

# Paper 1

## Answering questions about gender

Due on September 20

### Assignment

This assignment is based on answering one of the reading questions, on the basis of your own careful reading of the text that it is about.

1. Look back at everybody's reading questions for Unit 1, and choose one that seems important and *non-obvious* to you.
2. Take a few minutes to think about why the question matters, why one would want to ask it, and *for whom* the answer matters.
3. Take another few minutes to re-read the relevant text, and ponder how the author might respond to the question, based on what you can infer about their general outlook and project.
4. Write a short essay in three parts.
  - a. Tell us what the question is (please quote your original question exactly!) and explain what it means and why it matters.
  - b. Explain how the question fits into *your larger reading* of the original text. What do you think is the text's main point or argument? What seemed to be its chief limitations? What was its context or intended audience? And how does the question fit into these?
  - c. Finally, give an answer to the question, and *explain the thought process that led you to your answer*. Feel free to emphasize points on which you would disagree with the text's author, or the person asking the question!
5. Submit the completed essay to me on Canvas on September 20. It should be 1500-2000 words long (roughly 4-6 pages, double spaced). Do cite your sources (using any scholarly reference style that you are comfortable with).

### Suggestions for writing

- If you choose a simplistic question to write about, your paper will suffer. Pick an interesting question that requires some thought or judgment to answer.
- A *reading* is a scholarly term that means a *thoughtful interpretation of a text based on detailed reading and systematic analysis*. A reading in this sense might *begin* from your personal feelings about a text, but there's more to it than just your spontaneous reactions. You have to also document your thought process and the specific statements in the text that justify your thought process. So for instance, "Kimmel's paper is unsatisfying" would *not* be a sufficient scholarly reading of Kimmel, because it is just an opinion without any supporting analysis. But you could develop that feeling into a more elaborate reading. Something like this: "Kimmel's paper attempts to claim that men's position is distinctive because of the way manhood is perpetually tested, but the argument remains profoundly limited by its white middle-class masculine perspective, as we can see in the following passage... And this leads Kimmel to overlook XYZ..."
- In explaining your reading of a text, you are also very welcome to bring up any relevant outside information to help make sense of it. For instance, when was it written? Who was the author (in gender/race/class/national/linguistic/age/etc terms)? Who was the author writing for? (You are welcome to use Google, Wikipedia, etc, to help find out about the authors!) Remember: **context matters!**
- Clear, cogent, well-organized writing is preferred.
- If you need help with standard scholarly reference protocols, please email me for assistance.