

SOCI 315: Contemporary Gender Relations

Mason Korea

Spring 2021

Professor Name: Dr. Deborah Kwak

Class Time & Location: Mon & Wed 10.30am - 11.45am @ G105

Synchronous Session: Every Monday 10.30am - 11.45am via Zoom;

Weekly lectures will be available in Blackboard

Email: hkwak4@gmu.edu

Office Hours: Mondays, 11.50am - 1.30pm via Zoom; Please email me to schedule a meeting

COURSE FOCUS

In this course, we will examine the topic of gender, mainly using a sociological lens, but also using insights from other disciplines. Our study of gender will allow us to understand how social structure, social institutions and culture shape gender roles and the lives of people who practice these roles over time, while at the same time, how these gender roles shape culture, social institutions and social structure. We'll talk about many different topics including the role of media in shaping gender, the intersection between gender and family, work, religion and politics, and the "inherent or constructed" debate about gender roles.

Briefly: What is the point of taking this class?

Because a lot of people assume gender as being a natural part of one's identity, it might be difficult for us to consider, at first glance, gender's influence on us and society. In this class, we will critically think about gender and what it means to *be gendered*. This course should provide us with a better understanding of how gender shapes our identity, our social world, and many aspects of our society.

Getting Specific: Course Questions & Objectives

Questions 1 - 4 serve as a starting point for engaged conversation, dialogue and reflection throughout the semester. #5 is essential for this course.

1. What are the central concepts, theories and debates that structure the sociological field of gender?

2. What does it mean to be a particular gender? How is this related to being human?
3. Is gender a biological reality, a social construction, a combination of biology and learning, or something altogether different?
4. What interesting insights can we gain about gender by examining the influence of society on gender? What interesting insights can we gain about society by examining the influence of gender on society?
5. Communicate and collaborate productively with peers. Communication & Collaboration are integral to academic learning and working in the real world. We will develop and practice these skills very often in this class through group work and dialogue.

What does this course have to do with The Mason Core?

This course contributes towards The Mason Core's mission to cultivate **The Mason Graduate: an Engaged Citizen and Well-Rounded Scholar who is Prepared to Act**. The Mason Core is Mason's general education program that builds the foundation for The Mason Graduate. SOCI 315 (3 credits) fulfills requirements for Social/Behavioral Sciences in the *Exploration* category of The Mason Core.

The following three learning outcomes are required goals as part of The Mason Core:

1. Explain how individuals, groups or institutions are influenced by contextual factors;
2. Demonstrate awareness of changes in social and cultural constructs;
3. Use appropriate methods and resources to apply social and behavioral science concepts, terminology, principles and theories in the analysis of significant human issues, past or present.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Kimmel, Michael and May Aronson. 2017. *The Gendered Society Reader*. Sixth Edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

I will also share other readings with you via Mason Blackboard.

What can we expect from each other?

What you can expect from me, the instructor:

Every time I enter discussion, I will come prepared, which means that I will have read the assigned materials for the day and thought carefully about what we are trying to accomplish that day. I will be fully present during class and will treat each of you with respect and integrity. I am also available outside of our Zoom meetings and more than willing to discuss your concerns and any aspects of this course.

What I can expect from each student:

Because you have chosen to enroll in this course, you agree to have the same expectations as the instructor. In other words, you agree to come to each class (via Zoom) having read all assigned materials and thoughtfully prepared for class. You also agree to be fully present during class and to treat fellow students and the instructor with respect and integrity. Finally, as students in this course, you agree to thoughtfully engage in discussions and conversations in every class and make every effort to empathize with and respect the perspectives of others.

What we can expect to happen in class:

Every time we meet via Zoom, this class is an opportunity for us to become a learning community. This means that each student is required to be an active participant in this class—asking questions, contributing to discussion by sharing their perspectives, and critically thinking about the issues we address in this class. Half-baked ideas and thoughts are welcome; often times, just trying to say what you're thinking allows you to further develop your ideas and arguments.

What we can expect in regards to electronic devices:

As part of cultivating a space for discussion, please use your laptop *only* for the purpose of participating in our Zoom meeting. Obviously, I can't check if you're doing anything else on your laptop. But please note, the appearance of being distracted during our Zoom meeting will be enough to negatively affect your participation grade and attendance.



Overview of Course Grade

Your learning will be evaluated in the following ways:

10% Class Participation (Attendance via Zoom, Large Group Discussion, in-class activities)

10% Class Participation (Breakout Rooms via Zoom)


15% Journals
20% Group Presentation
15% Reflective Papers
15% Mid-Term Exam
15% Final Exam

1. Attendance & Class Participation

This course depends upon your attendance. Two or more absences of our Zoom meetings during the semester will *lower* the student's final grade by two thirds of a letter grade (e.g. a B+ will become a B-), and more than four absences will result in a failing grade. If a student joins the meeting after attendance is taken or leaves the meeting early, the student may be counted absent (unless student contacts the professor prior to class to make arrangements).

You will be granted an excused absence from class only in specific, unavoidable situations such as death in the family or health emergency.

In order to get a full participation grade, actively ask questions, share your perspectives, and engage in critical thinking about the material during *Large Group Discussions* and *Breakout Rooms*. Equally important, participate enthusiastically in class activities and writing assignments.



**"When everyone in the classroom, teacher and students, recognizes that they are responsible for creating a learning community together, learning is at its most meaningful and useful."
-bell hooks**

Note: If a student engages in actions which distract others and detract from the classroom's overall experience as a learning community, then his/her participation grade will be significantly reduced.

2. Breakout Rooms via Zoom

We are a learning community and the success of this class depends on our active engagement with the class materials and with one another. Through the process of dialogue and discussion, we will gain a deeper and richer understanding of the issues discussed in this course. Difference in opinions, feelings and values are welcome and respected in this classroom.

I will remind you via email the reading schedule for the upcoming week every Friday. You should come prepared to discuss what you have read for every class. A specific type

of discussion that we will have in each Zoom session is: *Breakout Rooms* (please see “Reading Roles & Journal Guidelines” which I will make available on our first day of class).

I will ask everyone to evaluate their fellow group members several times during the semester regarding their participation and contributions to group discussions and project. However, if you have a problem with a group member who is not keeping up with the reading or not participating please notify me early in the semester so that I may discuss the issue with that individual.

3. Journals

Good writers are most often interested readers. For this class, please write a reflective journal responding to the day’s readings prior to class. See the “Reading Roles & Journal Guidelines” handout for the requirements for journals. Students should post their journal entry on Blackboard by 9am the day of class. Late journals will not be accepted. Please have your journals with you for breakout rooms.

4. Group Presentation

Students will form groups for this project. These groups will be responsible for a final presentation near the end of the semester. I will share with you a handout on “Group Presentation” which will contain specific details on the project.

5. Two Reflective Papers

Students will write two reflective papers: “What It Means to be Gendered Me” and “My Gender Then and Now.” I will share with you a handout on “Guidelines for the Two Reflection Papers” which will contain the requirements for each paper.

6. Mid-Term and Final Exam

The final exam in this course is cumulative.

Grading Scale

As instructor, I reserve the right to round up or down any course grade calculations at the end of the semester.

A	94-100	B-	80-83	D+	67-69
A-	90-93	C+	77-79	D	64-66
B+	87-89	C	74-76	D-	60-63
B	84-86	C-	70-73	F	0-59

Students should keep in mind that “A” level work should be outstanding and consistently exceed minimum requirements.

Answers to Other Important Questions

Turning in Late Work

All course work should be submitted by the assignment deadlines. There is no exception for group projects and presentations. Regarding individual papers, if you know that you will be unable to complete an assignment by the due date, you should make this clear to me by e-mail at least 24 hours before the deadline. A short extension without penalty is possible only if you notify me 24 hours in advance.

If not, assignments submitted *after* the deadline will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade for each day late: a B+ becomes a B, a B becomes a B-, and so on.

Academic Integrity

All of the work that you submit for this course must be your own. The university has a strict policy concerning academic integrity. The George Mason University Honor Code reads as follows: "To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this Honor Code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work." More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found on the Committee of Academic Integrity's website at <https://masonkorea.gmu.edu/resources-and-services/cai/overview>.

Academic integrity is an essential part of personal integrity, and I expect you to demonstrate honorable behavior in all of your classes including mine. You should pledge to observe Mason's Honor Code in all written and oral work including journals, papers, presentations and exams. Student who committed plagiarism in an assignment will at a minimum receive a failing grade for the assignment. As the instructor for this course, I will also report the student and instance of plagiarism to the Dean.

Ethical Discourse and Inclusivity

George Mason University is committed to social justice. I share that commitment and strive to maintain a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. In this class we will not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, economic class, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

Disability Accommodations

If you are a student with a physical, learning, and/or psychological disability, I will gladly work with you to arrange academic accommodations for this class.

Please note that reducing assignments or reducing the class attendance requirement are not permitted as accommodations for a disability at the college level.

Meeting with the Professor about Your Grades

I won't discuss grades over email. This is to protect your privacy, so please do not make such requests. Instead, set up a Zoom meeting with me.

Essay Formatting

I expect you to show that you take pride in every piece of written work that you submit. Always re-read your journals and essays (even if they are in draft form) for grammatical errors and spelling mistakes. You should also read your essay aloud to yourself or to a friend. In addition, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Essays must be in 12-point Times New Roman or similar font with 1.0 in/2.54 cm spacing around the margins.
- Essays must have page numbers and a header that includes your name, the assignment name, and date.
- All of the formal assignments must be submitted via paper copy.

Rules for Citation

You can use this useful online resource for rules on citation. The *American Sociological Association Style Guide*:

for in-text citation: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/asa_style/in_text_citation_references.html

for references: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/asa_style/references_page_formatting.html

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Tentative Schedule of Topics

As the instructor for this course, I often make changes and adjustments to the course schedule. I post weekly readings in Blackboard and make weekly announcements via email. Please bring the required texts to our weekly classes via Zoom.

Week 1 (2/22): Introduction

Course Introduction

Syllabus & Handouts

Group Formation for group projects

Monday 3/1 No class (Lecture will be posted in Blackboard)

Week 3 (3/8): Establishing a Sociological Framework

What it Means to be Gendered Me

Introduce the two reflective papers

Week 4 (3/15): Establishing a Sociological Framework

The Sociological Imagination

Reflective paper 1 due

Week 5 (3/22): Sex and Gender?

Reader: Caveman Masculinity: Finding manhood in evolutionary science

Reader: Testosterone Rules

Week 6 (3/29): Sex and Gender?

Reader: Men as Women and Women as Men: Disrupting gender

Week 7 (4/5): Gender as Learned?

Reader: Doing Gender

Reader: "Spice Girls," "Nice Girls," and "Tomboys": Gender discourses, girl's cultures, femininity's in the primary classroom

Week 8 (4/12): Gender as Learned?

Reader: Policing Masculinities: Investigating the role of homophobia and heteronormativity in the lives of adolescent school boys

Week 9 (4/19): Gender as Learned?

Film and Discussion: The Mask You Live In (2015), 1 hr 31 min

No Lecture; Mid-Term Exam Review & Mid-Term Exam on Friday

Week 10 (4/26): Religion & Gender

Reader: Help or Hindrance? Religion's impact on gender inequality in attitudes and outcomes

Web Links:

-The feminization of the church?: <http://krwordgazer.blogspot.com/2014/03/the-feminization-of-church.html>

-When I say I'm a feminist: <http://culturalsavage.com/christianity/when-i-say-im-a-feminist/>

-Modesty: I don't think it means what you think it means: <http://qideas.org/articles/modesty-i-dont-think-it-means-what-you-think-it-means/>

-Misandry: <https://bramboniusinenglish.wordpress.com/2013/11/08/on-similar-misandry-in-christian-fundamentalism-and-consumer-capitalism/>

-The Psychology of the Christian Purity Culture: <http://experimentaltheology.blogspot.com/2013/02/the-psychology-of-christian-purity.html>

-“The Evangelical Debate over Biblical ‘Headship’”: <http://godswordtowomen.org/scholar.htm>

Monday 5/3 - Tuesday 5/4 Spring Recess (no class)

Week 11 (5/10): Social Structure?

Gender Stereotyping in the English Language

Reader: Who Takes the Floor and Why: Gender, power, and volubility in organizations

Week 12 (5/17): Social Structure?

Documentary

'You Guys' Exercise

Week 13 (5/24): Media

Reader: From Damsels in Distress to Sexy Superheroes: How the portrayal of sexism in video game magazines has changed in the last 20 years

Reader: Performing Gender on Youtube: How Jenna Marbles negotiates a hostile online environment

Week 14 (5/31): Media

Film and Discussion: Miss Representation (2011), 1 hr 30 mins

Final Exam on Wednesday, June 9 @ 9am - 11.45am

Other Topics: Relationship

Reader: Gender Rules: Same- and cross-gender friendship norms

Reader: Transgender Friendship Experiences: Benefits and barriers of friendships across gender and identity and sexual orientation

Reader: “That’s just how it is”: A gendered analysis of masculinity and femininity in ideologies in adolescent girls’ and boys’ heterosexual relationships

Other Topics: Family

Reader: At-Home Fathers and Breadwinning Mothers: Variations in constructing work and family lives

(How) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?

Other Topics: Work

Reader: The Gender Revolution: Uneven and stalled

Reader: Racializing the Glass Escalator: Reconsidering men’s experience with women’s work

Reader: Unmasking Manly Men

Reader: Sexual Harassment and masculinity: The power and meaning of “girl watching”