

University of Utah
Women's Studies 369
Social Change: Sex Roles
Vella Neil Evans
Taught Fall & Spring Quarters

Description of the class:

Women's Studies 369 addresses gender roles from a social constructionist perspective, analyzing how definitions of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation affect both traditional and emerging gender roles. Particular attention is paid to strategies for enacting change and for adapting effectively to current definitions. Given the broad focus of the course, an equally broad focus for service is appropriate. Students will work with populations whose circumstances clearly constrain gender-related identities and behavior. Agencies include the Bennion Center's ongoing Children's Projects, the Cross-Cultural Projects, Domestic Violence Projects, Education Support Projects, and the Homeless and Hunger Projects. Efforts will also be made to establish a service relationship with the Stonewall Foundation.

1. Class members will provide a needed service to individuals or organizations in the community. Students will be trained by and accept placement through the Bennion Center to provide the service that the Center and the recipients agree is most useful.

2. Service will relate to the course subject matter. The service experience relates to our social constructionist perspective by

exposing both dominant and non-dominant belief systems including gender-linked social policies and/or life styles.

3. Classroom experience will help students identify what they learn through service and its relationship to the subject of the

class. Lectures, films, and the course text will provide feminist analyses of gender roles as they are constrained by varying

racial-ethnic, economic, and sexual orientations. Students will observe real gender-linked experiences and analyze, in class

discussion, how their observations help support or modify concepts and issues presented in the text, lectures and films.

4. Learning derived specifically from service will be assessed. Students will submit journal records of their service experiences, make on-going oral reports of their service as one basis for class discussion and analysis, and write a term paper in which the

service experiences are integrated with the social science concepts of the course. The analysis and integration will focus on

students' growing awareness of the social construction of gender in the formal and informal discourse. Students will also analyze

inherited gender roles and the costs and benefits of alternative perspectives.

5, The course is sensitive and responsive to needs of the service recipients. Recipients will report to/through their agencies relating the quality of the service, service hours will be monitored, and students will ask recipients for feedback concerning emerging understandings and ongoing efforts. Modifications will be made as deemed necessary by the agencies and the Bennion Center.

6. Service will provide a civic education for citizens. Service outcomes do not flow exclusively from student to recipient. Instead, the most predictable outcome will likely be increased student understanding of social diversity and hierarchies. Such knowledge should produce increased empathy for marginalized groups and future advocacy for real democracy and justice.

7 . Service will be based on practices and conceptual frameworks that are central to Women's Studies. Students will employ a participant-observation approach to their service and class work. This effort includes two levels of analysis: structural and biographical. The structural approach focuses on social institutions and practices which create and sustain gender stratification and links those inequalities to interrelating systems such as racism, ageism and homophobia. The biographical level honors individual voices and incorporates personal experiences that dramatize course concepts. Underlying all of this work is a strong focus on language and the social construction of gender in discourse.

8. Classroom experience will facilitate peer education as well as learning from the instructor. Continuing oral reports of service, collaborative analysis, and mutual support will make us all learners, teachers, and members of a civil community.

FOCUS OF THE COURSE

This course investigates the interrelation of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation in constructing standards for gender-linked identity and behavior. Issues include values attached to various images of femininity and masculinity, gender-relevant options, and strategies for change.

Please be aware that the course requires some emersion in the lives of nondominant populations--either through extensive reading or by face-to-face interaction in service performed through the Bennion Center. Either choice will demonstrate the relative well-being and so-called "propriety" that privilege often affords to dominant populations. In addition, some course experiences will

include strong language and harsh and/or sexualized images - both relevant and absolutely necessary to achieve real understanding. People who anticipate offense must prepare to manage it or not enroll in the course.

TEXTS

EVERYONE WILL READ ONE OF THE FOLLOWING AS A PRIMARY TEXT:

Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, Eds. (1995). *Men's Lives* 3rd and Revised Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon Publishing Company.

Laurel Richardson and Verta Taylor, Eds. (1993). *Feminist Frontiers III* 3rd and Revised Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

THE READING OPTION REQUIRES THAT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF WEEK SIX:

Dorothy Allison (1992). *Bastard Out of Carolina* New York: Penguin Books Ltd. USA.

Mary Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes (1990) . *Lakota_ Woman*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

THE READING OPTION REQUIRES THAT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF WEEK TEN:

Nathan McCall (1994). *Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America.* New York: Random House.

Paul Monette (1992). *Becoming a Man: Half a Life Story*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

THE SERVICE OPTION IS LIMITED TO EITHER *Feminist Frontiers* or *Men's Lives* PLUS 40 HOURS OF SERVICE arranged with the Bennion Center (see syllabus page 10) before Wed., Oct. 4, and commenced no later than Mon., Oct. 9.

DESIGN OF THE COURSE

We begin with perspectives on the present as we consider varying descriptions of contemporary "gender-linked" experience and

equally varying explanations of how these conditions came into being. The course then concentrates on several of our most common experiences and concerns--sexuality or intimate relationships, wellness, employment and personal agency. We conclude by surveying strategies for coping with the present and for change.

THE COURSE IS BASED ON THESE ASSUMPTIONS: Our society is heterogenous. The peoples, cultures and subcultures vary widely; and their interplay creates patterns of harmony and conflict, integration and division, stability and change. Such tensions affect institutions and personal experiences but are not always addressed in their full complexity. Instead our society has most frequently been defined through the perception of its relatively privileged members who have had access to public discourse and influence.

Often such privileged (but unrepresentative) expressions have been codified as "law"; solidified in "institutions"; published as "news"; distributed as "entertainment"; and read as part of the classical canons of "literature, 11 "history, 11 and "science. 11 Such perceptions have been self - reflexive and self perpetuating. They valorized market values, individual freedom, and the status quo. Not surprisingly, these expressions also overlooked or distorted the experiences of poor and/or working-class men, people with disabilities, the young, the old, bisexuals, homosexuals, women, and people of color.

This course calls into question the perceptions and societal arrangements that have dominated much American experience. In particular, it recognizes existing gender inequity, gender stratification and conflict. It asks who benefits in what ways from inherited "gender" customs and "gender-linked" social order. who receives privilege and who is disadvantaged? Thus "agency" and "power" become issues: how is power defined and by whom? how is it obtained and how expressed? what is its price? The purpose is not to indict; even privilege has its costs. We will focus, instead, on the diversity of experience, mechanisms that support the status quo, and strategies for survival and growth. However, this course also suggests that values of "liberty and justice, 11 "freedom and equality" must be addressed in an earnest dialogue of multiple voices. Culture is created by people and is therefore both necessarily imperfect and necessarily subject to change.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Individual effectiveness includes understanding of all course materials, insightful speaking and writing, and effort to include quiet

members in the discussions. Small amounts will write at least the first of two assigned papers, and the process should facilitate the learning of group skills including negotiation and collaboration. Group work also produces enriched understanding of course materials and a heightened sense of community.

In general, there should be increased ability to understand, analyze and integrate information regarding race, class, gender and sexual orientation. There should be increased care and precision in language use. Finally, we should improve critical thinking skills by challenging what is taken for "reality" and by considering the costs and benefits of different perspectives and practices. This course is both intellectually challenging and emotionally engaging. All the better! Experiential learning works best!!

GRADING FOR THE COURSE

We are working on a 100 point scale with grade breaks at deciles (90%, 80%, etc.). Grades will NOT be curved, and the option to rewrite the first paper (or write a rough draft) helps protect the final grade.

EVERYONE IS EXPECTED TO ATTEND CLASS AND PARTICIPATE IN THE DISCUSSIONS. Consistent attendance and informed participation are worth 10 points total.

EVERYONE IS TO SUBMIT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS on Wednesdays. These questions (worth 10 points total) should be drawn from the readings and should be designed to clarify or extend concepts or help integrate information into more complex understandings. Identify authors, essays and concepts precisely, type the questions, and include your name at the top of the page.

EVERYONE WILL TAKE AN ESSAY FINAL DURING FINAL EXAM WEEK. This exam will address basic issues in the course and is worth 20 points total.

THE READING OPTION REQUIRES TWO PAPERS, These papers should measure depth of understanding as they become a vehicle for integrating the wide range of class concepts into more unified form.-The first paper (worth 25 points) is due on Monday of the seventh week of the quarter. It will be group-written, five-to-eight-pages long, and should address either _Lakota Woman_ or _Bastard Out of Carolina_. Fridays of weeks 3, 5 and 6 will be dedicated to group paper-writing.

The second paper (worth 35 points) is due on Monday of the eleventh week of the quarter. It can be either individually written or group written, six to ten pages long, and address either _Makes Me Wanna Holler_ or _Becoming a Man_. One-third of a grade advantage is offered to group-authored second papers. This means that I will grade group papers one-third of a grade higher than the same paper would receive if it were written independently.

THE SERVICE OPTION REQUIRES FOUR JOURNAL SUBMISSIONS, ON-GOING CLASS REPORTS AND ONE PAPER, JOURNALS will be submitted on Mondays of weeks

4, 6, 8, and 10. These submissions (worth 20 points total) should be typed, double-spaced, and include the following: a

rough summary for the period including first names of the most "involved" people; explain what specific experiences mean in the setting in which you are working; explain how the "service population" illuminates the readings and discussions of marginalized people; explain how and where you have found our common humanity in the lives of others.

REPORTS of your service experience should be made during class discussions as they relate to the assigned topic OR as they could stimulate a course-related discussion. Oral reports should follow the same format as the journals: What is happening? Is it representative of the experiences of a specific group of marginalized people? What are you learning of greatest value (including information about yourself)? How does your service experience relate to our study of diversity and gender? Total class participation is worth 15 points.

The FINAL PAPER should analyze and integrate your 40-hours of service with the readings on gender and diversity and with class experience. How do these various elements test, refine and enrich each other. This term paper should draw on your journals and incorporate readings precisely. A rough draft may be submitted by Monday of week nine, and the paper is worth 35 points.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

The papers are designed to measure depth of understanding and provide a vehicle by which a variety of course concepts and issues can be integrated into a relatively cohesive unity. In other words, the goal is to integrate the narrative writing (or service

experience) into the other course materials so they refine and enrich each other. Begin by asking how the narratives (or service',,, "dramatize,, the concepts and issues from the readings, lectures and class discussion. Also ask how the "text" and lectures help "explain" both the thought and action in the narratives or interpersonal experience.

By Monday of the third week, the first third of one of the women's stories" must be read. Identify others in the class who are reading your same book and form a small group (no more than five people) of such readers. Exchange names and phone numbers. When you meet Friday, brainstorm to identify some issues that appear to have the greatest potential for future development. Check the reading list for the concepts and issues found in BOTH texts that will most closely parallel the narrative you select. Later you will need to work back and forth between the narrative and other course materials to develop a solid integration of concepts, issues, and lived experience.

Both narratives address family relationships. In both there is a troubled person who finds unconventional outlets for self-expression. Issues of self-esteem, social validation, intimate relationships, violence, and the development of gendered personalities comprise only a few of the concepts that might be addressed. One story focuses more on female experiences, one more on racial-ethnic experiences, but both address some of the gender stereotypes and sex-role expectations that direct and constrict life. And both strongly call into consideration questions of "class-" Decide which of the many issues can be most powerfully developed and limit the paper to one or two such issues. PLEASE REMEMBER that BOTH the NARRATIVE TEXT and the TWO PRIMARY TEXTS must be used in developing the integration.

The final paper, like the first, can draw from a range of possible concepts including the costs and benefits of traditional friendships and intimate relationships, the presence or absence of social validation, the effects of wage work and financial resources on self-concept and relationships, parent- child relationships, and the impact of race and ethnicity on personal experience. As was the case in the first paper, a major challenge will be to limit the focus to a few concepts or issues that can be best developed by utilizing both texts and the course lectures and discussions.

Here are standards for good writing:

THE PAPER IS SHARPLY FOCUSED. Some unifying theme or concept, stated in the first paragraph, draws the entire

writing together. This focus will be carefully developed throughout the remainder of the paper.

THE PAPER IS CLEARLY ORGANIZED. Because the focus is stated first, it will take on the nature of a "claim. 11

Subpoints (your two or three major concepts) will merit several paragraphs each and will develop the unifying "claim."

THE PAPER USES COURSE TERMINOLOGY AND READINGS PRECISELY AND EXTENSIVELY. Cite readings

and lectures that support your argument frequently--at least four to five citations per page, comparing and contrasting point

by point. Demonstrate scholarship by discussing the central concepts with precision.

1. Papers must persuade an intelligent but skeptical reader to believe your argument. Do not assume that the reader

will accept your claims just because we have read similar materials. An "integration" paper works only if the

parallels are tightly drawn, the claims are backed with numerous examples, and the commonalities are sharply

defined. Develop your argument as carefully and as thoroughly as an attorney would develop a case to persuade a

judge. Overwhelm the reader with your evidence and clearly stated logic.

2. Writing must be clear and meet University standards for spelling and grammar.

Remember this is an upper-division class.

Excessive errors will result in some point loss, so please proofread carefully.

3. Be concise. Avoid lengthy quotations. Paraphrase where possible.

4. For all citations, use an appropriate intratextual form which requires no footnotes or endnotes. Hantover's essay "The Boy Scouts and the Validation of Masculinity" in *Men's Lives*

provides an example of this form. Check pages 124 and 125. However, because we are reading only one selection by any given

author, we do NOT need to date the essay or cite the text beyond initials (ML for *Men's Lives* and FF for *Feminist Frontiers*).

Notice that the page number follows the quotation marks but precedes the period. Here are a couple of examples referring to

Hantover's essay: Hantover argues that scouting was designed to turn boys into "red blooded, virile men" (ML 123). (Notice the

Punctuation needed for a quote within a quote.) Here's the second example: scouting was adopted at the turn of the century to

offset changes in society that seemed to threaten the development of normal manhood (Hantover, ML 123). (Note that in this case

I have summarized and paraphrased Hantover's thesis, but have still cited the page on which Hantover's claim is found.)

5 . Written work is to be typed, double-spaced, one side of a page only. Concise writing is required and excessive length will be penalized.

6 . Please attach a cover sheet that provides your name (s) , the course number and title, my full name, and the date of submission in the upper RIGHT-HAND CORNER. Omit your name from any inside pages. Also, photocopy your final draft; save it until the original is returned; and save the graded copy until you receive your report of credit from the registrar.

7 . Attach a sixth page on which the group explains its paper-writing process. If the group wishes to thank any member for extraordinary dedication, leadership, or technical skills, the sixth page is the place to make that tribute. If the group feels that any member did not contribute adequately to the process, that failure should also be described. In any case, please summarize the group writing process briefly--explaining how often the group met, how the topic was selected, how the thesis was developed, how the writing, editing, and copying were accomplished. Thus, members will need to keep a record to make their combined report accurate. (And members will need good faith and skilled effort to support and exploit Diversity. These are the traits that make populations of all sizes succeed.)

A COMMUNICATION PRACTICUM

Social scientists agree that communication is powerful. It both reflects and directs perception--influencing our understanding of "gender" and directing our gender-linked behavior. For these reasons, in the context of this course, the pragmatics of communication choices must be addressed.

Inherited patterns of interaction typically empower specific groups over others and obscure or devalue our diversity. Such language habits are also difficult to recognize, understand, and change. To study communication pragmatics effectively, our classroom will be our laboratory in which we can monitor and analyze our own communication and that in our readings and films . I ask everyone to be sensitive to language use: note how it defines "masculinity" and "femininity," how it attaches different kinds of values to different gender images and behaviors, how it can either assume or ignore specific conditions of race, class, gender and sexual orientation.

If we are sensitive to our communication and address the assumptions and definitions we find, we can produce at least the following outcomes:

- + We can learn how deeply embedded our language habits are.
 - + We can learn how resistant to change our language habits are.
 - + We can understand better the strength of our emotional commitments to our language-based perspectives.
- We can support the practice of new communication forms.

One new practice that some may wish to adopt is using non-sexist language. Pronouns are particularly problematic because using "he," "his," and "him" for general cases ignores and thus devalues the female. The following sentence provides a good example. "If an employee parks in a ' fire lane his car will be towed and he will be fined." Obviously, not all employees are male, and the information could be made more inclusive, and thus more accurate, in any of the following ways:

1. Use both genders of pronouns: HIS or HER / HE or SHE.
2. Use a combined form in writing: S/HE / (S)HE.
3. Use the plural form throughout : EMPLOYEES, THEIR, and THEY.
4. Revise to use articles: "THE car will be towed and A fine assessed-"
5. Use second-person pronouns: "If YOU park ... YOUR car will ... " f . Be concise: "Cars parked in f ire lanes will be towed & owners f ined."
6. Active voice: "Police will ticket & tow cars parked in fire lanes"

In addition to avoiding gender-exclusive pronouns, non-sexist communication avoids using "man" or words that incorporate "man" for general cases . It also avoids terms that devalue females or males.

It is possible to use language that is even more inclusive, avoiding words that ignore or devalue any person on the basis of involuntary class membership (race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and disability) efforts to use such non-discriminatory language take more care, more time, can feel restrictive. However, such efforts also indicate the respect for others that undergirds all kindness, politeness, and courteous behavior. Perceived personal cost is usually offset by increased equality and good will.

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