

SOCIOLOGY 3010
SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER
(Winter 2007-8)

Grande Prairie Regional College

Instructor: Alan Segal

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Office Hours: Mondays: 14.30- 15.30, 17-17.30;

Tuesdays & Thursdays: 13.00 - 14.00; 17-17.30

Or By Appointment

Course Description:

An inquiry into contemporary and historical concepts, assumptions, and expressions of gender, and their political, personal, cultural, and social implications.

Course Prerequisite: Sociology 1000

Required Reading:

Dreams of trespass - Fatima Mernissi

Exploring Gender in Canada - Beverly Matthews & Lori Beaman

Recommended Reading:

Gender in Canada - E.D. Nelson & Barrie Robinson

Assignments: All written work must be submitted by email, as a regular message. Do not send as an attachment. Send assignments to

gprc_assignments@yahoo.ca Messages from hotmail accounts appear to be the worst for not receiving replies from me, or for not arriving after they've been sent to me. I strongly recommend you use an entirely different email

provider. There is a lateness penalty of one letter grade per day, including weekends, for all late papers. The 'received date' indicated in my College mailbox will count as the final statement of submission. Journal marks will be reduced by one letter for every 2 days beyond the due date.

Assignments:

Essay or Project Outline: Due the third class of February: A full outline is expected, not a few generalities. Section headings and subheadings, listing appropriately the details you consider useful to that point, must be included. Grades will be applied as follows: A, B, C, or D. No plus or minus signs will be used. I will not accept any final assignments if I haven't previously read an outline from you.

Essay or Project: Due the Last Class of the semester: The objective of this assignment is to bring you beyond your assumptions about gender and related issues. Gender is assumed by some sociologists to be a master status. When contemplating your essay or project, you should not aim for a summary or description. Instead, a critical analysis of the concepts you think are relevant to the analysis, must be examined. You may use first person words like 'I', but the paper is not a large opinion piece. You will select your own topics. If you opt for a different kind of major assignment, for example a fine arts project, critical thinking still must be evident. Consult with me about how this might be done. In these types of assignment, a 1500 word paper explaining the sociological significance of what you hand in must also be provided.

You must use as research at least six sources beyond the assigned books for the course. At least three must be academic, such as might be located in books or journals, or original documents. Of the remaining minimum, two can be informal sources such as interviews, conversations, popular media of any kind, internet websites, etc. **You must reference more than quotations.**

Other authors' interpretations, analyses, perceptions, or ideas, deserve credit in your papers. Mentioning them does not disqualify your view of their analyses.

All research must be presented in MLA style, both in the text itself and the 'Works Cited' section at the end of the paper. The minimum length is 2000 words. All work must clearly stipulate your name, ID number, and course and section numbers. Omitting any of these requirements will result in a lateness penalty equivalent to that of one day. Grammar and general coherence are reasonable expectations of university-level written work, and will be included in the evaluation of your assignments

Two Journals: (F, C+ to B)

Journals are due February 25th and March 24th.

Anything pertaining to the sociology of gender, class discussions or lectures, class interaction, personal life relevant to our examination of sociology, or course observations and suggestions, is a suitable topic. No research is necessary or expected. The purpose is to allow informal communication with the instructor. Grammar and general writing clarity are expected in all written assignments in university courses. While recognizing that we speak and write informally when communicating our personal observations, the journals should be coherent and reasonably articulate. Evaluations will reflect this expectation.

Discussion Bonus:

Everyone may (but not necessarily will) receive a bonus mark based on a combination of the frequency and quality of the participation. Discussion postings to the webCT discussion forum also will be considered class participation. You will be eligible for a bonus mark only if you display commitment to the course by reading and completing the required assignments. Although attendance is not relevant to the regular

assignments for the course, it is important to your eligibility for a bonus mark. If you are absent for more than 3 classes, you will not receive a bonus grade.

The bonus mark offers an A, B, C, or D. No plus or minus signs will be used. If you receive a bonus mark, it will be added to your overall grade total prior to working out a final mark.

Tabulation of marks

Your final mark will be formulated by adding the grade point value for each letter grade you receive, and dividing by the total GPA score achievable for the course (14).

NOTE: (1) No class averaging will be done. (2) All marks will appear on Blackboard. You are responsible for monitoring your grade input, and informing me that a mark has not appeared for which you deserve credit.

Discussion Sequence

1. Introduction to Course

2. Dreams of Trespass: Chapters 1-12

Class Discussion:

Describe the harem that Mernissi experienced. How many kinds of harem were there? What were the harem's limits, frontiers, and possibilities? How did the harem as an idea and a practise, influence women's and men's lives? Do we have harems in Canadian society?

Women in Mernissi's harem symbolize various ideas and assumptions about life and social order, and therefore gender. Prepare to discuss these currents.

What was the cultural and gender significance of World War 2 to the people

in Mernissi's life?

Why were Asmahan and the story of Scheherazade important to the women of the harem?

All societies distinguish between commonplace and special occurrences. What distinctions are mentioned in the book?

3. Dreams of Trespass: Chapters 13-22

Class Discussion:

What boundaries between the permissible and the forbidden does Mernissi discuss? Forbidden experience prevails in all societies, as actual practise and stigmatization. Does the idea of forbidding something, and the specific enforcement of that standard, have social value? Is prohibiting behaviour the same thing as forbidding it? If not, what implications are there, for the establishment of harems of all kinds?

What is the gender significance to Mernissi of puberty and school?

Why mention "skin" and "politics" in the same title?

4. Exploring..... Chapter 1

Class Discussion:

What framework do the authors give to their book on gender? Identify the assumptions of their purpose.

We condense and demote our vernacular understanding of gender to a body part like the penis, say Beaman and Matthews. Is this the only part of the human body that premises gender? What value to society is acquired by founding gender in this way?

What is patriarchy, and do you think the book presents the concept adequately? If not, how would you explain it? What is missing from the presentation? If the book does justice to the concept of patriarchy, what are the best attributes of the explanation?

How does social experience minimize, nullify, or facilitate our understanding

of gender identity generally, and our own, particularly? What is hegemonic masculinity? Is there any context in which femininity is hegemonic? Is 'femininity' the most conceptually effective counterpoint to 'masculinity'? What criteria mark the transition from awareness of gender as a philosophical inquiry, to a conversation about gender as an institution?

5. Exploring..... Chapter 2

Class Discussion:

List the lens of gender that are revealed in this chapter. Do some seem more intellectually and analytically credible than others?

After reading the authors' discussion of science and the assumptions about women that permeate it, are you disillusioned about the 'fate' of women under our most powerful institutions of knowledge and discourse?

Why bother with causality?

Can you state that one of the waves of feminism addresses most profoundly the challenges and conditions of gender?

6. Exploring..... Chapters 3 & 4

Class Discussion:

What do sociologists refer to when they mention normative expectations? In your direct exposure to them, what such expectations have you felt were most or least insistent?

Explain the reference to sociocultural landscapes.

In your sense of gendered life, are manhood and masculinity identical? Of the numerous images of males in the society, which do you feel to be most culturally pressing? In any of the genders observable in our society, do you perceive internalized oppression? Can we oppose oppression but still raise a concern about sexually precocious children?

Do you attribute to language the power to affect gender, as Matthews and Beaman do? Do you concur with the authors that the words in Table 4.2

are derogatory? If so, why? If not, what do they detect that you dismiss? Would you recommend the College change the name of the women's sports teams to something other than the Lady Wolves?

7. Exploring..... Chapters 5-7

Class Discussion:

Prepare to discuss the theories articulated in chapter 5.

How much of what we consider adulthood is linked to gender?

Looking at Grande Prairie's culture, and then beyond, do you see counter-hegemonic moments such as those on page 104?

To what degree is health care a site of gender conflict, and a medium through which many normative formations are established?

Does the intensity of gender shift depending on our ages?

What is "intersectionality"?

8. Exploring..... Chapters 8-10

Class Discussion:

How do you 'do' gender?

What are the cultural insignia of gender? Are there differences between these in Grande Prairie or northern Alberta, and in other parts of Canada?

What is status expectations theory and its relationship to gender?

Why write a chapter on sexualities for a book on gender?

How do we become sexual, according to Matthews and Beaman? Is it similar or identical to how we become gendered? How strictly scripted is gender? Are scripts compatible with Judith Butler's understanding of gender as performative?

In the authors' write of negotiating power, what is actually being negotiated?

What varieties and subtleties of power are brought forward in this chapter?

What is meant by a Relational View of Power? What are some critiques of it?

What is a 'subject position'?

9. Exploring..... Chapters 11-14

Class Discussion:

In a 'conversation' about family life in Canada in the 21st century, why harken back to the 'traditional family'? What is it?

If culture does alter before conduct most of the time, why bother with education campaigns?

What does 'gendered patterns of work' allude to? How profoundly influential is it to the formation of gender norms or identity?

What is Human Capital Theory and its link to gender?

Gender and Law are two social institutions. Yet the second has been utilized frequently in Canada to ameliorate or change dramatically conditions of gender. Does this indicate Law has a more powerful impact on society than Gender?

Prepare to discuss Mary Daly's position that we desert traditional religion.

Do you evaluate religion's effect on gender experience as do the authors?

Are some religions' ideas or ideals more impacting on gender than others?

Would polygamy reinforce or change the experience of becoming gendered?

10. Exploring..... Chapter 15

Class Discussion:

Beaman and Matthews conclude their book with a chapter on crime. Is this a random draw of topics or can you see a possible logic in the sequence that brings us to crime at the end of their volume?