender. Gendered selves, performance and identity  
Connell, Ch 5  
West, Candace and Don Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," pp 167-190 in Feminist Foundations.  
Martin, Patricia Yancey "Said and Done vs Saying and Doing" and 3 responses  
by Bird,  
Connell and Ferree, *Gender & Society*, 2003, 17(3): 342-378.

Cases (read any 2 of these 3)

- Lurie, Alison, The Language of Clothes, ch 7, "Male and female" pp 212-229  
Lucal, Betsy, "What it means to be gendered me: life on the boundaries of a dichotomous  
gender system" Gender & Society, 1999, 13(6): 781-797.  
Bordo, Susan "Beauty (re)discovers the male body" Pp 168-225 in The Male Body

Who/what do we think we are? What is the relation between the social and the natural in the formation of gender? We obviously have bodies: what uses do we make of them in constructing social relations? How do our "selves" figure into our performances of gender? What uses should sociology make of psychology in constructing a theory of gender as process (involving the making of difference, power/inequality and emotion/cathexis)?

### **Project #1 DUE October 10. Analysis of gender meanings in texts or objects**

- (6) October 10 – Micro-level gender - looking at children in terms of interaction processes  
Lever, "Sex differences in the games children play" Pp 102-112 in Feminist Foundations  
Thorne, Gender Play

Lever offers a classic "sex role socialization" account of childhood socialization. Thorne tells a gender interaction story of children's interactions. How do they differ, particularly in the uses they make of "difference"? What does Thorne's account simply add to Lever's story? In what ways does Thorne's account challenge and resist Lever's version?

- (7) October 17—Micro to meso—standpoint theories—conforming and resisting-TAL 12/13/96  
Micro level gender: culture and individual resistance  
Martin, Karen "Giving birth like a girl" *G&S*, 2003, 17(1): 54-72.  
Moore, Valerie Ann. 2003. "Race, Risk and the Emergence of Gender  
Boundaries: Kids Crossing Boundaries in Summer Camps." *Qualitative Sociology*  
26:173-98.

Being "good" boys and girls is not so easy, nor something that all of us want to do. And being a good boy or girl is not the same thing as being a "good" man or woman. How does adding age

and sexuality complicate the picture of just learning gender once and for all in childhood? How does conformity and non-conformity vary by race and by class? How do Black boys “get in trouble” by enacting masculinity OR by resisting it? How about Black girls and femininity?

Micro to Meso: Standpoint theory and struggles over cultural discourse

Collins, “The social construction of Black feminist thought” *Feminist Foundations*, ch 15, pp 371-396.

Smith, Dorothy, “The Standard North American Family: SNAF as an ideological code” Pp. 156-194 in *Writing the Social and “Political Correctness”* 177-194

What do Smith and Connell say are the important features of cultural “texts,” ideologies, codes and what do they have to do with us -- our personal standpoints, perspectives, projects? How does our “self” interact with cultural discourses and our engagement with them? How do our perceptions of our “authentic” gendered and raced selves interact with our own cultural “traditions” and how do we use both “self” and “tradition” to criticize as well as conform to the gender order? Are collective struggles to change a discourse different from individual struggles to resist it? Do you agree with Collins’ ideas about who struggles and why?

Cases (read one):

Bartokski “To veil or not to veil: a case study of identity negotiation among Muslim women in Austin Texas” *Gender & Society*, 2000, 14 (3): 395-416.

Espiritu, Yen Le “We don’t sleep around like white girls do: family, culture and gender in Filipina American lives” *Signs*, 2001, 26 (2): 415-440.

(8) October 24 - meso level gender - theorizing organizations

Acker “Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations” Pp 299-318 in *Feminist Foundations*.

Reskin, “Bringing the men back in” Pp 278-298 in *Feminist Foundations*.

Cases (read any 1 of 3):

Cases (read any two):

Martin and Hummer, “Fraternities and rape on campus.” *Gender & Society* 1989, 3(4):457-473.

Quinn, “Sexual harassment and masculinity: the power and meaning of ‘girl watching’” *Gender & Society*, 2002, 16(3): 386-402

Kleinman and Ezzell, “The King’s English: a campus fable.” Pp 173-180 in Ferber and Kimmel, *Privilege*

What is a gendered organization? How do gendered organizations change and resist change? How is this similar to/different from individual resistance? How do *you* see gender in workplaces you have known (especially in academia as an organization)? Considering universities as social organizations in which work is done and gender is constructed, what are some of the ways in which gender operates systematically in such organizations? How do universities differ as organizations in their gender regimes? How might one “bring men back in” to the study of gender relations on campus?

### **III. Including the macro level of analysis: gender as a social institution in society as a whole**

(9) October 31 -meso to macro level - work organizations and social structures

Espiritu, Asian American Women and Men

Gendered social organizations exist within society-wide social structures that hierarchically organize gender, class and race relations. How do gender relations involve both intra- and inter-race relations? How do race relations involve both intra- and inter-gender relations? And how do both gender and race relations fit into a changing historical pattern of intra- and inter-national class relations?

(10) November 7— meso to macro---Care and the Distribution of Unpaid Labor/ family structures and changing power relations

England, Paula. 2005. "Emerging Theories of Care Work." *Annual Review of Sociology* 31:381-399.

Brines, Julie. 1994. "Economic Dependency, Gender, and the Division-of-Labor at Home." *American Journal of Sociology* 100(3):652-88.

Rudd, Elizabeth, "Reconceptualizing gender in postsocialist transformation" G&S, 2000, 14(4): 517-539.

Parreñas, Rhacel "Migrant Filipina domestic workers and the international division of reproductive labor" G&S, 2000, 14(4): 560-581.

Rather than seeing "the family" as the singular locus of gender subordination, gender theories see class- and race- (and nation and historical period) specific families as part of systems that are economic and political. As such, families are sites of negotiation and are subject to social change. How do these authors relate broad trends of social and historical transformation to the interpersonal experiences of being in families? What does gender equality outside the family contribute to gender equality inside families and vice versa? How is the gender division of labor itself a macro-institution?

(11) November 14-meso to macro level—the role of the state

Haney, Lynne. 1996. "Homeboys, Babies, Men in Suits: The State and the Reproduction of Male Dominance." *American Sociological Review* 61:759-78.

Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "A Genealogy of 'Dependency': Tracing a Keyword of the US Welfare State"

Orloff, Ann. 1993. "Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship." *American Sociological Review* 58:303-28.

**November 21---NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Break**

(12) November 28—meso to macro level gender- the role of the state  
Gwendolyn Mink, *Welfare's End*. Free Press.

(13) December 5 – meso to macro-level gender - heterosexuality as a social institution  
Rich, Adrienne "Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence" Signs, 1980,  
5: 631\_660.  
Stein, Arlene, "Sisters and Queers: The de-centering of lesbian feminism" Pp.  
133-153 in Cultural Politics and Social Movements.  
Altman, Meryl, "Everything they always wanted you to know: the ideology of  
popular sex literature" Pp. 115-130 in Pleasure and Danger, 1984 Carol Vance  
(ed). NY: Routledge.  
Stacey and Bilbarz, "(How) does the sexual orientation of parents matter?" ASR,  
2001, 66(2): 159-183.

How well does Rich's analysis of heterosexuality as a structural power relationship stand up 20 years later? How is sexuality a "macro" issue? How does a discourse of repression (and/or of liberation) get used as a vehicle for male power? For heterosexual privilege? For gender conflict? For privileging the "queer"? How does (public) discourse and (private) family interaction relate?

(14) December 12 - meso to macro level gender - sexuality and race  
White, The Dark Continent of our Bodies

Why and how is sexuality a race and class issue (as well as a gender question)? Would you want to add sexuality to a "list" of structural inequalities (with gender, race and class) or not? Why/why not?

13<sup>th</sup> and back by the 15<sup>th</sup>

## ASSIGNMENTS

**\*\*\*\*\*All paper, with the exception of the discussion questions, should be sent via email\*\*\*\*\***

Grading will be based on the following four areas:

1. (45%) **Discussion papers** (800-1,000 words – which is approximately 3-4 pages), participation in discussions and (especially for graduate students) discussion leadership. Discussion papers (each person does 3, at least one of which **MUST** be before October 10 and at least 1 of which must be handed in before Nov. 14). A discussion paper should be a thoughtful and considered comment on someone else's argument as presented in their talk or article. The papers are based on class assignments of a theoretical article or book (i.e. not one of the ones marked as "cases"). The first part of the paper should be devoted to describing the author's argument, the second part should be devoted to analysis—what are the strengths and weaknesses of the argument. Draw on other readings to develop your analysis.

### 2. (10%) **Class Participation**

Class participation is critical. The course is centered around discussion, so completing class readings and participating is very important. For eight classes you must bring one discussion question to class—turn it in right at the beginning of class.

2. (15%) **Cultural analysis.** Selecting a specific cultural symbolic system (spaces or objects, advertising for a particular type of product, the packaging for it, articles of clothing as worn, hair or other body decoration, etc) critically analyze the gender (and race, class, age, sexuality etc) codes that are being used to convey difference and status for the user. Discuss how difference and status are marked, how they are related, what makes them gendered codes and how you relate their gender-political meaning to theories of gender discussed in the readings and/or in class. Be sure to **CITE** your readings and apply them specifically showing how they are useful in your analysis. Ideal is 1000 words, maximum is 5 double spaced pages. **DUE on October 10.**

5. (30%) Final Exam