

Anth 353: Sex and Gender in Culture

Syllabus - Winter 2008 Kathleen Saunders

Required Texts

David M. Buss. *The Evolution of Desire*
David Gilmore. *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*
Martha Ward. *A World Full of Women*
Inga Muscio. *Cunt: A Declaration of Independence*

Course Overview

In this course we will sort through various theories and points of view on sex and gender, and the relationships and discontinuities between the two. First we will consider biological sex (noun) – what makes a person male or female and why those two categories don't exhaust the possibilities. Then we will consider biological sex (verb) – what are the consequences of being a dimorphic mammal with sexual reproduction and no estrus cycle? Further, why do humans "mate" when reproduction is not their intention? What's love got to do with it? The Evolution of Desire is a thought provoking examination of these issues and more.

We then take up the vexed subject of "manhood." Why, one wonders, is manhood so often an achieved status while womanhood is often an ascribed one? Through ethnographic examples in *Manhood in the Making* we will consider the cultural bestowing of manhood and we will speculate on the underlying reasons for such practices.

In early second wave feminist theorizing, it was often stated that all women had been subordinate to men in all places at all times. Careful scholarship since then has led to more nuanced understandings of women's lives which we will sample in *A World Full of Women*. We will conclude the course with Muscio's *Cunt*, a popular piece of third wave feminist writing. There is much to discuss here.

Course Objectives

1. To explore the concept of "sex" both biologically and culturally
2. To explore anthropological theory on the subject of gender
3. To explore formulations of "gender" cross-culturally and through time
4. To examine how "sex and gender" interact dynamically and with cultural specificity
5. To explore the socio-political and economic implications of sex and gender
6. To consider where "sexual orientation" fits in the dynamics of sex and gender

Course Format

Expect a wide variety of experiences. This class will be a mixture of mini-lectures, guest lectures, video, group exercises, seminar-style discussion, and student presentations. Perhaps even a fieldtrip or two. Come prepared to participate in your own education.

Requirements

I. Meaningful Participation

Meaningful participation begins with attendance. Simply "being there" is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition. Students who accrue three unexcused absences during the quarter will automatically receive an "F." Every unexcused absence will deduct 10 points from your participation points. An unexcused absence during student presentations will cause your final grade to be lowered by an entire letter (e.g. from a B+ to a C+).

Daily reading assignments are appended to this document; they should be read before class. You can only make meaningful contributions to our "community of learners" if you come prepared to question, discuss, or dispute the reading. If preparation seems generally insufficient pop quizzes could become a regular feature. I hate them: so do you. Don't make me do it.

In the spirit of justice, students should monitor their own contributions to avoid "free-riding" (no contribution) or "dominating the floor" (more than one's share).

II. Assignments

Graded assignments include a body mapping exercise, two academic essays based on readings (3-4 pages each) and one critical film essay (3-4 pages) and a final project.

III. Exams

No exams. Exams suck. It's summer.

IV. Project/Presentation

Students will author a project of their choice on some aspect of sex, gender, or sexual orientation which will be presented to the class during the last week. "Creative" as well as "research" projects are encouraged. You may write a research paper (8-10 pages) but you may also use the plastic or performing arts to convey your thoughts and feelings. Sculpture, drawings, paintings, poetry, songs, dramatic readings – once you have approval from the instructor for the project, get creative!! With prior approval, students may design a group project (e.g. – a one act play). So far, no class has presented Sex and Gender through ballet – perhaps yours will be the first.

Grading

Final Project 100
Body Mapping 25
3 Short Papers @ 25 points each 75
Participation 50
Total 250

Letter grades will follow the WWU scale as posted in your handbook.

Special Needs

Students who have special needs to facilitate learning should make those needs known the first week of the term.

Academic Honesty

Standards of academic honesty will be rigorously upheld. Consult your student handbook for WWU policies concerning academic honesty. The Wilson Library web site has additional information for students on how to avoid inadvertent plagiarism. As a rule of thumb, any five consecutive words not of the student's original composition must be cited and punctuated as a quote; any information previously unknown to the writer or not "common knowledge" must be cited as to the source.

BLACKBOARD

Blackboard is Western Washington University's online system for course information and communication. Your courses should appear on your "My Western" page. If you receive email from an account other than your Western issued account, set your Western account for automatic forwarding. "Breaking news" concerning the class will be disseminated this way. You are responsible for checking it.