

Anthropology of Gender and Sex Differences

In cross-cultural perspective

ANTH 365/465, WGST 365

Syllabus - Fall 2019 - Version 1.0.6

Instructor

Dr. Eli Thorkelson

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I prefer “they/them” pronouns.

Office hours: Thursdays 10-11am, Mather Memorial 204.

Purpose

This course will give a general introduction to anthropological research on gender and sexuality in human societies. The course is divided into three sections. Part I introduces a number of basic concepts in gender analysis. Part II explores the relationship between gender and social reproduction. Part III examines gendered work, including housework, emotional labor, service work, and sex work. Our ethnographic cases will include the USA, South Africa, Indonesia, India, the UK, Mexico, Canada, Egypt, Barbados, and Madagascar. We will also make some observations of our own about gender dynamics in our own immediate environments, and practice writing in public.

Objectives

Upon completion of this course you should be able to:

- Explain the basic concepts of gender analysis.
- Notice the dynamics of gender and sexuality in social life.
- Build an ethnographic archive around gender and sexuality.
- Understand, summarize, and critically assess social research on gender.
- Reflect on your own relationship with gender and sexuality.
- Write publicly about the workings of gender and sexuality in society.

Logistics

Time: Tuesday/Thursday 11:30—12:45

Place: Mather Memorial 225

Course Requirements

Reading and Reading Questions (15%)

You should do the assigned readings each day before class. When you read, I suggest focusing on the overall argument, and on any passages that seem especially interesting or problematic. You are not expected to memorize every detail of the texts. You just need to understand them well enough to have a conversation about them, and to draw on them later in your written work. If you are pressed for time, I suggest you at least skim from start to finish, and highlight interesting passages. The readings are generally succinct.

For each class session with readings (24 total), you will also need to submit *one question about the day's reading*, at least 30 minutes before class starts. Please submit your question on Canvas, under the relevant reading question assignment.

Class attendance and participation (15%)

You do need to come to class each day. You may be absent **twice** without any explanation needed. After that, please do let me know what is happening!

On days when we are discussing readings, I will call on two or three people to present their reading questions in class. We will use these to guide our discussion. (The presentations should be very informal. You just need to read your question and explain why you are asking it.)

Some days we will do short writing exercises in class. These exercises will not be given letter grades, but I will collect them at the end of class, and their completion will contribute to your participation grade.

Papers (20% each)

There will be two short papers, due **September 22** and **October 20**.

They will be 1500-2000 words long, and they will address the readings from Part 1 and Part 2, respectively. They will be more conventional academic papers, providing critical analysis of the course readings.

Ethnography of gender portfolio (30%)

A series of short ethnographic exercises will help us connect the readings to lived experience. There will be 8 of these short assignments (due dates marked below). These *will not be graded individually*, but I will read them and provide you with feedback on your progress. Over the course of the semester, you will develop these assignments into a portfolio of ethnographic work about gender and sexuality.

These assignments will generally involve a short data-gathering component and a short writing component. The data-gathering will give you a chance to learn about ethnographic fieldwork on a small scale (by observing a space, doing a short interview, collecting documents, etc). You are encouraged to investigate spaces and contexts that interest you in Cleveland. Note that this is not formal social research; it is merely a set of exercises in fieldwork methods.

Each week, after the data gathering is complete, you will need to write a short reflection on your week's field exercise. You should explain what your exercise teaches you about gender and sexuality, referring briefly to the week's readings.

This written exercise should be addressed to an *audience of your peers* and should be posted electronically on medium.com. I am asking you to write for your peers because, in the end, your job as a student is *to learn something worth conveying to a non-academic audience*.

Before you get started, we will discuss ethical practices for writing about human social life. Needless to say, anything you write should provide anonymity and confidentiality to the people you write about. *You* may also choose to remain anonymous in these exercises. Public writing is often pseudonymous, after all. Thus you do not need to use your real name for your Medium account – choose a nom de plume if you wish!

Each week's assignment will be announced on Thursdays the week before it is due. It will be due eight days later, on the following Friday. For example, the first weekly assignment will be announced on Thursday, August 29, and it will be due Friday, September 6. You can prepare for the first assignment by creating a Medium account for yourself, and following my Medium account (@edt27).

At the end of the course, you will conclude by posting a short final essay about your growing ethnographic portfolio. This final essay should still be addressed to your peers, and it should be about 1500-2000 words long. You should reflect on what you learned by doing these fieldwork exercises, and on what they suggest about gender and sexuality in social life. You could also comment on your personal experiences during the research process, or on anything you've changed your mind about as you went along.

I will issue you a final grade for your course portfolio, taken as a whole and including the final essay. The grade will assess both your fieldwork itself and your writing about it. Insightful, courageous, reflexive, persuasive, and clear work will be rewarded.

Graduate Requirements

Graduate students in the class are asked to submit a 10-15 page research paper on a topic relevant to their own research interests. (This is in addition to the other course requirements.) You should discuss your paper topic with me at some point before November 1st, and the paper will be due by the end of the day on Monday, December 2nd. You may write an analysis of some specific sociocultural situation, a more conceptual analysis of a pertinent debate in anthropology of gender, or some other genre of academic writing that is useful to you. (You are not expected to conduct original ethnographic fieldwork for this assignment.)

Reading Schedule

Part 1: Basic concepts in gender, culture, and power

August 27 — Introduction

- No readings today.

August 29 - Gender is a 'social construct'

- Judith Lorber, "Night to his Day: The Social Construction of Gender"

September 3 - Gender interacts with race, class and other social processes

- Patricia Hill Collins, "Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection"

September 5 - Gender is organized around (hetero)sexuality

- Michael Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity"

See also:

- Dianne Richardson, "Patterned Fluidities: (Re)Imagining the Relationship between Gender and Sexuality"
- Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"
- Beth A. Quinn, "Sexual Harassment and Masculinity: The Power and Meaning of 'Girl Watching' "

Ethnographic exercise 1 due on September 6 (by the end of the day)

September 10 - Gender is political

- Timothy Stewart-Winter, "Lesbian Survival School"

See also:

- Combahee River Collective, "Combahee River Collective Statement"

September 12 - Gender organizes social space

- Avtar Brah, "The Scent of Memory: Strangers, Our Own, and Others"

See also:

- Aimee Carrillo Rowe, "Be Longing: Toward a Feminist Politics of Relation"
- Adrienne Rich, "Towards a Politics of Location"
- Phyllis Ewen, "Beauty Parlor—A Woman's Space"

Ethnographic exercise 2 due on September 15

September 17 - Gender fixates on the body

- Evelyn Blackwood, “(Trans)Gender: Tomboy Embodiment”

See also:

- Jack Halberstam, “Making Trans* Bodies”
- Breanne Fahs, “Dread Otherness: Heteronormative Patrolling in Women’s Hair Rebellions”
- Carol Wolkowitz, “The Social Relations of Body Work”

September 19 - Identities shift, and become hybrid, as they move through the world

- Gloria Anzaldúa, “now let us shift... the path of conocimiento... inner work, public acts”

Paper 1 due on September 22

Part 2: Gender, sexuality and reproduction

September 24 - The way we see biology is cultural

- Emily Martin, “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles”

September 26 - Reproduction is racialized

- Dorothy E. Roberts, “Racism and patriarchy in the meaning of motherhood”

Ethnographic exercise 3 due on September 29

October 1 - Pregnancy has politics

- Khiara M. Bridges, *Reproducing Race* (Chapter 6, “Wily Patients, Welfare Queens, and the Reiteration of Race”)

See also:

- Lila Abu-Lughod, “A tale of two pregnancies”

October 3 - Reproduction is a pedagogical project

- Matthew Gutmann, *Fixing Men* (Chapter 6, “Scoring Men: Vasectomies and the Totemic Illusion of Masculine Sexuality”)

See also:

- Elizabeth Arveda Kissling, “Bleeding Out Loud: Communication about Menstruation”

Ethnographic exercise 4 due on October 6

October 8 - Parental roles are (often) ambivalent

- Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born* (Chapter 1, “Anger and Tenderness”)

October 10 - As norms shift, reproduction becomes a problem

- Michelle Walks, “Raising Queerlings: Parenting with a Queer Art of Failure”

Ethnographic exercise 5 due on October 13

October 15 - While formal education remains a key scene of gender policing

- C. J. Pascoe, *Dude, You’re a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School* (Chapter 5, “Look at My Masculinity”)

October 17 - Review session

- *Paper 2 due on October 20*

October 22 - FALL BREAK

- No class
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Part 3: Gender and labor

October 24 - Gender and class emerge together

- Cynthia Cockburn, "The material of male power"

October 29 - Emotions are work *No reading*

October 31 - Cleaning a house is also work

- Pat Mainardi, "The Politics of Housework"

Ethnographic exercise 6 due on November 3

November 5 - Feminized workplaces are sites of gender discipline and agency

- Carla Freeman, *High Tech and High Heels in the Global Economy* (excerpt)

November 7 - Workplace gender discipline is also sexual discipline

- Leslie Salzinger, "Manufacturing Sexual Subjects: 'Harassment', desire and discipline on a Maquiladora shopfloor"

Ethnographic exercise 7 due on November 10

November 12 - It takes work to hide the work

- Maheshvari Naidu, "Glaring Invisibility: Dressing the Female Cleaner"

November 14 - Work (often) can't hold up the world

- Andries Bezuidenhout and Khayaat Fakier, "Maria's Burden: Contract Cleaning and the Crisis of Social Reproduction in Post-apartheid South Africa"

Ethnographic exercise 8 due on November 17

November 19 - "People do things however they can" (in changing sexual economies)

- Jennifer Cole, "Fresh contact in Tamatave, Madagascar: Sex, money, and intergenerational transformation"

November 21 - Work can reorganize the (sex) worker's self

- Kimberly Walters, "The Stickiness of Sex Work: Pleasure, Habit, and Intersubstantiality in South India"

November 26 - Although (sex) workers can also self-organize

- Selma James, "Hookers in the House of the Lord"

See also:

- Sundari Anitha and Ruth Pearson, "striking women—striking out"
 - Inés Hernández-Ávila, "In the Presence of Spirit(s): A Meditation on the Politics of Solidarity and Transformation"
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November 28 - NO CLASS

December 3 - Review session

December 5 - Conclusion

- *Final portfolio submission due on December 6*
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Course policies

Community and safe environment.

All are welcome in this classroom. “We” includes a diverse set of views, social locations, identities, histories, genders, sexualities, ethnoracial locations, languages, capacities, struggles and commitments. We are here to learn from our differences, not to erase them. Gender and sexuality can be very sensitive issues; let us all be prepared to encounter positions unlike our own. Let us, however, commit to affirming each other’s existence as such, particularly the existence of those who are historically marginalized by dominant norms (gendered, sexualized, and otherwise).

It is university policy to provide a positive, supportive, discrimination-free educational and work environment. Sexual harassment, and any other form of harassment, will not be tolerated.

For further information, see <https://students.case.edu/handbook/policy/sexual/>.

Sensitive course content

In the study of gender and sexuality, there is much that can be hard to read, distressing, or worse. I will do my best to prepare you for the topics involved in the course readings. But everyone’s reactions are different; if you have concerns about particular topics or themes that may come up in the course, please don’t hesitate to speak to me.

Communications

The easiest way to reach me is by email.

I will normally respond to your email within 24 hours (except during weekends and holidays). If you have not heard back from me within 24 hours, please feel free to write again to make sure I received your message.

You are also welcome to visit me during my office hours. Please try to email me in advance to let me know that you are coming. If necessary, I may also be able to meet with you at an alternative time.

Digital devices

You are welcome to use digital devices in class *to facilitate your participation in class*. Please do not use them for any other reason!

Emergency circumstances

In the unhappy event that you experience an emergency during the semester, I am ready to discuss any accommodations that you may need for our class. If you wish, you are also very welcome to channel these kinds of conversations through your advisors, navigators, counseling staff, or any other relevant campus offices.

Accommodations

The Disability Resources Center is here to assist students with disabilities to fully participate in your chosen programs and activities. Please contact the office of Disability Resources to discuss your individual needs.

For further information, see <http://studentaffairs.case.edu/academic/disability/>.

Late work

Your work should be submitted on time. It is due by 11:59pm on the due date.

You may submit your work up to 12 hours late without penalty. After that, late work will be penalized 1/3 of a grade per day, and is not accepted after one week.

If you need an extension for some reason, please feel free to email me to discuss your situation. Asking about this in advance is much better than asking at the last minute!

Academic integrity

Please do maintain academic integrity in your coursework. Cite sources for concepts as well as for direct quotations. As a (presumably obvious) reminder, inadmissible practices would include cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, obstruction, submitting work to one course that was completed for another course, etc.

If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism, acceptable citation practices, I am happy to talk to you about it.

Further reading

There is an immense literature on gender, sexuality and culture, but here are a few places to look for further reading.

- *Feminism & Masculinities* (2004), Peter F. Murphy ed., Oxford UP.
 - *The Transgender Studies Reader* (2006), Susan Stryker ed., Taylor & Francis.
 - *A Companion to Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment* (2011), Frances E. Mascia-Lees ed., Wiley-Blackwell.
 - *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present* (2005), Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell eds, UKZN Press.
 - *Nonbinary: Memoirs of Gender and Identity* (2019), Micah Rajunov and A. Scott Duane eds., Columbia UP.
 - *This Bridge Called My Back* (1983), Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa eds., Persephone Press.
 - *African Gender Studies: A Reader* (2005), Oyèrónké Oyewùmí ed, Palgrave MacMillan.
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