

SOC 254: SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER
Winter 2012
Bellevue College



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(Note: when emailing me, please put "SOC 254" in the subject line)
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COURSE INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Are there only two sexes?
- ❖ What is the difference between "sex" and "gender?"
- ❖ Why do women and men seem so different? How are they alike?
- ❖ How much of our behavior is learned and how much is biological? Is it nature or nurture?
- ❖ Are women and men equal in American society?
- ❖ How are some women advantaged over others?
- ❖ How do all men benefit from the extraordinary actions of only a few?

This class is a broad introduction to the Sociology of Gender. We will explore the ways in which gender organizes social life and shapes the unequal distribution of power and privilege. We will also examine how gender influences our everyday interactions with others and how social institutions depend upon and perpetuate gender differences and inequalities. We will look at both the microdynamics of gender (the small things we all do everyday in socially producing ourselves as women and men) and gendered macrostructures (such as the economy and mass media). As we all come to the course with strong ideas about what it means to be a man or a woman, the subject matter is personally as well as intellectually challenging. I think you will find that it challenges the taken-for-granted attitudes about gender that we all tend to operate by in our everyday lives. (In fact, a large portion of the content in this class leads us to question the assumptions that we make about sex and gender.) Hopefully, you will take these lessons with you on your future endeavors.

Over the course of the quarter, we will engage in a variety of learning activities – lectures, discussions, group work, and individual fieldwork papers. Students are encouraged to share their personal reactions to the readings, films, and lectures in class discussions. Students have a great deal of responsibility in this course – for many of the discussions, and for the various activities and exercises we will engage in throughout the quarter. I look forward to working with you this quarter and sharing with you my fascination with the sociology of gender! I hope you find this course to be intellectually rewarding and relevant to your life.

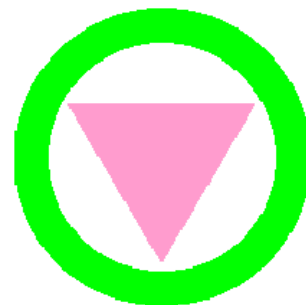
*"The chief object of education is not to learn things but to unlearn things."
–Gilbert Chesterton*

LEARNING ATMOSPHERE

I believe that students learn best when they are actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Thus, this is an *active, interactive* course where you will often *learn by doing*. You are expected to observe the world, read, write, discuss, and participate. I think of our class as a "collaborative learning community" where we all teach and learn from each other. Every time you make a comment or ask a question, you teach something to the rest of us. I challenge you to abandon the traditional passive student role and to get involved with teaching and learning – I think you'll enjoy it and learn a lot in the process!

A note about course content: Please note that we may have frank discussions about potentially sensitive and explicit topics. If at any time you feel uncomfortable during class, you are free to step out of class. However, if you are one to become upset by open and frank discussions, this course may not be a good choice for you. This is an “R” rated class.

REGARDING SAFE SPACE: This class is a Safe Space for **all** students. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, queer-identified, and transgendered students are welcome in this classroom and encouraged to speak out and be an integral part of this class. Any questions about what this means should be brought to me immediately. All are welcome!



COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing the course, the successful student will be able to:

- Explain the difference between "sex" and "gender";
- Illustrate how sex and gender are socially constructed and culturally relative;
- Analyze the ways in which societies are fundamentally organized by gender;
- Understand sex and gender in a sociological, non-ethnocentric manner;
- Identify the systemic and structural components of gender;
- Critically assess whether a social structure is based on patriarchy, matriarchy, or egalitarianism;
- Discuss the major social trends of our gendered institutions, like the family and the economy; and
- Explain how gender is both classed and raced.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MISCELLANEOUS PURCHASES

Texts: “Questioning Gender: A Sociological Exploration” by Robyn Ryle
Additional course readings are posted on *MyBCC* (from the BCC homepage)

A NOTE ABOUT COURSE READINGS:

The readings in this course may be difficult for some students in that some of them are advanced. However, if you follow my reading tips, you will find the process much easier (and you’ll perform better on exams too). In this class, it’s very important to be an **active reader**. Have a purpose when you read! As you read, regularly ask yourself, “Am I getting it?” If not, go back and find the place where you last understood the material and re-read from that point forward. Also, you should **take notes as you read**. Try making an outline of the material by organizing the main ideas and supporting details. Or, write a brief summary of the main ideas. Or, make comments in the margins. *You should always highlight or underline the main points as you read.* If you are having trouble concentrating, take a break and come back to the readings later. (It doesn’t do any good to “study” while you are not paying attention or focusing – in fact, it’s a waste of time!) Please know that I am always available to assist you with any of the readings. Do not hesitate to come to my office hours for help! My goal as an instructor is to help you succeed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

The following outlines what you may expect of me as your instructor:

- *A sincere effort to help you learn the course material.* Since my ultimate goal is to help you learn and succeed, I intend to spend enough time and effort on class preparation to make the material as understandable and as interesting as I possibly can. I will not simply “regurgitate” the material from the textbook, but rather, I will help you synthesize it. This means that class time will not be solely lecture – we will have interesting discussions, watch films, and engage in a wide variety of activities. I am a big believer that a variety of teaching styles/approaches helps you learn more.

- *Accessibility.* I agree to be available to you outside of class should you desire help. I encourage you to come to my office hours whenever you have a question or concern. I am more than happy to help. If my office hours are not convenient for you, we can schedule an appointment that fits your schedule. However, please be aware that I am not available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. In general, I am in my office for a couple of hours in the morning (before my classes) and again in the afternoon, and I always check my email a few times a day. I do my coursework during the week, during daytime business hours. *Thus, please do not send to me late-night or weekend emails expecting an immediate response.* Thank you in advance for your understanding and consideration.
- *Attention.* When you are speaking, you will have my undivided attention.
- *Fairness.* Your grade will be based upon what I detect that you have learned and how I assess your performance. It is your job to clearly communicate to me that you understand the material. I will not negotiate final grades.

The following outlines what I expect from you as a student in this class:

- *A sincere effort to learn the course material.* When participating in discussions and when writing assignments/papers, your comments should indicate to me that you have read and understand the course material. Some students wrongly assume that they can simply "wing it" in this class and still receive a high grade.
- *Preparation.* You should come to class having done the assigned readings and homework, and you should always bring the proper supplies with you. On seminar days, you should bring the readings. Note that the BCC guideline for homework is two hours outside of class for each hour spent in class.
- *Attendance.* Please attend all class sessions – your presence in class contributes significantly toward your final grade in the course as I cover a lot of material in class that cannot be found in the readings. If you do need to miss class, please note that you will not be able to make up any in-class work that you may have missed (such as group work), and you are also responsible for any and all work that is due at the class meeting immediately upon your return. That means that being absent does not grant you an extension on anything. I highly recommend that you get the names and contact information of one or two of your classmates so you can contact them for any assignments or notes you may have missed while absent.
- *Promptness.* You should be in class on time except when delayed by an emergency, and you should stay until class is over unless you become ill or have made arrangements with me to leave early. Furthermore, you should comply with all due dates. I believe that one of the major lessons students take away from college is the importance of meeting deadlines. As a result, **no late work will be accepted**. Late work will receive a **zero** grade. **Please do not ask me if I will accept your work late...I won't.** If you know you are going to be absent on the day an assignment is due, then turn it in early. **Being absent on the day something is due does NOT grant you an automatic extension (even if you were absent on the day it was assigned).** Major due dates are indicated on the attached Course Calendar, so plan ahead.

NOTE: I do not accept assignments via email. It is your responsibility to get the work to me in class when it is due, just as it is your responsibility to get to work on time.

- *Contribution.* Learning about each other's experiences and perspectives is an integral part of the learning process in this course. I believe that you will learn a lot about yourself and your fellow classmates. To work effectively in this course, therefore, you are expected to be an active participant in our learning environment. You should do your best to contribute to class discussions and activities. Please be advised that your grade will suffer if you do not participate and contribute to the intellectual life of our class.
- *Respect and tolerance.* Since learning about diverse experiences is central to this course, it is of the utmost importance that you respect your classmates' experiences, differences, and opinions. Disrespectful attitudes will not be tolerated.
- *Honesty.* This means no cheating, and no plagiarism. If you cheat/plagiarize, you will fail. No excuses will be taken into account. Your work must be your own, except when asked to work with other students. Furthermore, you are required to acknowledge in your papers if you have borrowed any ideas, terms, or phrases, even if you have borrowed from a classmate. Please do not copy and paste material from wikipedia or any other website into your assignments, as this is a severe form of cheating (that is very easy to catch, by the way). ***In this class, your assignments should be grounded in the textbook (rather than web resources, which are often wrong!). This means that you should NOT do internet research in this class – all you need can be found in the course textbook and supplementary readings.*** If you have any hesitation, or if you are in doubt about one of these issues, feel free to ask me.

GRADING

Grades are based on your performance on the following:

Exams (2 @ 200 pts each)	400 points
Quizzes (9 @ 10 pts each)	90 points
Seminar (9 @ 15 pts each)	135 points
Homework (10 @ 20 pts each)	200 points
Group Project/Presentation	100 points
Participation	50 points
<u>Gender Artifact</u>	<u>25 points</u>
TOTAL	1,000 points

Course Grade		Point Total	Course Grade		Point Total
A	=	930-1,000 points	C+	=	770-799 points
A-	=	900-929 points	C	=	730-769 points
B+	=	870-899 points	C-	=	700-729 points
B	=	830-869 points	D+	=	670-699 points
B-	=	800-829 points	D	=	600-669 points
			F	=	0-599 points

Exams: Two exams are given over the course of the quarter. Exams *may* consist of multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and/or essay questions. They may also involve a creative component. You are encouraged to study with your classmates for each exam. **Please note that I do not give make-up exams.** If you are absent on the day of an exam, you will receive a zero grade. Please review the attached Course Calendar and make note of the exam dates. Plan ahead!

Quizzes: Each week, I will give a short quiz on the reading materials. Quizzes will be held at the beginning of class, so if you come in late, you will miss the quiz and receive a zero grade. You are permitted to miss one quiz without consequence to your grade (I drop the lowest score). Quizzes will typically be short answer, although I may throw in a multiple choice question once in a while. The purpose of these quizzes is simply to ensure that you have done the readings and understand them on a basic level. My rationale for this is that I think our time in class will be much more productive, and you'll learn more, if you've done the readings ahead of time.

Seminar: We will have ten seminars over the course of the quarter; you are permitted to miss one seminar without consequence to your grade (I drop the lowest score). Seminar involves discussing a specific reading and completing a brief assignment independently AND another one in small groups in order to reach deeper levels of learning. Early in the quarter, I will assign students randomly to groups. This will be your quarter-long Seminar Group (although I reserve the right to re-assign groups at any time, particularly if a group has become dysfunctional). Each week, you will work in this group, having discussions with your group members and completing a brief group assignment with them. If you look at the Course Calendar, you will see that there is a Seminar due just about every week. On Seminar day, it is crucial that you come to class prepared. You will need to complete the reading ahead of time and bring a brief assignment to each seminar. (NOTE: I will not accept assignments that are not typed.) Each INDEPENDENT seminar assignment (that you bring with you to class on Seminar day) should include the following:

- a statement of what you think the article's main claim/conclusion is (in your own words); in other words, what is the thesis of the article, and what is the author CONCLUDING about the topic? (Oftentimes, the title of the article is a big hint about the conclusion/thesis!) Please note that a thesis is NOT the same as the topic of the article, but rather, a thesis is an ARGUABLE CLAIM that the author is making.
- 3-4 central questions that you have about the article that you would like to talk about with your classmates (the questions should be thought-provoking, not "What did you think about the article?" and "What is the author saying?").
- Seminar assignments should NOT include your opinion about the article (you will have plenty of time to talk about that during seminar!).

In class on seminar days, you will break into your assigned groups and come to an agreement about what the thesis of the article is. Your group will write your agreed-upon thesis on a piece of paper, and then begin talking about your discussion questions. After your discussion ends, your group will staple your individual

seminar assignments to the sheet of paper that contains your agreed-upon thesis, and you'll CIRCLE the best three discussion-questions (that is, the three questions that were the most thought- and discussion-provoking for you all). I grade seminar in the following manner:

I review your group's agreed-upon thesis and assign it a grade (for example, 15 out of 15). I then look at my notes from class and check to see who contributed to discussion in a meaningful way. Those students will receive the highest grade in the group (in this example, they'd receive 15s). Students who participate a little might receive 10s, and those who don't participate at all would receive zeros. Students who do not submit individual assignments (stapled in the packet) also receive a **zero** grade. This means that not all seminar group members automatically receive the same grade – students who participate less receive lowered grades.

Homework: You will complete several homework assignments throughout the quarter that require you to reflect on the course material and/or observe the social world. You should do your best to address every assignment thoughtfully, clearly, and completely. Homework will be graded not only on completeness (Did you adequately address all the components of the assignment?), but also thoughtfulness (Does your assignment show that you thought hard about the topic, or did you give the topic just a little superficial attention?). Homework assignments vary in length - some may be a paragraph long, others will be 1-2 pages (usually typed and double-spaced). Please note that I will not accept late homework, so homework that is not handed in on time will receive a **zero** grade. Additionally, I will not accept homework that isn't typed (unless I've specifically mentioned that it can be handwritten). Some homework assignments are described in the attached Course Calendar, and others will be announced during class.

Group Project/Presentation: You will form groups of 3-4 students each and conduct a "team" research project in which you observe some aspect of the social world. Your group will then give a 20-minute presentation to the class about what you saw and learned about gender, connecting it to what we've talked about in class. Details on this project will be distributed early in the quarter.

Participation: Participation is essential to the format of this class and therefore contributes significantly toward your grade. In short, your success in this class depends on your *active* participation. "Participation" includes attendance, class discussions, group work, and independent in-class assignments. As a result, if you skip class or disrupt class by coming in late regularly or whispering, then your participation grade will suffer. Conversely, if you contribute to class discussions and add important insights, your grade will benefit. *Do not take this portion of your grade lightly – excellent attendance and participation can significantly improve your final grade!*

Gender artifact: One day this quarter (you pick the day!), you need to bring something to class that relates to any of the topics from the current week or previous weeks. For example, you might bring to class a link for a YouTube video, a newspaper article, an advertisement from a magazine you read, or the lyrics to a song you recently heard. It is up to you to bring whatever you want, but you need to be sure that it relates to the course material. You should turn in to me the item itself and a one-paragraph explanation of exactly how this item relates to what we've talked about in class.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

All students are responsible for all requirements of the class, but the way they meet these requirements may vary. If you need specific academic accommodations due to a disability, please speak with me and with the Disability Resource Center (564-2498). You will need to obtain the appropriate documentation from the DRC in room B233. The disability accommodation documentation must be given to me before it is needed rather than afterward, so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

COURSE CALENDAR

The following Course Calendar will be revised as needed. Please note that you will be held responsible for all revisions to the calendar. If you miss a class, be sure to check either with me or a classmate regarding any changes.

WEEK ONE – Introduction and Overview of “Gender” and “Sex”

“We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.”

-Anais Nin

Readings and Assignments:

Ryle, Chapter 1

Lorber, “Believing is Seeing: Biology as Ideology” (on WEBSITE)

Due Friday: Quiz on Chapter 1 **and** Seminar on Lorber article

HOMEWORK (Due Friday): Interview three people about their views about gender. Ask them the following questions, and write down their answers:

- When you think of “men,” what five things come quickly to mind?
- When you think of “women,” what five things come quickly to mind?
- Males are more likely than females to be violent. Why do you think this is so?
- Females are more likely than males to express emotions such as sadness and fear. Why do you think this is so?
- What do you think explains the behavioral differences between women and men?

Type up their responses, and bring them to class with a one paragraph summary of the overall themes/patterns.

WEEK TWO – Social Construction of Sex and Gender

Readings and Assignments:

Ryle, Chapter 2

Frye, “Oppression” (on WEBSITE)

Due Monday: Quiz on Chapter 2

Due Friday: Seminar on Frye article

HOMEWORK (Due Wednesday): View the following music video, and describe in detail how it is an illustration of “doing gender”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vwNcNOTVzY> What message is this video sending about masculinity? What message is it saying about femininity? Watch the video as many times as necessary. Your response should be about one page, typed.

WEEK THREE – Gender Socialization and “Doing Gender”

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.”

-Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

Readings and Assignments: **No classes on Monday, January 16 – Honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.!**

Ryle, Chapter 4

Kane, “No Way My Boys Are Going to Be Like That! Parents’ Responses to Children’s Gender Nonconformity” (on WEBSITE)

Due Tuesday: Quiz on Chapter 4

Due Wednesday: Seminar on Kane article

HOMEWORK (Due Friday): Interview three people who you suspect are likely to have experiences of gender socialization that are different from your own. This could be someone of a different gender, age, or culture, for example. Ask them to tell you stories about how they learned what it meant to be a boy or a girl. How do their experiences compare to your own? Your response should be about two pages, typed.

WEEK FOUR – Gendered Sexualities

*“It’s crazy how you can go from being Joe Blow
To everybody on your dick, no homo.”
-Kanye West, Run This Town lyric*

Readings and Assignments:

Ryle, Chapter 5

Kimmel, “Masculinity as Homophobia” (on WEBSITE)

Due Monday: Quiz on Chapter 5

Due Thursday: Seminar on Kimmel

HOMEWORK: (Due Friday) Gender and sexuality are connected in that many gays and lesbians are assumed to have a different gender identity than heterosexuals. Gay men are assumed to be less masculine and lesbian women less feminine. Pick a movie or television show that depicts gay and lesbian people. Does the movie/show depict them in ways that are gender-consistent or gender-inconsistent? How so? Explain in detail. How common do you think these kinds of representations are? Your response should be about one page in length.

WEEK FIVE – Dating and Friendships

Readings and Assignments: **NOTE: No classes on Tuesday, January 31st**

Ryle, Chapter 6

Walker, “Men, Women and Friendship: What They Say, What They Do” (on WEBSITE)

Due Monday: Quiz on Chapter 6 **and** Seminar on Walker

HOMEWORK (Due Wednesday): Purchase one of the following popular magazines: Cosmopolitan, Marie Claire, Glamour, or Women’s Health. Also purchase one of the following popular magazines: Maxim, FHM, Men’s Health, or Esquire. Read both magazines (and pay attention to the pictures and ads!), and answer the following: What norms of courtship do they seem to prescribe? Are they different for women and men? What do these sources tell you about the directions courtship is going and the changes that are taking place? Write about a page, typed, and ***bring the two magazines to class along with your written response!***

WEEK SIX – Gendered Bodies

Readings and Assignments:

Ryle, Chapter 7

Hesse-Biber, “Becoming a Certain Body” (on WEBSITE)

Due Monday: Quiz on Chapter 7 **and** Seminar on Hesse-Biber

HOMEWORK (Due Friday): Investigate the gender of current products designed to help people alter their bodies in some way. Begin by making a list of all the products that fall into this category (this could end up being a long list!). Then, think about which of these products seem to be aimed primarily at men, which at women, and which at both. (Mark each product as either M, F, or M/F.) What does this list suggest about women’s and men’s bodies? Write about a paragraph, at the end of your list.

WEEK SEVEN – Families

“Sometimes I wonder if men and women really suit each other. Perhaps they should live next door and just visit now and then.” – Katharine Hepburn

Readings and Assignments:

Ryle, Chapter 8

Pyke, “Class-Based Masculinities” (on WEBSITE)

Due Monday: Quiz on Chapter 8 **and** Seminar on Pyke

HOMEWORK (Due Friday): Interview a heterosexual couple that lives together (married or cohabiting) about their division of household labor. (It is a good idea to interview them separately.) First, come up with an extensive list of all the tasks that are involved in maintaining a household and ask your respondents who does each of these tasks on a regular basis. Then ask them what they feel the ideal division of household

labor is and how close their own situation comes to that. How does your interview line up with the research in this week's chapter? Your response should be about 1 ½ to 2 pages, typed (excluding lists).

WEEK EIGHT – Work

Readings and Assignments: **NOTE: No classes on Monday, February 20th**

Ryle, Chapter 9

Williams, "The Glass Escalator" (on WEBSITE)

Due Tuesday: Quiz on Chapter 9

Due Friday: Seminar on Williams article

HOMEWORK (Due Friday): Go to a workplace in which you can observe a moderate to large amount of workers, and take a discreet pad of paper with you. You should select a workplace that is likely to have both women and men employed (i.e. don't choose *Victoria's Secret*!) You might choose, for example, a grocery store, a bank, or a good-sized restaurant. Conduct an audit of its level of sex segregation (remember that sex segregation doesn't have to be intentional, and it doesn't have to be discriminatory!). Make a list of all the jobs that you can identify, as well as the sex of the people occupying those jobs. Pay attention to details and to the subtle differences between jobs. For example, which jobs are supervisory (have authority over other workers), and is there a gender trend in who occupies those jobs? What are the potentially subtle differences in what seems like relatively similar jobs? Your response should be 1-2 pages, typed.

WEEK NINE – Media and Popular Culture

Readings and Assignments: **NOTE: No classes on Thursday, March 1st**

Ryle, Chapter 10

Milkie, "Contested Images of Femininity" (on WEBSITE)

Due Monday: Quiz on Chapter 10 **and** Seminar on Milkie

HOMEWORK: (Due Friday): Research by Kimmel that was discussed in this week's chapter suggested that many college-aged men play video games as a means of Relaxation, Revenge, and Restoration. Find two people who play video games (not including yourself!), and interview them about their experiences with playing video games. Ask them what kinds of games they like, what they enjoy about playing, and what they think the effects of playing video games might be, as well as what gender messages they believe are contained in the video games they play. How do their responses compare to Kimmel's findings?

WEEK TEN – Power and Politics

Readings and Assignments:

Ryle, Chapter 11

Quinn, "Sexual Harassment and Masculinity: The Power and Meaning of 'Girl Watching'" (on WEBSITE)

Johnson, "Unraveling the Gender Knot" (on WEBSITE)

Due Monday: Quiz on Chapter 11 **and** Johnson article (meaning, the Johnson article will be on the quiz!)

Due Friday: Seminar on Quinn

HOMEWORK: (Due Friday): Interview three males and three females that are at least 17 years of age each. Ask them the following questions, and write down their answers to each:

- Have you ever felt unsafe in a public space? If so, explain the circumstance(s).
- Do you always feel safe on the BC campus?
- Would you feel safe on the BC campus after dark?
- Do you feel safe walking alone in your neighborhood? What about after dark?
- Have you ever been harassed in a public space? If so, describe. How did you deal with it?

In your write-up, describe the themes to the above. Do gender differences emerge in the interviews? What kinds of things lead women and men to feel unsafe in public spaces? Do women appear to have a geography of fear? Your response should be about 1-2 pages, typed.

WEEK ELEVEN – Presentations

Your groups will be giving your presentations all week. You are required to be present each day this week.

This course's final exam will be held on **Thursday, March 22nd, from 9:30-11:20am.** I do not give early exams, so plan ahead accordingly.