The principal objective of the course is to illustrate the complex interplay between age and gender, as well as the significance of two key institutions--work and family--in shaping basic life choices and their consequences throughout the life course. A second objective is to introduce a comparative, cross-cultural perspective on age, gender, work, and family. A third course objective is to familiarize students with some of the ways scholars have thought about and studied changing gender roles and age in our society. The issue is not only what we know, but how we know it. Accordingly, this course offers opportunities for students to engage in content analysis, in-depth life history interviewing, and a group research project. Specific topics for these group projects are left to the students' discretion and intellectual interests, but the goal is to provide a comparative perspective on some aspect of gender and aging.

Exams: There will be one prelim and a final. The prelim covers (roughly) the first half of the course and the final focuses largely on the second half. However, the final is cumulative and will also include material related to the group research projects. Both the final and the prelim will be principally multiple choice, but may include some short answer questions. There will be no makeup exams.

Research Projects: Students are required to engage in three "mini" research projects involving: (1) content analysis of advertisements, magazines, television programs or commercials, (2) a life history interview of at least one person age 40 or older, (3) a comparative study of age and gender carried out by a research team. The goal of these projects is to understand how social scientists frame questions and find answers about age and gender roles in contemporary society. Details will be provided early in the semester.

Grading: The prelim counts for 30% of your grade, with the final exam counting for 40%. The research projects will count as follows--content analysis, 5%; life history interview, 8%; comparative research 14%. In addition, to pass the course each student is expected to complete a workbook (3%), an informal log of observations and reflection. An absolute grading scale will be used:

- 97-100% = A+
- 93-96% = A
- 90-92% = A-
- 87-89% = B+
- 83-86% = B
- 80-82% = B-
- 77-79% = C+
- 73-76% = C
- 70-72% = C-
- 67-69% = D+
- 63-66% = D
- 60-62% = D-
- Less than 60% = F
Gender and the Life Course: Work and Family Issues

HDFS 255 Fall, 1995

Phyllis Moen
Cornell University
Discipline: Human Development

Required Texts


SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Note: Assignments are to be read prior to class!

I. THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER AND THE LIFE COURSE

August 31: Roles, Identities, and Social Change
Introduction to Course and Overview of the Three Research Projects

Newman, Chapter 1, "The End of Entitlement"
Allen & Pifer, Chapter 1 (Allen), "The Front Lines"

Introduction to Content Analysis Project

September 7: Work, Gender and Age
Reskin & Padovic, Chapter 1, "Work and Gender"
Moen, Chapter 1, "Introduction"

II. THE CONTEXT: HISTORICAL TRENDS AND FORCES

September 12: The Interplay Between Biology and Culture
Allen & Pifer, Chapter 5 (Fahs), "Preventative Medical Care: Targeting Elderly Women in an Aging Society"
Allen & Pifer, Chapter 4, "Years Gained and Opportunities Lost: Women and Healthcare in an Aging America"

September 14: The Significance of the Economy
Newman, Chapter 2, "Winners and Losers in the Eighties and Nineties"
Reskin & Padovic, Chapter 2, "A History of Gendered Work"

September 19: Culture, Ideology, and Beliefs
Moen, Chapter 2, "Recent Trends"
Newman, Chapter 3, "The Making of the Boomers"

***CONTENT ANALYSIS PROJECT DUE***

September 21: Demography, Social Policy, and Social Services
September 26: Opportunities and Inequality: Race, Class, Gender, and Age
Allen & Pifer, Chapter 7, (Malveaux) "Race, Poverty and Women's Aging"
Reskin & Padovic, Chapter 3, "An Overview of Sex Inequality at Work"

III. THE TRANSITION TO ADULT ROLES

September 26: Early Experiences and the Life Course
Moen, Chapter 4, "Implications for Marriages, Families and Children"

September 28: Contingencies and Turning Points: Educational and Occupational Achievements
Reskin & Padovic, Chapter 4, "Sex Segregation in the Workplace"

***TEAM RESEARCH TOPIC AND PLAN DUE***

IV. GENDER IN THE FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD

October 3: Marriage and Family Transitions and Trajectories
Moen, Chapter 3, "Patterns, Problems, and Payoffs for Women"
Moen, Chapter 4, "Implications for Marriages, Families, and Children"

October 5: Discussion of Life History Projects

October 7: FALL BREAK!

October 12: Marriage and Family (Continued)
Discussion of Task Force Projects

October 17: REVIEW

October 19: ***MIDTERM***

V. WORK AND FAMILY LINKAGES

October 24: Shifting Norms, Belief Systems, and Behavior
Newman, Chapter 4, "The Problem of the Moral Mother"

October 26: A Contemporary Dilemma
Moen, Chapter 5, "Implications for Employers, Unions, and Governments"
Moen, Chapter 6, "Conclusions and Implications"

***LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEWS DUE***
VI. GENDER AND AGE AT WORK

October 31:  Mid-Career Pathways and Resources
Reskin & Padovic, Chapter 5, "Sex Differences in Moving Up and Taking Charge"
Reskin & Padovic, Chapter 6, "Sex Differences in Earnings"

November 2:  Long-Term Pathways and Resources
Allen & Pifer, Chapter 6 (Rayman, Allshouse & Allen),
"Resiliency Amidst Inequity: Older Women Workers in an Aging United States"

November 7:  Implications for Individuals and for Society
Newman, Chapter 5, "The Spoiled Generation"
Newman, Chapter 7, "The Fractured Generation"

VII. COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL NETWORK TIES

November 9:  Paid and Unpaid Work
Allen & Pifer, Chapter 9 (Allen), "Caring, Work, and Gender Equity in An Aging Society"

***TASK FORCE GROUP RESEARCH REPORT DUE***

November 14:  Task Force Presentations

VIII. TRANSITIONS TO MIDLIFE AND OLD AGE

November 16:  Gender, Health and Caregiving
Allen & Pifer, Chapter 3 (Foster and Brizius), "Caring Too Much?"

November 21:  Task Force Presentations

November 22-27:  ***THANKSGIVING BREAK***

IX. TOWARD THE 21st CENTURY

November 28:  Task Force Presentations

November 30:  Social Change: Toward a Contingent Life Course
Allen & Pifer, Chapter 8 (Jacobs), "Expanding Social Roles for Older Women"

December 5:  Task Force Presentations

December 7:  The Future Life Course: Reinventing Gender, Age and Generation
Reskin & Padovic, Chapter 9, "Women, Men and Work in the Twenty-First Century"
Newman, Chapter 8, "The Politics of Generation Division"
RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED READINGS FOR ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS INTO THIS TOPIC


Kohn, Melvin. 1977. *Class and Conformity,* Homewood, IL: Dorsey


