Fall 2019
Thursdays, 2:30-5:10

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Overview

We all have experiences with sex and gender. Controversies relating to sex and gender are regularly in the news—we hear troubling stories about Silicon Valley tech bros asserting that their dominance of the field is due to innate sex differences. We hear about the exclusion of trans people from the military, or about women confronting powerful men with accusations of sexual assault (and often having those claims silenced or dismissed). Our social media feeds leaven these negative reports with positive stories: of the high levels at which African American men embrace feminism, of parents fighting for protections for their trans kids, of increasing representations of more diverse women in film and television.

Everybody has opinions about sex and gender. In the world of popular news, this means an eternal round of point/counterpoint reporting that resolves little. Sociology allows us to move beyond the stalemate of eternally conflicting opinions, offering the hope that we can indeed solve social problems relating to sex and gender inequality, using the tools of empirical analysis.

The field of sex and gender is broad. Not only does it contain a wide array of interesting topics of inquiry, it can be approached from a variety of differing perspectives. It is the intent of this course to complement rather than duplicate the content of the Sociology 927 Seminar in Social Institutions focusing on gender—students will find that they can take both classes with few if
any overlaps in required readings. The 927 seminar focuses on gendered institutions, most centrally work and family. The foci of this seminar will be on intersectional inequalities, especially interrogating binary sex/gender essentialism, gendered sexuality, gender expression, and the body. We will seek to query the “unmarked” categories—cis men and masculinities—no less than we examine marked gender categories (femininity, cis women, binary and nonbinary trans people, those born sex-variant, etc.).

The Seminar Format

Graduate seminars are considered the pinnacle of academic experience. I suggest you appreciate that they are a rare treat, and try to savor the few you will experience as a student! They constitute the Platonic ideal of intellectually engaged classroom experience. Ideally, graduate seminar participants should go far beyond the passive absorption of content common in undergraduate classroom experiences. Seminar students should have the opportunity to challenge themselves and one another, not just to understand a field of scholarship, but to experience intellectual growth and become more sophisticated theorists and analysts. Often, new ideas in a given field emerge out of seminar environments, where graduate students do more than receive existing wisdom: they generate new ideas.

We will take collective responsibility for trying to achieve this goal. That is, we will all be taking partial responsibility for seminar pedagogy, which is of course excellent preparation for an academic career. But whatever career path you wind up taking, you will gain useful experience in helping a group conceptualize issues, consider their ramifications, and generate plans for future action.

While we will be taking collective responsibility for course discussions, as the instructor, I will take primary responsibility for ensuring that students do indeed understand the key ideas presented in course readings, and how they relate to the field of sex and gender scholarship generally. To ensure this, I will do the majority of the speaking for the first hour or so of our class meeting. I will also help direct the flow of the conversation that follows, so that more introverted students are given space to speak comfortably, and extroverts are reminded to step back if that is needed. I will also introduce exercises, case studies, and popular and material cultural artifacts to help generate discussion.

The quality of a graduate seminar is dependent upon the full engagement of the group in class discussions. Seminar participants need of course to complete the required readings—but to really achieve the goal of intellectual growth, students should come to class prepared in other ways. You should spend time reflecting on the readings, considering them from varied angles, for example:

- Theoretically: how are sex and gender conceptualized in a given reading? How are they understood to relate to other social statuses? To change over time? How is inequality explained? How do the authors’ theoretical frameworks relate to those of other sex/gender scholars, and to other sociological and/or feminist theories?
• Substantively: what issues do the authors seek to explain? What are the strengths and weaknesses of their accounts? What do their explications fail to address? Do authors make assertions that you have difficulty understanding, or have reason to question? How could their ideas be applied in understanding other issues?
• Methodologically: what empirical data do authors employ and how was it gathered? Are there problems you can see relating to study conceptualization, with data collection, with how the results are evaluated and interpreted? Or particular strengths that you wish to learn from and employ in your own work?

Having reflected in this way, students will be prepared to contribute to a sophisticated discussion of the course materials. Class assignments will ensure that some students have formally prepared to lead this endeavor at each class meeting. (Also, we will take turns providing a snack to help maintain our energy and a nice level of enthusiasm!)

So: the first and central goal of a seminar is to engage in collective learning via seminar discussions. The second goal is to use these as a springboard for individual scholarship, culminating in the writing of the seminar paper. The seminar paper gives you the opportunity to explore and analyze literature on a topic related to sex/gender of particular interest to you. (This can then be used as a literature review for an article, or as part of a thesis or dissertation.) Finally, students will present on their seminar paper topic to the group, giving everyone an opportunity to practice professional presentation skills.

Course Requirements

Every week you will be assigned 3-5 book chapters or articles to read. It is expected that you will come to our seminar meetings having read and reflected on those readings.

You will be assigned to write four, 4-5 page reading reflection papers on assigned dates. On those dates, you will have primary responsibility for guiding the student-led portion of the seminar meeting. Participation is a central course requirement, and discussion leadership on your assigned dates will be a major determinant of your participation grade. You will also be writing a seminar paper of about 15 pages, due at the final class meeting. You will present on your seminar paper topic at that final meeting, employing a brief (5-8 slide) PowerPoint presentation to assist you. Handouts will be provided describing each of these course assignments in greater detail.

The point values of the assessment criteria are:

• 200 points for reflection papers (50 points each)
• 100 points for participation
• 50 points for your presentation
• 150 points for the final paper

○ Total = 500 points
In addition, attendance at seminar meetings is required. Because lives are complicated, you will have one excused absence, which you can take for any reason you like. You need not inform me of why you chose to use your excused absence. After that, however, additional absences require documentation of an illness or emergency, or they will result in a deduction of 25 points from the final grade. Remember: we only have 14 class meetings, and we will want to make each one count!

**Course Texts**

Because I empathize with the sparseness of most graduate students’ finances, to the extent possible, I have selected required books that are available at low cost (especially when purchased used or in digital format via the vendor of your choice). Articles and book excerpts that can be shared via fair use will be made available on our course Canvas site. I have also requested that the required books be made available via closed reserve at the library.

The required books for this course, in order of our reading them, are:


**Assignments**

Color code:

- Assigned book
- Reading on Canvas
- Other assignment

5 September: Introduction

- Read Terminology Handout.
12 September: Overview of Gender Inequalities Through a Mainstream Sociological Lens


19 September: Critiquing Binary Sex/Gender Essentialism


26 September: Policing Binary Sex

  - Note: this book can be accessed in digital format without cost via the UWM library.

3 October: Gender in Intersectional Context

  - Required: chapters 1, 2, 4 and 7 (the rest is optional)

10 October: Masculinities

- Topic proposal for the seminar paper is due.

17 October: The 21st Century Manosphere

  - Required: chapters 1, 3 and 5 (the rest is optional)
24 October: Gender Policing Boys via Homophobia


31 October: Gender Policing Girls via the Beauty Imperative

- **Halloween gender expression extravaganza**

7 November: Gender Expression


14 November: Gendered Sexuality


21 November: Trans Experiences


28 November: Thanksgiving

5 December: Considering Research Methods

  - Required: chapters 1, 9, 14, 19 (the rest is optional)

12 December: Seminar Paper Topics

• You will give your prepared presentation

UNIVERSITY AND SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT POLICIES

The Secretary of the University maintains a web page that contains university policies that affect the instructor and the students in this course, as well as essential information specific to conduct of the course. The link to that page is:


**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities.** In the pursuit of equal access and in compliance with state and federal laws, the University is required to provide accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is expected that a statement be placed on your syllabus informing students to contact you to arrange needed accommodations. A sample syllabus statement can be found here:


**Religious Observances.** Policies regarding accommodations for absences due to religious observance are found at the following:

http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm
**Students called to active Military Duty.** Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty are found at the following: [https://uwm.edu/active-duty-military/](https://uwm.edu/active-duty-military/)

**Incompletes.** You may be given an incomplete if you have carried a course successfully until near the end of the semester but, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond your control, have been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of course work. An incomplete is not given unless you prove to the instructor that you were prevented from completing the course for just cause as indicated above. The conditions for awarding an incomplete to graduate and undergraduate students can be found at the following: [https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_31_INCOMPLETE_GRADES.pdf](https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_31_INCOMPLETE_GRADES.pdf)

**Discriminatory Conduct** (such as sexual harassment). Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience and well-being of students, faculty and staff. Policies regarding discriminatory conduct can be found at: [https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf](https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf)

**Academic Misconduct.** Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Policies for addressing students cheating on exams or plagiarism can be found at: [https://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/](https://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/)

**Complaint Procedures.** Students may direct complaints to the Sociology Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the Sociology Department Chair, the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences, or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. Policies may be found at: [https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf](https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf)

**Grade Appeal Procedures.** A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the sociology department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College of Letters & Science. Procedures for undergraduate student grade appeal can be found at: [https://uwm.edu/letters-science/advising/answers-forms/policies/appeal-procedure-for-grades](https://uwm.edu/letters-science/advising/answers-forms/policies/appeal-procedure-for-grades)
Procedures for graduate student grade appeal can be found at
https://uwm.edu/graduateschool/appealing-academic-decisions/

**Final Examination Policy.** Policies regarding final examinations can be found at the following:
http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S22.htm

**Book Royalties.** In accord with Department of Sociology policy, the royalties from the sale of faculty-authored books to students in their classes are donated to a UWM Foundation/Sociology Account to support future awards and activities for UWM students in Sociology.