

Women, Men and Culture

GENA 2192 Spring 2022
Thursday 3:30pm—5:15pm
NAH 115

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Office hour: By appointment

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Course description

In her book *The Second Sex*, Simon de Beauvoir famously wrote: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” What did she mean? Aren’t you born a woman or a man? Isn’t it given? Or do you *become* a woman and a man as guided by the culture you are part of? If, indeed, culture plays a guiding role, then can you be somebody other than a man or a woman?

In this course, we will combine anthropological and interdisciplinary approaches with rich ethnographic examples to understand the category of gender. Gender describes how we identify ourselves and categorize others as “men,” “women” or belonging to other gender, and how these categories have implications for social interactions, power relations, the organization of labor, and other aspects of life. We will question what it means to be masculine, feminine, or gender nonconforming as related to ways of living, speaking, maintaining health, eating, and decorating our bodies. We will learn how biological and sexual differences are interpreted and acted upon in different societies. By doing so, we will also develop a better understanding of our own gender assumptions and expectations.

The course will illuminate the experiences of women, men, and differently gendered individuals across different societies: in the Americas, Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Pacific. Based on a series of captivating articles, documentaries, YouTube videos, games, and other class activities, this course will invite you to reflect on gendered aspects of beauty, sexuality, health, money, inheritance, political power, knowledge, kinship, and technology. We will also debate about how gender intersects with other collective categories such as race, social class, religion, and citizenship. Students are expected to participate actively in the lecture.

Course objectives

By the end of this course, students will

- Understand the concept of gender and the cross-cultural variations of gender categories
- Develop a critical awareness to gender inequality locally and globally
- Critically evaluate and/or compare the experiences of men and women as related to their social class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and citizenship

Required readings

All readings are posted on Blackboard. Keep in mind that some readings may be changed during the semester. Please, make sure to consult Blackboard before each class.

Assessment

Term project – 75%

This assignment is based on an anthropological method of field observation. You will carry out a mini-research project to explore the central concepts and questions of our course. There will be a number of prompts provided on Blackboard, but you may choose your own research questions (with my approval). Depending on a chosen question, your project may include the following activities:

- interview with someone over 60
- interview with a person born and grown up outside Hong Kong
- examination of a magazine issue, a newspaper article, a movie poster, or another printed material
- examination of a webpage, a video clip, or another online material
- examination of a museum exhibition or art installation
- analysis of an online community
- observation of a physical place (a grocery store, a bus, a coffee shop, a community center, etc.)

The length is 1500 (min)-1800 (max) words

Topic due on March 24, 2022 in class (late submissions will result in a grade deduction)

Essay due April 14, 2022, 23:59 on Blackboard and VeriGuide

Peer review – 25%

You will be randomly assigned to review one of your classmates' term essay (anonymously). There will be detailed rubric for completing the review posted on Blackboard

The length is 500 words

Due May 5, 2022, 23:59

Grading scale

Grade	Final essay and review
A	your writing demonstrates a nuanced understanding of material and concepts; information is factually accurate; arguments are convincing; the data is relevant The documents are original, of a required length and format, and submitted on time
A -	Your writing demonstrates a nuanced understanding of class material and almost all concepts; information is factually accurate; arguments are convincing, even if occasionally contain minor errors; the data is relevant The documents are original, of a required length and format, and submitted on time
B+	Your writing demonstrates an overall good understanding of class material but may lack clarity, contain several minor errors, and / or slightly deviate from required length and format. The data is somewhat relevant The documents are original and submitted on time.

B	<p>Your writing demonstrates an overall good understanding of class material but may lack clarity, contain many minor errors, and / or deviate from required length and format. The data is somewhat relevant</p> <p>The documents are submitted on time. They are original, although there might be minor problems with citations and attribution</p>
B -	<p>Your writing demonstrates an overall good understanding of class material but lack clarity, contain minor errors and a few major logical flaws, and / or deviate from required length and format. The data is somewhat relevant</p> <p>The documents are submitted on time. They are original, although there might be minor problems with citations and attribution</p>
C +	<p>Your writing demonstrates an acceptable level of understanding of class material but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws, and/or often deviate from required length and format. The data is not clear and a bit irrelevant</p> <p>The documents are submitted on time or a day late. They are original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution</p>
C	<p>Your writing demonstrates an acceptable level of understanding of class material but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws. Your work does not follow the required length and format. The data is not clear and a bit irrelevant</p> <p>The documents are submitted on time or a day late. They are original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution</p>
C -	<p>Your writing demonstrates an acceptable level of understanding of class material but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws. Your work does not follow the required length and format. The data is not clear and a bit irrelevant</p> <p>The documents are submitted a day or two late. They are original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution</p>
D +	<p>Your writing demonstrates minimal understanding of class material. It lacks effort, hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints. The data is not clear and irrelevant</p> <p>The documents are original, but citations are absent. The writing considerably deviates from the required length and format (answers are too short), and/or is submitted a few days late.</p>
D	<p>Your writing demonstrates minimal understanding of class material. It lacks effort, hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints. The data is not clear and irrelevant</p> <p>The documents are original, but citations are absent. The writing considerably deviates from the required length and format (answers are too short), and is submitted many days late.</p>
F	<p>The documents are submitted more than a week late or not submitted at all. They are extremely short, factually incorrect, biased, and/or contain instances of plagiarism.</p>

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: January 13 Introduction to the course

Week 2: January 20 Is being a woman or a man our only options?

- A map of gender-diverse cultures. Click and explore on your own. In PBS, 2015 <https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/content/two-spirits-map-html/>
- BBC (2016) Do we need more than two genders? <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-35242180>

Week 3: January 27 Did men and women equally contribute to human evolution?

- Vivek Venkataraman, *The Conversation* (2021) Ancient men were hunters and women were gatherers. Right? Wrong. In *Scroll.in* <https://scroll.in/article/989275/ancient-men-were-hunters-and-women-were-gatherers-right-wrong>
- Michael Greshko (2017) Famous Viking Warrior Was a Woman, DNA Reveals. In *National Geographic* <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/viking-warrior-woman-archaeology-spd>

Week 4: February 10 Are men and women's brains wired differently? Do they have different talents and preferences?

- Lise Eliot (2019) Neurosexism: the myth that men and women have different brains. In *Nature* <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-00677-x>
- *Sonshinemagazine* (2018) Animals, aggression and entitlement: Boys' clothes on the High Street <https://sonshinemagazine.com/magazine/animals-aggression-and-entitlement>

Week 5: February 17 Do women and men talk differently?

- Deborah Cameron: Speak up, I can't hear you. In *The Guardian*, October 2, 2007 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/oct/02/gender.familyandrelationships>
- Alisha (2020) It's Not Just You: In Online Meetings, Many Women Can't Get a Word In. In *New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/14/us/zoom-meetings-gender.html>

Week 6: February 24 Do men and women like different foods?

- Eva Wiseman (2010) The truth about men, women and food. In *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2010/oct/17/gender-eating-men-women>
- Rachel Sugar (2021) The politics of "dude food." In *Vox* <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/22178806/diners-dudes-diets-emily-contois>

Week 7: March 3 Do all women have maternal instinct? What about men?

- Jennifer Neal (2017) The Maternal Instinct Is A Myth And We've Got The Science To Prove It. In *Medium* <https://medium.com/@jenniferneal/39017/the-maternal-instinct-is-a-myth-and-weve-got-the-science-to-prove-it-de435786adbf>
- Sarah Gibbens (2018) Is Maternal Instinct Only for Moms? Here's the Science. In *National Geographic* <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/mothers-day-2018-maternal-instinct-oxytocin-babies-science>

Week 8: March 10 Do men have a stronger sexual drive than women?

- Joanna Moorhead (2018) A strong libido and bored by monogamy: the truth about women and sex. In *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/oct/13/a-strong-libido-and-bored-by-monogamy-the-truth-about-women-and-sex>
- Katherine Rowland (2020) Why Gender Inequality in the Bedroom Matters for Women. In *Time* <https://time.com/5775442/sexual-relationships-inequality/>

Week 9: March 17 Is it okay to experiment with one's sexuality? Is it okay to pay for romance and sex?

- Tony Silva (2021) Why some straight men have sex with other men. In *The Conversation* <https://theconversation.com/why-some-straight-men-have-sex-with-other-men-160140>
- Brandon Ambrosino (2017) The invention of 'heterosexuality.' In *BBC* <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20170315-the-invention-of-heterosexuality>
- Nayantara Bhat (2017) Compensated dating: Social problem or a road to empowerment and easy cash? In *HKFP* <https://hongkongfp.com/2017/09/03/compensated-dating-social-problem-road-empowerment-easy-cash/>

Week 10: March 24 Do women and men suffer from different diseases?

- Laura Beil (2016) More men are developing eating disorders. Why are we treating it as only a women's disease? <https://www.statnews.com/2016/12/28/male-eating-disorders>
- Patti Neighmond (201) When Men Get Breast Cancer, They Enter A World Of Pink. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/02/08/465578231/when-men-get-breast-cancer-they-enter-a-world-of-pink>

Week 11: March 31. Should women look beautiful, and men be strong?

- Jamilla Rosdahl (2014) Why do we find muscular women wildly perplexing? In *The Conversation* <https://theconversation.com/why-do-we-find-muscular-women-wildly-perplexing-21846>
- Rachel Lubitz (2016) Makeup isn't suddenly genderless. It always has been. In *Mic* <https://www.mic.com/articles/160407/makeup-isn-t-suddenly-genderless-it-always-has-been>

Week 12: April 14 Does globalization affect women and men in the same way?

Readings to be decided

Week 13: April 21 Why are women paid less? Is gender equality achievable?

Readings to be decided