SOC 792b: Gender Seminar  
Spring 2006  

Instructor: Joya Misra  
Email: misra@soc.umass.edu  
Office: Machmer W33e, 545-5969  
Office Hours: Mon 10-12 & by appointment  
Class Meetings: Wednesday 3-5:30 pm  
Classroom: Machmer W32  

The seminar explores current literature in the sociology of gender. Gender is one of the most central axes of inequality, along with class, race, ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality. Over the past thirty years, feminist scholarship in sociology has truly exploded; gendered understandings of almost every social phenomenon exist. Indeed, I would argue that gender always matters. However, given the limits of a semester, this course will only highlight a number of key areas: feminist theory; feminist methods; sexualities; identities; culture and bodies; work and organizations; work in the global economy; immigration; families and relationships; welfare and welfare reform; crime, law, and punishment; and states and social movements. In addition, these readings are meant to highlight intersectional approaches to gender.

The syllabus primarily includes recent works by feminist sociologists. In addition to the required readings, I list “recommended works” for you to pursue as interested. However, if you would like additional recommendation, do not hesitate to ask me. There are many classic books and articles pieces that I would be delighted to direct you towards. I have also incorporated scholarship by several UMass faculty into the syllabus, to introduce you to a small portion of the excellent and influential research being done here, as well as to allow you to consider the intellectual arguments of these faculty members.

This course serves a survey course in gender; there are more advanced courses in sociology on topics like gender & family, gender & work, global feminist movements, gender & social policy, gender & law, sexuality, etc. that I urge you to seek out (if you have not already). In addition, we have a vital Women’s Studies program, with an excellent graduate certificate program that you should consider. The best feminist research is interdisciplinary, and I would encourage you to develop intellectual relationships with scholars and scholarship in many fields.

Course Requirements

As a seminar, this course is based on the active involvement of all participants in discussing the topics we cover. Because discussion is an integral part of this course, I want to ensure that the classroom is a “safe place” for frank and open discourse. Although we will have different viewpoints on many of the readings, I expect all of us to treat one another with respect. Because we will also come to the class with different levels of experiences (both real-world and academic), we should be attentive to maintaining openings in discussion for everyone. Asking questions should be a top priority – often questions that appear simple end up being the most difficult to grapple with (and therefore, the most productive).

I expect everyone to complete assigned readings before class, and be prepared to take part in class discussion. Indeed, everyone will take part in a web-based discussion of the readings before each class session (by two days before the class session, in order to give those leading class discussion some time to plan their session). In these discussions, I hope that we all pose questions that we would like us to address in class. I also expect active participation in the in-class discussions. Participating in the web board will make up 10% of the grade, participating in class will make up another 10% of the grade. The course website is at: “https://webct.oit.umass.edu/”, and will be available once classes begin.
You will also be in charge of leading discussion of the course material for one class session during the semester, either alone or with another student. Organizing the class discussion involves presenting a short (3 minute) orientation of the required readings for the week, raising specific questions and issues for the week, and relating the material to previous readings and class discussions. Your role as discussion leader will not be in “lecturing” on the material, but facilitating a thoughtful and active discussion of these materials. Joint discussion leaders should meet well in advance of the class session to plan their duties for the session. You should bring to class a list of five main questions that you plan the session to address. The form I use for evaluating discussion leading appears at the end of this syllabus; organizing class discussion is worth 15% of the grade.

You will write two short papers responding to materials covered in the readings. In these 3-5 page papers, you will discuss and critically evaluate one of the assigned readings (an article or book) for which you have not led discussion. I encourage you to treat these papers as practice book (or article) reviews. These papers should begin by briefly describing the major argument of the piece, but then critically evaluate the argument, noting both its strengths and weaknesses. You may want to read some reviews in Contemporary Sociology or Gender & Society to give you a sense of how to write these papers. The first is due by March 8, the second by May 10.

Finally, you will also write a course paper that sociologically examines some aspect of gender. In this long paper, you should apply a theoretical perspective to a substantive area that interests you. The paper can take a variety of forms – an in-depth review of a certain theoretical or substantive tradition, a research proposal, a piece of original research, etc. The paper should draw on at least some sociological literature, and should be around 12-17 pages in length. Final paper topics should be discussed with me and decided by March 1. Rough drafts of the paper are due May 3, no grades will be given these drafts, but 10% will be deducted from the final if a draft is not submitted. The final version of the paper is due May 22. Grades are based on the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Participation</td>
<td>10 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing class discussion</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First short paper</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second short paper</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>40 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The grading scale for this course is A=>93; A-=90-93; B+=87-90; B=83-87; B-=80-83, C+=77-80, C=<77.

Required Readings:

All books are available at Food for Thought Books, 106 N. Pleasant, and are also on two-hour/overnight reserve in the W.E.B. DuBois Library. Articles/chapters are available via e-reserves. The password is “gender”. Class members are expected to read all of the required readings, although I/the discussion leader(s) may point out certain chapters and articles that are particularly important. Additional readings are listed for you to pursue if you are interested.

- Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*
- Julie Bettie, *Women without Class: Girls, Race, and Identity*
- Leslie Salzinger, *Genders in Production: Making Workers in Mexico’s Global Factories*
- Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*
- Sharon Hays, *Flat Broke with Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform*
COURSE SCHEDULE

February 1: Feminist Theory, Part I


Recommended:


February 8: Feminist Theory, Part II


Recommended:

February 15: Feminist Methods


Recommended:

February 22: Sexualities


Recommended:
March 1: Identities


**Recommended:**

March 8: Culture & Bodies


**Recommended Readings:**
March 15: Work & Organizations


**Recommended:**

March 29: Work in the Global Economy


**Recommended:**
April 5: Immigration


**Recommended:**

April 12: Families & Relationships


**Recommended:**

April 19: Monday Class Schedule, No class
April 26: Welfare & Welfare Reform


**Recommended:**

May 3: Crime, Law, and Punishment


**Recommended:**
May 10: The State & Social Movements


Recommended:

May 17: Student Presentations
Guidelines for Leading Class Discussion

You will be in charge of leading discussion of the course material for one week of class during the semester, either alone or with another student. You can structure discussion in any number of ways. However, all discussion leaders must aim for equitable participation from class members and provide discussion questions for the class session. Many discussion leaders prefer to begin class by reviewing the required reading for the week. This review should raise specific questions and issues for the week, and relate the material to previous readings and class discussions. This is a fine strategy, but your summary should not take more than 3-5 minutes. Longer summaries take away from discussion of the material. Your job is not to lecture, but to lead discussion about the material. This discussion will lead to a clearer understanding of the readings, or at least a clearer understanding of the complexity of the readings.

The discussion leader must take a strong role, to ensure that the discussion covers the material, and that there is equity and continuity in the discussion. One of the major concerns in leading discussion is to ensure that the environment is secure enough for people to ask questions and become involved. Discussion leaders should be vigilant about maintaining equitable participation. Be creative in thinking about how to sustain discussion and involve all class members in discussion. I evaluate discussion leading using the following form. Leading discussion makes up 15% of your grade. Another 15% of your grade will reflect your participation in class discussion.

Is the class session organized well?
- Relates material to previous course readings 1 2 3 4 5
- Provides internal summaries and transitions 1 2 3 4 5
- Maintains continuity in the discussion 1 2 3 4 5
- Summarizes and distills main points at end of class 1 2 3 4 5
- Paces class session appropriately 1 2 3 4 5

How is the substantive content discussed?
- Presents background information for ideas 1 2 3 4 5
- Integrates readings into discussion 1 2 3 4 5
- Helps clarifies material/corrects misunderstandings 1 2 3 4 5

Is the discussion leader credible in her/his role? Does s/he present the material well?
- Appears well-prepared 1 2 3 4 5
- Understands the material 1 2 3 4 5
- Is able to admit insufficient knowledge 1 2 3 4 5
- Speaks audibly and clearly 1 2 3 4 5
- Communicates enthusiasm 1 2 3 4 5

How is the discussion leader’s rapport with the other class members?
- Recognizes when others are confused 1 2 3 4 5
- Encourages equitable participation 1 2 3 4 5
- Encourages class members to respond to one another 1 2 3 4 5
- Requires class members’ thought and participation 1 2 3 4 5
- Responds constructively to class members 1 2 3 4 5
- Treats members equitably and respectfully 1 2 3 4 5
- Requires respect between class members 1 2 3 4 5
**Guidelines for Reviews**

Two short papers responding to materials covered in the readings are required for this course. In these 3-5 page (single-spaced, typed) papers, you will discuss and critically evaluate one reading or set of the assigned readings for which you have not led discussion. You should turn in each review on the date of the class session covering the readings that you evaluate. I expect one review during the first half of the semester (by March 8), another in the last half of the semester (by May 10).

You may think of these short papers as critical reviews of the material. Although you will review a group of articles/chapters in your review, reading book reviews in *Contemporary Sociology* or *Gender and Society* may give you an idea of how to organize your review. Basically, a critical evaluation of the material should consist of a brief summary of the authors' main arguments, a paragraph placing this material within the larger context of the readings we have done, and a critical evaluation of the arguments the authors make. You should evaluate the material in terms of the authors' ability to present well-supported, sound arguments. In my evaluation of these reviews, I will consider writing style and organization, as well as whether you convey an understanding of the material you review and whether your argument and critique of the material is systematic and convincing.

**Guidelines for Final Papers**

The major requirement for this class is the final course paper. In this paper, you should do systematic research on a topic that relates to gender and social policy. This final paper may be in the form of a policy analysis, analyzing a particular policy, or it may be a detailed review of a specific literature, a research proposal, or a paper that engages in original research on a topic.

Final paper topics should be discussed with me during office hours, and submitted formally by email, with a preliminary outline for the paper, by March 1. Rough drafts of the paper are due May 3. No grades will be given these drafts, but 10% will be deducted from the final grade if a draft is not submitted. The final version of the paper is due May 22. The paper should be typed, double-spaced, and between 12-20 pages (length is negotiable). The paper makes up 40% of your final grade. A good paper has:

- A clear introduction, which provides a persuasive argument about the importance and relevance of the paper
- A clear and original argument, which draws from a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. Show that you understand how your argument fits within the scholarship that already exists, and rely upon at least 12 sources.
- Methodological appropriateness, if you propose or actually do research for the paper.
- A conclusion that summarizes your findings and makes explicit the implications of your research, including policy recommendations when appropriate.
- Effective writing and organization, including transitions between paragraphs and sections, and footnotes for any information that is not crucial for your argument.

Finally, **revise thoroughly**. Revision is the difference between an “A” and a “B” paper. Two papers can be well conceptualized, theoretically sophisticated, and methodologically well executed, and yet if the first was never revised, it will be noticeably inferior to the second. Try to finish the paper at least a week before it is due. Then reorganize your argument, clear up fuzzy concepts, recheck your references, and fix spelling and grammatical errors. **You should revise your paper at least 3 times before submitting it for this course.**