

Sociology 477
University of Wisconsin

Feminist Theory: Gender & Society
Myra Marx Ferree

Spring 2002
phone: 263-5204
office hours: Mon 10-12 and by appt.

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 A Room of One's Own. The other required readings (with *) are available on electronic and regular course reserve (at College Library) and as a course pack to purchase. The case readings (which you choose among) are only on reserve (electronic and regular); copy just the ones you want to do yourself (these are marked #).

Myers, Anderson and Risman, Feminist Foundations
Connell, R.W. Gender and Power
Espiritu, Asian American Women and Men
Pierce, Gender Trials
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 2-3 page critical analysis of a theoretical article or book section. 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) Jan 24 First organizational meeting/ handout

*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?

(2) Jan 31 Gender stratification and the need for a gender theory

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 and in the previous week’s reading? From your own perspective, which seem most significant and why?

(3) Feb 7 - Gender theory - gendered meanings in the body and social structure

Connell, Gender and Power, Ch 1-5, pp. 1-118

ises: *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) his theoretical arguments against Marx and Freud, (2) the issue of categorialism, (3) 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) Feb 14 - Gender theory – theorizing gender relations as historically grounded and variable

Connell, Ch 6 & 7, pp. 119-164

*Scott, Joan. "Gender: a useful category of historical analysis" American Historical Review, Dec. 1986, pp. 1053_1075

*Glenn, Evelyn Nakano “The social construction and institutionalization of gender and race” Pp. 3-43 in Ferree, Lorber and Hess, Revisioning Gender

Cases (read either one):

#Alexander, Sally “Becoming a woman in London in the 1920s and 1930s” pp. 200-227 in Shiach, Feminism and Cultural Studies.

#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.

How should we use history in studying gender? In studying race? What (if anything) *is* race? Are we talking about anything real when we use terms like “women” and “men” (as if they were abstract and unracialized)? What about *the* “Black” and “White” experience? The “American” experience? What is a “gender regime” and why does it matter? How are both gender and race involved in “constructing” social class (in specific times and places)?

II. Using gender theory at different levels of analysis

(5) Feb 21 - Micro-level gender. Gendered selves, performance and identity

Connell, Ch 8-10, pp 167-237.

West, Candace and Don Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," pp 167-190 in Feminist Foundations.

Cases (read any 2 of these 4)

#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

#Read and 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.

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)?

(6) Feb 28 -- Macro to micro-level gender relations: discourse and practice

Connell, Gender and Power, ch 11-13, pp 241-293

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" and "Politically correct as an organizer of public discourse" Pp. 156-194 in Writing the Social

What are t-discourses, ideologies, codes and what do they have to do with our personal standpoints, perspectives, projects? How does our "self" interact with our perception of the social and our engagement with it? What in our experiences can be mobilized to challenge the "taken-for-granted" and how does the taken-for-granted play a part in creating our "direct" experiences of the world? Can we perceive anything without a "theory" to guide us?

Project #1 DUE in class March 7. Analysis of gender meanings in texts or objects

(7) Mar 7 – 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?

(8) March 14 - meso level gender - looking at adults in formal organizations

Pierce, Gender Trials (including methodological appendix)

People in organizations are complex social selves, not just representatives of categories. How does a gendered organizational analysis deal with the diversity of interactions within and between individuals of different social statuses within the organization? How do individuals themselves negotiate these differences? Does a theory of gender have to be a theory of men and masculinity? Does a gender analyst need to study both women and men? Can gender-based discrimination “work” without positing individual male prejudice as a cause, and if so how? Use this book as an example of methodology for studying gender: what are its strengths and what are its weaknesses?

(9) March 21 - meso level gender - theorizing organizational change and stability

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.

*Ridgeway and Correll “Limiting gender inequality through interaction” Contemporary Sociology, 2000, 29(1):110-120

*Bielby, “Minimizing Gender & Race Bias” Contemporary Sociology, 2000, 29(1):121-129.

Cases (read any 1 of 3):

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

#Kimmel “Saving the males: VMI and the Citadel” Gender & Society, 2000, 14(4): 494-516.

#Benokraitis, Nicole “Working in the Ivory Basement: Subtle sex discrimination in higher education” Pp. 3-43 in Collins, Chrisler and Quina, Career Strategies for Women in Academia

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?

Spring break!

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

(10) April 4 -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?

- (11) April 11 – 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?

Project #2 DUE in class April 18. Analysis of gender processes in interactions.

- (12) April 18 - 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) April 25 - meso to macro level gender - family structures and changing power relations
- *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.
 - *Brush, Lisa D. "Gender, work, who cares?!" Pp 161-189 in Revisioning Gender

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?

- (14) May 2 **CLASS PRESENTATIONS** of research proposals: feedback and suggestions

- (15) May 9 - Gender and social change
- *Russo, "We cannot live without our lives" In Third World Women and the

Politics of Feminism, 1991.

*Martin, Jane "Aerial distance, esotericism and related traps" Signs, 1996, 21(3): 584-614.

*Ackelsberg, Martha "Identity politics, political identities: thoughts toward a multicultural politics" Frontiers, 1996, 16(1): 87-101.

What are the politics and standpoints we bring to our own work in gender? Should we think of research as a political activity? To what extent and how can gender scholarship be transformative? And what is to be transformed? (you? your discipline? gender relations in society?) Concretely, how do you see *your own* practices of scholarship relating to these transformations?

MAY 16 Final paper due (5pm, at my office)

ASSIGNMENTS

Grading will be based on the following five assignments:

1. (40%) **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 4, at least one of which **MUST** be before Feb 28 and at least 2 of which must be handed in before Apr. 18) are due at 9 am of the day of class. A discussion paper should be a thoughtful and considered comment on someone else's argument as presented in their talk or article. Three of the 4 papers are based on class assignments of a theoretical article or book (i.e. not one of the ones marked as "cases") and one discussion paper should be done on an out-of-class speaker (e.g. Kimmel, Mohanty, Hobson, Gerhard, Hagemann-White, Frankenberg, Walby, Kizenger or other speaker approved as appropriate). One extra discussion paper can be done for extra credit.

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 in class on March 7.**

3. (15%) **Observational analysis**. Using a social setting that you already are familiar with, such as your workplace, classroom, dorm, poker group, political group, church or whatever, take one or more of the concepts covered to date and apply it/them to analyze some specific aspect of gendered interaction (e.g. polarization, negotiation, accountability, subordination, emotion work, segregation etc.) discussed in the readings and/or in class. Be explicit about what it was you saw and how you connect your interpretation of the meanings of the interaction to what specific and concrete behavior you actually observe. Make sure that your introductory paragraph sets out the theoretical concept(s) that you are applying to the case you observed and that your analysis CITES the ideas you are applying. (Note: Only behaviors that are publically observable can be observed without ethically violating the right to privacy of those being observed.). Ideal is 1000 words, maximum is 5 double-spaced pages, **DUE in class April 18.**

5. (30%) Research paper or proposal on gender. A research proposal has two main parts: (1) an analytical literature review in which you describe the theoretical context, focus on one conceptual issue and review the state of existing research on this question, and (2) a methodology section in which you describe how you propose to add further insight into this issue via feasible empirical research. A research paper will stop at part one. At least 3 of the articles read in class **MUST** be actively used in the paper. For a proposal, the actual research proposed will not be carried out this semester, but it should be a project of appropriate scope for you to potentially carry out in the near future (e.g. over the summer or in the next semester or so). The appropriate length for a research paper is 10 pages; a proposal will add approximately 5 pages of proposed research design and methodology. No more than 20 double-spaced pages will be accepted. **DUE ONE WEEK AFTER THE LAST CLASS** (by 5 pm May 16 in my office). I expect each person to schedule

appointments with me to discuss their research papers or proposals. A minimum of **one appointment before April 11 is required**; an earlier appointment is strongly recommended. Scheduling is best done by email (mferree@ssc.wisc.edu).