Sociology of Gender  
Sociology 138  
Fall 2003

The feminist task is neither to glorify nor discount the differences between men and women, but to challenge the adverse consequences of whatever differences there may be.  
– Christine Littleton

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Our ideas about gender – about women, men, masculinity, femininity – organize our social life in important ways that we often do not even notice. These ideas, and the gendered dimensions of the institutions in which we live are largely invisible to us, and we take them for granted as the "normal" or natural way life works. Sociology asks us to investigate and expose the aspects of social life we take for granted. In this course, we will be critically examining the ways gender informs the social world in which we live.

My goals for this course are 1) to reveal the "common-sense" world of gender around you; 2) to consider how we learn to "do" gender as girls and boys (and women and men); 3) to provide information about the current situation of gender relations in the US; 4) to expose the workings of the institutions that shape our gendered lives; and 5) to challenge common assumptions about women, about men and about gender relations.

Required Texts and Materials:
Sociology 138 Reader (available from Social Science Copy Center) – listed as “R” below.  
27 index cards, size 3x5. may be purchased at UBS or any office supply store.

Kimmel's book is available at a Room of One's Own (University Bookstore and Underground Textbooks may have copies, too). The reader is available at the Social Science Copy Center. You will want to purchase The Gendered Society and the Reader because a large portion of your grade will depend on demonstrating that you have done the reading (see below). All will be available on reserve at Helen C. White as well. It is impossible to pass the course without doing the reading.

Course Structure and Grading
The goals listed on page one, you might notice, do not for the most part involve me, the professor, imparting information that you must memorize for exams. The words I use – “reveal”, “expose”, “challenge” – imply that I intend for you to engage in critical thinking rather than passively absorbing the teacher’s wisdom. These goals require cultivating your “sociological imagination.”

To develop a sociological imagination, which is your ability to understand human lives as shaped by historically conditioned social forces, you will need to think honestly and critically about the information you are receiving. You will need to examine your own experiences and observations related to gender, and you may need to be open as assumptions about gender are challenged by sociological data and analysis.

To think critically in this way, it is necessary (but not sufficient) to attend lectures and complete the reading. It is also important to engage with the reading, particularly by examining the world around you and by testing the concepts I offer by applying them to specific lives, including your own.
To reflect these goals, then, the grading system will assess 1) your engaged attendance at lectures, 2) your completion of the reading, 3) your thinking about the reading, and 4) your application of course concepts and information to understand social situations and processes and 5) your ability to compare and contrast ideas and arguments.

This grading system has four components:

1) LECTURE RESPONSES (26)
   • at some point during each lecture, you will hand in a written response card, often answering a question I ask, sometimes responding more generally to the lecture.
   • these response cards must be on 3 x 5 inch cards.
   • the component includes 26 response cards (in effect 3 free absences after day 1)
   • these will be graded pass/fail. You will pass if your response card is turned in at the end of lecture with a written answer to whatever question I have posed (these are not quizzes, they are to measure attendance and assist you to engage with the lecture; however, you must do more than whip off a random comment).

2) WEEKLY READING ANALYSIS (13)
   • at your section meeting, you will turn in a response of no more than 1 page engaging with at least two of the readings for that week (and 1-page readings don’t count). The syllabus provides some ideas for questions to address and your TA will provide others.
   • you will complete 13 assignments, 1 for every week of the course, except the first week, with one week “free” (save it for that unforeseen emergency or crisis!).
   • these responses should be typed, single-spaced and approximately 1/2 page long (never over 1 page). They are the starting point, not the end, of the expectation that you will participate in the section discussion.
   • these will be graded pass/fail. To pass you must demonstrate that you did at least two of the assigned readings for that week, and thought about them (rather than regurgitating them).
   • since you have a “free” week to deal with illness, housing emergencies, computer glitches or whatever life problem might come up, you don’t need to offer any explanation of what problem arose the week you skip. However, NO late papers will be accepted and recurrent problems will necessarily have an impact on your grade unless they are documented major difficulties (e.g. doctor’s statement that you have been ill for more than one week).

3) “REAL LIFE” CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENTS (3)
   • 3 times during the semester, you will complete a “real life” assignment, where you will apply the concepts of the course to a particular problem or issue.
   • these short papers should be typed, double-spaced, and 2-3 pages, but no longer. At least 2 of these papers should be posted to WebCT (one may, but need not be, turned in privately if the analysis is one you would prefer not be read or discussed by anyone else in the class).
   • these will be graded high pass/pass/fail. To pass you must complete the assignment according to its guidelines, by its due date (see assignment handout).
   • there will be 5 possible “real life” assignments; you need only choose the 3 that most interest you and complete them by their particular due date.
   • if your assignment is graded “fail” you have the option to rewrite it for a passing grade; you must do so within 1 week of receiving it back.

4) ARGUMENT PAPERS (3)
• 3 times during the semester, you will develop and present an argument, in which you engage with controversial debates in which gender is implicated. Each of these short papers should be typed, double-spaced, and 2-3 pages, but no longer.
• In each paper, you outline the arguments for and against various positions and take a position; there are 5 different topics and dates; choose the 3 that most interest you.
• These will be graded high pass/pass/fail, and the criteria (which is explained in the assignment sheet in more detail) will be the comprehensiveness of the arguments, ability to reason and the general quality of writing, NOT which position you take.
• If your assignment is graded “fail” you have the option to rewrite it for a passing grade; you must do so within 1 week of receiving it back. Or you can do a later argument (if there is still a later one left to do – which is why you should not wait!)

**FINAL GRADES:**
To receive the following grade (in the left-hand column), you must receive the following passing assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture Responses</th>
<th>Weekly Readings</th>
<th>Case study Ass’ts</th>
<th>Argument Papers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3 (w/ 1+ high pass)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>12</td>
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This is a modified pass/fail system. Pass is equivalent to B and high pass is equivalent to A, and AB falls between these (+ means “and maybe one of these being higher”). No pass is an F. Attendance is clearly a major component, and if you are on an athletic team that will be traveling a lot, or for other reasons have conflicts with this class time on occasion, you might wish to drop the class, or accept that this will affect your grade. While there are clear guidelines as you how many of each component you must complete for what letter grade, in cases where students have additional high passes, these will be taken into account when calculating final grades. Additionally, if you have severe difficulties due to unforeseeable circumstances (previous cases have included issues such as death in the immediate family, suicide of roommate, sexual assault or pregnancy during the semester) please come speak to me and we can discuss your case.

**Et Cetera**

1) “ENGAGED ATTENDANCE”. “Engaged attendance” (that which gets you a pass on your lecture response card) includes the following components
   a. **Don’t be late to class.** I’m not measuring did you show your face in the classroom, but did you attend the entirety of class, listen, and participate as could be reasonably expected?
   b. **Pay attention.** You can’t get lecture credit if you show up and sleep, read the paper, check cell phone messages or do other reading.
   c. **Don’t disrupt class.** I expect that you will not in any way make class less pleasant for anyone else by making it harder for them to hear or to concentrate. This includes talking to others, eating noisily, or refusing to participate in group activities.
   d. **If you engage in any of these activities, you forfeit your anonymity and I reserve the right to ask your name or address you by name, ask you to desist and/or ask you to leave.**
2) **No academic dishonesty will be tolerated.** This course is designed to get you to engage with the assigned material, and your doing so is rewarded with a passing grade. You only have to pass all the assignments to get an AB. Therefore, cheating yourself by not doing the reading and pretending you have will be treated as academic dishonesty. Borrowing others’ thoughts similarly defeats the academic goals of the course, so plagiarism of any kind will be grounds for a failing grade for the course.

3) **Do not hesitate to contact me if you need assistance.** If you cannot meet with me or with the TA during our office hours, we will make an appointment to meet you at another time. In addition, you are welcome to stop by my office without an appointment. If I cannot talk at that time, I will let you know. In a class with this detailed a grading system, the key to success (as is true for college in general) is to head off problems before they turn into emergencies.

4) **If you need accommodations** to succeed in this course, it is your responsibility to let me know at the beginning of the semester, and to provide me with the relevant documents, such as a McBurney VISA.

5) **Learning is a collective enterprise.** Since the main time set aside for discussion is in the sections, it is your responsibility to take an active part in this collective learning, not merely turn in your reading-reaction paper there. I will try to keep open some time for student reactions and responses during lecture, and am open to being interrupted with questions and comments. There will be times when you will disagree with another student or with me. That is just fine. I do expect a willingness to consider a variety of viewpoints, to engage with the sociological data provided through lecture and reading assignments, and to think about how you know what you “know” about the world. I also expect respectful treatment of each other and each others’ views at all times.
Course Schedule

I. Introduction: sociology looks at gender

Week 1
Sept 2    Introduction/Overview of Course

Sept 4    Thinking Sociologically About Gender
           Kimmel, Introduction
           R: Allan Johnson “Patriarchy, the system: an It, not a he, a them or an us” Ch 4 The Gender Knot.
           Question to think about: What is specifically a sociological way of seeing gender?

Week 2
Sept 9    Gender and Biology – it’s all in the genes, right?
           Kimmel, Chapter 2: Ordained by Nature
           R: Martha Coventry, “Making the cut” Ms. 10/2000

Sept 11   Just-so stories: Biological legitimations of inequalities
           R: Sapolsky, “The trouble with testosterone: will boys just be boys?”
           R: JJ Blumberg “The body’s new timetable” From The Body Project

Questions to think about: when and how are differences constructed as better/worse rather than just different?
Why would people assume that biology is less “fixable” than society when it comes to gender relations?

Week 3
Sept 16   Gender categories & sex role theories: variations in people & experiences
           Kimmel, Ch. 4: So that explains it!

Sept 18   The Politics of Sex Differentiation: Doing gender as social practice
           R: Judith Lorber “Night to his day” Paradoxes of Gender, excerpt.
           R: Deborah Tannen “Marked: Women in the Workplace”

Questions to think about: Why is it convenient to imagine a single “traditional sex role” for women that is the total opposite of the “traditional sex role” of men? How is “otherness” central to our construction of gender?
What role does dualism play in legitimating inequality?

Week 4
Sept 23   Variation in gender systems: history, nations & cultures
           Kimmel, Ch 3: Spanning the World

Sept 25   Gender at three levels: individual, interactional and institutional
           Kimmel, Ch 5: Inequality and difference
           R: Deborah Rhode “The no-problem problem.” Ch.1 in Speaking of Sex
           Argument paper #1 due in class

Questions to think about: what are some of the ways in which gender systems vary?
What does it mean to think about gender as a system of social relationships (both at a face to face level and as organizing a whole society) rather than just something an individual person has or becomes?
II. Individuals Join the Gender System: acquiring gender in contemporary American culture

Week 5
Sept 30 Seeing gender: media versions of masculinity & femininity
R: Susan Bordo. “Never Just Pictures.” From Twilight Zones
R: Lynne Luciano. Introduction” & “Looking Good” excerpts from Looking Good: Male Body Image in Modern America
R: Susan Holmes “How to be a girl” Women’s Day, 1948

Oct 2 Understanding the rules of relationships: masculinity & femininity
Kimmel, Ch 9: Gendered intimacies
R: Natalie Angier “In the movies, women age faster” NYT, 12/09/01
R: Anastasia Higgenbotham “Teen Mags: How to get a guy, drop 20 pounds and lose your self-esteem.”
R: Katz, Jackson “8 Reasons Why Eminem’s Popularity is a Disaster for Women”

Case study #1 due in class

FILM – You don’t know Dick.
Questions to think about: what specific types of masculinity and femininity are being presented as the norm in today’s mass media? How much variation is there within and across genders? How are men and women supposed to relate to each other? How do these images come to be seen as “natural” even if they are not “us”?

Week 6
Oct 7 Signaling dualistic gender with toys and clothes
R: Jean Kilbourne “Can an engine pump the valves of your heart?” Ch. 4 of Deadly Persuasion
R: Buckley “Children’s clothes: design and promotion” in The Gendered Object

Oct 9 Hegemonic masculinity, emphasized femininity and what else is there?
R: Christy Haubegger. “I’m Not Fat, I’m Latina” Essence, 12/94
R: Eku Omosep. “In Magazines (I found specimens of the beautiful)” [poem]
R: Hooks, “Selling hot pussy” excerpt from Black Looks

Argument paper #2 due in class

Questions to think about: How do things as well as people show gender? What specific expectations go with each gender and how they can be used? What are gender signals used for? How do people display gender differently? How do you display your gender? What specific messages do you want this display to send?

Week 7
Oct 14 The gendered self – bodies, body images and (non)conformity
R: Brent Staples. Just Walk On By.
R: Rose Weitz “Women and their hair: seeking power through resistance and accommodation” in The Politics of Women’s Bodies.
R: Sue Williams, “Trying on gender: gender regimes and the process of becoming women”

Oct 16  The media’s gender vision – symbols of dualism, of tradition, of progress?
R: Susan Douglas, “I’m not a feminist but...” Ch.12 from Where the Girls are
R: Jean Kilbourne, “Relax and enjoy the revolution” C13 from Deadly Persuasion
R: Rivers, Caryl “Where have all the women gone?”

Case study #2 due in class

Questions to think about: When people fail to conform to gender norms in one way or another, what are the
different ways our culture offers for them to deal with this discrepancy? How do gender norms themselves
change? How do advertisers and others use gender displays to show “tradition” or “progress”? What is the
most significant change in gender norms that you have seen in your lifetime?

III. Doing Gender: constructing gender in embodied interactions

Week 8

Oct 21  Doing Gender in school
    Kimmel, Ch 7, The Gendered classroom
    R: Conlin, Michelle “The new gender gap” Business Week, May 2003

Oct 23  Resistance and accommodation in doing gender
    R: McGuffey and Rich “Playing in the Gender Transgression Zone” Gender&Society, 13(5)
    1999.
    R: Ferguson, Ch 4 “Naughty by nature” From Bad Boys

Questions to think about: When you were in grade school, what were the gender rules like? How are the
gender rules for college different? How are they similar? Who engages in “policing” gender rules of appearance
and behavior in school? Outside school? What specific gender rule would you most want to change? How do
gender rules vary by race and class?

Week 9

Oct 28  Doing gender with and in sport
    R: Michael Messner, “School sports, Title IX and the football lobby”
    R: Michael Messner, “Becoming 100% straight” from Kimmel & Ferber, Privilege
    R: Abigail Feder.  “A Radiant Smile from the Lovely Lady:  Overdetermined Femininity in
    “Ladies” Figure Skating” in Women on Ice
    R: Anne Enke “

Oct 30  Doing gender with and in our sexualities
    Kimmel, Ch 10: Gendered sexualities
    R: Jason Schultz, “Eroticizing equality’ Ms. 11/95
    Ch. 5 of The Body Project

Case study #3 due

Questions to think about: Using our bodies for both sport and sex, how do we “do” gender? What are some of
the gendered rules for sex? For being athletic? How are the rules for sex similar or different from other gender
rules for interaction? Have the rules for sex changed from when your parents were 20-somethings to now?
How about gender rules in sport?
Week 10
Nov 4 Gendered Violence – intersections of schools, sports and sex
   Kimmel, Chapter 11: gendered violence
   R: Martin and Hummer “Fraternities and rape on campus” Gender & Society

Nov 6 Resisting Gendered Violence
   R: John Stoltenberg. “I am Not a Rapist!”: Why College Men are Confronting Sexual Violence”

Argument paper #3 due

Questions to think about: How do gendered rules of interaction contribute to what some call “rape cultures” in particular societies and organizations? How do both women and men challenge them? Are they changing, and if so, when and how much?

Gendered Institutions: perpetuating or changing gender relations?

Week 11
Nov 11 Family structures as historically & culturally changing
   Kimmel, Chapter 7: the gendered family
   R: Stephanie Coontz. “The way we wish we were” from The Way we never were
   R: Defense of Marriage Act/Rights Conferred with Marriage.
   R: Judith Stacey “Backward toward the postmodern family” Ch 1 from In the Name of the Family

Nov 13 Housework as a gendered institutional demand
   R: How to Be a Good Wife

Case study #4 due

Questions to think about: How has The Family changed its rules over time and why does matter? What is the relationship between the gender rules of “The Family” as a social institution and the gender rules of specific individual families? How do specific families meet (or resist) institutional demands?

Week 12
Nov 18 The gender of the workplace & structural incompatibility of paid work and housework
   Kimmel, Chapter 8
   R: Evelyn Nakano Glenn “From Servitude to Service Work” excerpt.

Nov 20 The history of struggles over appropriate work for women
   FILM: Rosie the Riveter
   R: Kessler-Harris: “The wage conceived: value and need as measures of women’s worth” excerpt from A Woman’s Wage.
   R: Eleven Tips for Getting More Efficiency Out of Women Employees

Argument paper #4 due

Questions to think about: How have “workplaces” become separate from “homes”? When and how do the rules for these “separate spheres” conflict? How is the exclusion of women from better-paid jobs legitimated? Challenged?
**Week 13**

Nov 25 The organization of inequality on the job  
R: NYT 2/17/03: "Gap between pay of women and men smallest on record"  
R: Business Week 3/03/03: "No Way to Treat a Lady"  
R: Ivy Kennelly “I would never be a secretary” Gender &Society 2002, 16(5): 603-624

Questions to think about: What is and is not a gender-fair work practice? Should women and men be expected to do the same work in the same way to be treated equally in the labor market?

**THANKSGIVING BREAK - HAVE A NICE TURKEY**

**Week 14**

Dec 2 Work, carework and poverty  
R: Crittenden, The Price of Motherhood, excerpts  
R: Hays, Flat Broke with Children, excerpts (pp.3-28 and 71-93)

Dec 4 Changing systems of gender and caring  
R: Williams, Unbending gender, excerpt, ch. 7 "Do women need special treatment? Do feminists need equality?"  
**Case study #5 due**

Questions to think about: How does the gender rule about carework affect rich and poor women differently? How are gender norms built into the rules states produce to regulate workplaces and families? How is the US express values that are similar or different from other countries in the nature of the rules it has?

**Week 15**

Dec 9 Women’s Movements & Men’s Movements  
R: Gloria Steinem. Revving up for the next 25 years Ms. 9/97  
R: Michael Kimmel. Real Men Join the Movement, Ms. 11/97  
R: Cocco, Marie “On women’s rights, Iran becomes a friend”

Dec 11 What this means for us—and what comes next?  
Kimmel, Epilogue  
R: Anna Bondoc, “Close but no banana” from R. Walker, To Be Real  
R: Connell: “Gender politics for men”  
**Argument paper #5 due**

Questions to think about: How does a large and complex society begin to change its gender rules at any level? How does change at each level from individual to interactional to institutional relate to change at other levels? What is the relationship between collective and individual challenges to gender rules? Between women’s struggles for justice and men’s?