

Gender Identities, Interactions, and Relations (SOC 272.01)
101 Buttrick Hall • MWF 11:10p-12:00p • <http://majorsmatter.net/gender>

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Office Hrs: 12p – 1p Monday/Wednesday

*“Men and women are, of course, different. But they are not as different as day and night, earth and sky, yin and yang, life and death. In fact, from the standpoint of nature, men and women are closer to each other than either is to anything else – for instance, mountains, kangaroos, or coconut palms. The idea that men and women are more different from one another than either is from anything else must come from somewhere other than nature.” (Gayle Rubin in *The Traffic In Women*)*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the sociological study of gender. From the first time we open our eyes and bawl at being introduced roughly into a new and foreign world, we are treated as little men or little women. This socialization continues through our years of being wrapped in blue or pink blankets, dressing in little baseball uniforms or pink ballet tutus, masquerading as either Superman or Wonder Woman for Halloween, being pushed to excel in science or in English, and eventually learning to either chase or be chased as sexual beings. The central theme of the course will be the social construction and maintenance of gender identities. Unlike other courses you may have taken on gender, this one will not focus or even spend much time on gender inequalities. Instead, we will focus on how we come to be gendered. Specifically, we will look at the changes and continuities in gender roles within the United States, the social processes that influence our lives and our identities, and ways in which race, class and sexual orientation intersect these processes.

My primary desire is that you will leave here with a greater understanding of the sociological perspective as it relates to gender. That is, you should understand how gender-related behavior and definitions of gender are shaped by particular social processes. You should be able to draw upon sociological theory and research to discuss the debates within sociology about how the social environment influences the identities, behaviors, and experiences of men and women. I also hope that, through this class, you will develop a deeper understanding of how your own experience, views, choices and behavior have been shaped by the relationship between your gender/race/class, the cultural environments you inhabit, and the structure of opportunities you encounter.

TEXTS

The main texts for this course are Howard and Hollander’s *Gendered Situations*, *Gendered Selves* and Kessler’s *Lessons From The Intersexed*. Both books are available in the bookstore. The lecture material will supplement the information contained in these books. Any additional course readings will be listed on the course webpage with links. You will need Adobe Acrobat to read/print the articles.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

The grade in this class is based on your performance on the following forms of evaluation. Each of you starts with an "A" (500 points) and you move down from there. The buffer for each letter grade is 50 points (10%). Pluses and minuses are earned in the 15 point margins at the top/bottom of the letter grade range. **You will receive an A- at 470 points (94%).** Once you go below the threshold for any given grade, there is NO way to move back up unless you’ve managed to earn extra credit points (see below in *Town Meetings*). Your continued enrollment means that you understand and accept this grading policy. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments should be single-spaced, 1" margins, in Times or Times New Roman font, and have no more than a one line header with your name, the date, and the assignment. Some assignments will be sent as an email attachment so ensure BEFORE YOU SEND IT that you've formatted it appropriately.

A=450-500 B=400-449 C=350-399 D=300-349 F=0-299

A) Mini-Projects (5 @ 20 points – 10%): Many sociologists argue that gender is performance. In other words, we “do gender” when we display certain traits or behavior in a given social context to meet others’ expectations. Because there are cultural norms about gender in society, we generally have to meet the expectations of others (and ourselves) and conform to these norms. Every two weeks, I will offer an activity designed to get you to think about how gender is performed in daily life. You are to participate in 5 of the 6 activities and write a one-page answer to the questions I raise about the experience. We will expect you to draw on material covered in the class in each paper. A “B” paper will answer the questions as asked. If you’d like a higher grade, your answers should be more sophisticated and show evidence that you understand the connection between the experience and the course material (including text and readings). The papers are due on January 18, February 1, February 14, February 29, March 28, and April 11. All mini-project assignments can be found on the course webpage.

B) Town Meetings (100 points): On 7 Fridays, we will hold a mock town meeting about an issue. You will be responsible to serve as a panelist in one of the seven meetings. I will evaluate you in two ways. Fifty percent of the grade will be based on the persuasiveness of your arguments, your level of preparedness, and how convincing you are as that character. I also suspect that some that evaluation will be based on your overall performance, so feel free to ham it up. The other fifty percent of the grade will be based on a four-page argument paper that you will write, in character, explaining your position on your town meeting’s issue. This will help you organize your thoughts and give me some confidence that you aren’t just making your argument up extemporaneously. The paper must include a minimum of 5 sources from the course readings or some other academic (non-website) source and should be sent to me as an email attachment no later than 11:59pm on the day of your town meeting. See the last pages of this syllabus for more.

Extra Credit (Possible 14 points): Because town meetings are not intended solely as a learning opportunity for the people assigned to them, it is important that presenters remember that they are accountable to you, the other students in the class. With that in mind, I have created an online response form where you can evaluate each presenter’s presentation. In order to receive the two extra credit points, you have to complete the checkbox portion of the form, and you must give useful written comments to at least *three* of the presenters. These forms must be completed by noon the day after the town meeting being evaluated. I will consider these comments when I grade the presenters and they will receive an anonymous summary of your rankings and comments with their grade.

C) Examinations (3 @ 100 points): I expect you to master the course materials at the following levels of understanding: (1) basic knowledge, (2) comprehension and understanding, (3) application, and (4) analysis and comparison. The first exam will contain 30 multiple-choice, 10 short-answer, and 1 essay question. You will have a choice for the second and third exams. You can either take the 40 multiple-choice and 10 short-answer exam OR the 3 essay question exam. On the course webpage, I will provide a weekly outline of that week’s materials to help you **broadly** keep tabs on what I’m expecting you to know for the test. Prior to each exam, I will provide a web-version of possible essay questions. Six of those questions will appear on the actual exam; you will choose a subset of them to answer. There will be no surprises—if you prepare all of these questions, you will not only find that you have reviewed the course material, but you will also recognize the essay part of the exam when you get it.

OTHER IMPORTANT THOUGHTS

Academic Excuses: With the astonishing incidence of sickness and death that invariably occurs just around due dates, my policy is to let you know in advance that anything turned in late will lose 20 points for every day it is late. The first 20 points are lost when the assignment is due. I **will not respond** to emails requesting extensions. It would be a mistake for you to wait until the weekend before an exam or mini-project is due to begin working on it. In my experience, ANYTHING can and often does go wrong.

Academic Etiquette: As a sign of respect to your fellow classmates, please avoid walking in late or leaving early. Please TURN OFF CELL PHONES and PAGERS before class. Respect the views and opinions of others. Avoid talking when others are making a point. You will have your chance. Try to avoid destructive criticism. However, constructive criticism is welcomed. Don’t read the paper, check your Facebook page, talk to your friends, etc. during class. If we discover you abusing your freedom to use laptops, we will disabuse you of that freedom and bar their use in class. DO NOT LEAVE CLASS UNTIL CLASS HAS ENDED! Not only are those things disrespectful and disruptive to your classmates and me, but they also limit your ability to understand the material.

Academic Integrity: Vanderbilt’s Honor Code governs all work in this course. Any Honor Code violation will be taken up with the Honor Council and it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the provisions of the Code. If you have

any doubts about applications of the Honor Code, please ask me and/or consult the Honor Council's web page. Uncertainty about the application of the Honor Code does not excuse a violation. Plagiarism is easily detected and WILL NOT be tolerated. If I suspect that plagiarism has taken place, you will receive no credit for the assignment.

“I’ll Do Anything”: Don't wait until the last minute to ask questions about the material covered in this class. Also, please come by our offices to review your papers and exams. Don't wait until the end of the session to worry about your grade. An emergency on your part does not constitute one for us. Oh yeah . . . and the time for “I’ll do anything to raise my grade, Professor Pitt” is on the date things are assigned, not the last weeks of the semester.

Uncomfortable Situations: In this class, we will be dealing with issues that might make some people uncomfortable. Some of the texts may use explicit sexual language and explore important themes that are likely to include prostitution, reproductive rights, heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and pornography. Some of the ideas presented in this course may challenge your ideas/beliefs. While I understand that, at times, you may feel discomfort, it is expected that you will be able to read assigned texts and engage in class discussions in an academic manner.

Final Thoughts on Respect: People often have strong opinions about the topics discussed in a gender relations course. Many people have ideas about gender that are based on misinformation and prejudices which are very prevalent in the society in which we live. We will try to help each other come to a better understanding of gender roles and relations. In the process it is possible that members of the class will make comments which are based on misinformation or an interpretation that other members of the class find objectionable. Given this, it is essential that we treat each other with respect, that we do not demean or devalue the comments of class members, and that we stick to the issues rather than engage in personal attacks. If something is said in class that makes you uncomfortable and you want to discuss it, you can either address it in class or you can speak to me personally. When you discuss such comments, remember to do so in a way which meets the ground rules described here.

Curriculum Units

Unit 1: Introduction

Required readings for this week: The Course Syllabus And Webpage

- January 9: Course Introduction – What This Course Requires
January 11: Course Introduction – Sociology, Journalism, and Psychology
January 13: Course Introduction – Social Psychological Approaches To Gendered Outcomes

Required readings for this week: Chapter One In Howard & Hollander Text

- January 16: No Class – MLK Holiday
January 18: Trying Out This Town Meeting Thing
January 20: Gender Functionalism

Required readings for this week: Chapter Two In Howard & Hollander Text

- January 23: What Is Gender I: Differences, Sex, and Gender
January 25: What Is Gender II: Stereotypes, Sex Roles, and Gender Roles
January 27: What Is Gender III: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Unit 2: Essentialism . . . We Were Born This Way

Required readings for this week: “Society Writes Biology, Biology Writes Gender” (Online)

- January 30: Biological Differences I
February 1: Biological Differences II
February 3: Biological Abnormalities I

Required readings for this week: Chapters Two, Three, and Five in Kessler Text

- February 6: Biological Abnormalities II
February 8: Intersexuality
February 12: EXAMINATION I – IN CLASS

Unit 3: Socialization . . . Everything I Learned, I Learned In Kindergarten

Required readings for this week: “Sons, Daughters, and Family Processes” (Online)

February 13: Psychoanalytic Theory I
February 15: Psychoanalytic Theory II
February 17: Social Learning Theory

Required readings for this week: Chapter Four in Howard & Hollander Text

February 20: Cognitive Development Theory
February 22: Gender Schema Theory
February 24: TOWN MEETING Gendered Toys

Unit 4: Social Exchange Gendered Processes Of Give And Take

Required readings for this week: Chapter Three in Howard & Hollander Text

February 27: Social Exchange - Theory
March 1: Social Exchange - Power
March 3: TOWN MEETING Sexist Gods

Required readings for this week: *No Readings*

March 5-9 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Required readings for this week: “Housework In Lesbian Families” (Online)

March 12: Social Exchange - Households
March 14: Social Exchange - Justice
March 16: TOWN MEETING Sex Workers

Unit 4: Social Construction of Gender . . . Hardhats Not Required

Required readings for this week: Chapter Five in Howard & Hollander Text

March 19: Symbolic Interactionism
March 21: Symbolic Interactionism
March 23: EXAMINATION II – In Class

Required readings for this week: “Three Faces of Identity” (Online)

March 26: Self and Identity
March 28: Self and Identity
March 30: TOWN MEETING Transgenders

Required readings for this week: “Doing Gender” (Online)

April 2: Intersectionality
April 4: Doing Gender
April 6: TOWN MEETING Expendable Fathers

Required readings for this week: “Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts” (Online)

April 9: Impression Management
April 11: Repairs & Behavioral Confirmation
April 13: TOWN MEETING Fraternities & Sororities

Required readings for this week: “Gender Ideology” (Online)

April 16: Status Expectations

April 18: Status Expectations

April 20: TOWN MEETING – Women Warriors

Required readings for this week: No Readings

April 23: Course Wrap-Up

The Final Examination Will Be Given At 9am On May 3rd

Town Meeting Basics

THE PRESENTATION:

Each town meeting will begin with a short introduction of the topic and then I will give each of you an opportunity to BRIEFLY tell us who you are and what you believe about the question at hand. We will then have about 20 minutes where the panel can engage each other with questions or elaborations of their own point. You want to see this as a community meeting where decisions have to be made by the audience. Therefore, it is your job to help us understand why you think things should go your way and, as necessary, why we shouldn't follow your opponents' lead. For the last 30 minutes or so, I and the audience will ask you questions. From the moment you walk into the class to the end of the debate, you should ALWAYS be in character. If you're the Pope, you have to convince us that you know how the Pope would respond to questions and how he might say it. I encourage you to go the evaluation (extra credit) page on the course website to know how we will grade you.

Your intros have to grab us. If you fail to engage us there when you have our attention, we're afraid everything that follows that will just come across as contrived or muddled. We don't need your history as much as we need your position. If you are a character we might not be familiar with, give us just enough to be able to understand where you're coming from. But, if you're the President of the United States, we don't need your life history. We need your argument for/against the proposition.

Don't spend more than one round of arguments on something another panelist said. If the panelists want to remind people of things they said, let them do that. Tread a fine line of knocking down their argument while spending your valuable time making your OWN case. Being the "anti-them" doesn't win elections. It's not going to win the panel discussion either. Two of you will agree and two of you will disagree with each proposition. We know that. What you need to do is state which side you're on and then give us a clear sense of why this matters to you. What's YOUR angle and why should we listen to you rather than just focus on the other person who agrees with you?

Remember that you are playing roles. VISUALS matter when you're playing a character. While it may seem burdensome, dressing appropriately, making subtle changes to your appearance, or even going over the top and wearing a costume keeps us focused on your portrayal AND helps you stay in character. There is a reason pharmacists wear clinical smocks when all they're doing is pouring pills in bottles; they're trying to convince/remind us that they doing medicine back there.

In order to be most successful, you MUST think outside of your own box. One of the things that disappoints me most in meetings is when a pretty basic "what about this" question gets asked by another panelist, the moderator, or an audience member and you're totally caught off guard by it. Know who your other panelists are and what zingers they might use to trip you up.

Recognize that we have heard these arguments many, many, many times before and will challenge you when your argument is illogical, inconsistent, or worse . . . offers support to the other side. We WILL play those up and leave you hanging. While you should know what the other side is thinking, you really need to be an extremist in these panels because we all will get confused pretty quickly.

I encourage you to review the course webpage for the "town meeting review" page that students will be using to comment on your presentation. They'll be looking at how prepared you were, how persuasive you were, how much your presentation was informed by literature, how well you stayed in character, and how much time they think you spent on your presentation. I've attached some examples from an old town meeting to give you a sense of what kind of GOOD comments, BAD comments, and UGLY comments you might get. These should be really useful in thinking through mistakes you don't want to make and things you want people to be able to say about you.

THE PAPER:

The foundation for your performance in class is the argument paper that you will write, in character, that makes the argument your character will make in the meeting itself. As with any argument paper, it should be lay out what you plan

to argue, argue it competently, defend itself against naysayers, and then summarize what the argument was. The most important thing to think about as you write these arguments is this: I will always be reading your paper as a naysayer. Your job is not necessarily to convince me, but your job is (at least) to persuade me that you've given your character's perspective AND MINE lots of thought. This paper (with its 5 OR MORE academic sources) is due by email AFTER your town meeting but by 11:59pm that same day. If it hits my mailbox after midnight, you will lose 20 points. That said, it is NOT smarter to turn your paper in early. An A paper will incorporate some of the criticism (OBLIQUELY . . . not "as John said in the meeting") you heard in the town meeting itself.

One of the questions I usually get when students are doing the research for their character is "how do I find five sources ABOUT my character"? Remember, you're not doing a report on your character. You ARE YOUR CHARACTER doing a report about the issue. Imagine we were doing the following town meeting and you were assigned to be Rush Limbaugh: *"The United States was founded by immigrants but it has not always been open to unfettered immigration. In this post-September 11th United States, there is renewed interest in keeping tight control over our borders. And yet, some argue, this is precisely the time that we need to be embracing the people who have helped make this country what it is today. There is legislation pending in which a concrete wall will be built across the southern border of the country and National Guardsmen will be stationed with the orders to shoot anyone who tries to scale it. We have been asked to convene a panel to discuss whether we should control the borders this way. You are Rush Limbaugh, talkshow host and author of "The Way Things Ought To Be". You believe that every "No Entry" sign at the border should be "replaced with an armed National Guardsman until 100,000 new Border Patrol and interior enforcement agents are trained and ready to be deployed." You see the problem as bigger than an economic one. If illegal immigrants can come and go across the borders, so can terrorists. You're a proponent of immigration reform."*

We know, generally, what Rush' perspective on immigration reform is . . . he's for it. You don't need to look for five sources (webpages, articles, books) about Rush Limbaugh. We wouldn't even accept five sources about Rush Limbaugh. Once you have a general sense (from the card, from some other sources) on what Rush' general perspective would be, your job is to do the same research Rush would do to sit on a panel where he had to speak on immigration. What resources (books or journal articles) would he use to make a SOCIOLOGICAL case that the immigration practices of the US need to be changed? You need to learn about immigration and then come up with a "pro" position on reforming it. In some ways, this is still just a debate and you're assigned to take a side in the debate. Start from THAT APPROACH. Find out if your person is for or against the proposition and then find research supporting that. THEN, if your character might have a particular slant or position or connection to the issue, add that on to what you've learned. Rush might have the same position on immigration reform as the governor of New Mexico (a Democrat), but they would talk about it differently. If I assigned you to be a second generation immigrant from Mexico, you would not be able to find much written BY second generation immigrants decrying building a wall at the bottom of the country, but you could still present that person's perspective because enough has been written from the pro-immigrant side of this debate. So, you'd do research supporting THAT perspective (e.g., "borders are simply imaginary lines on maps") and then, in the paper and the meeting, BE a first generation immigrant (with a background and a story that you'd probably have to make up) and present a comprehensive argument drawn from your research. Some of you will be assigned people you can contact—authors, politicians, academics, professors at Vandy. You would be AMAZED at how helpful these folks can be in crafting not only "an argument," but in crafting "their argument." I **strongly** encourage you to reach out to them.

Obviously this paper is a HUGE plagiarism risk because you are responsible to "be" someone who you are researching. As with any paper, you're still responsible to take care with appropriate citation

Wikipedia, and Time magazine are not the only resources for sociology research. Obviously, I'd want websites and popular magazines to be the LAST thing you'd use. In fact, they shouldn't be used for your five external sources for town meetings. Time, Wikipedia, etc. are all SECONDARY sources. Reporters, bloggers, and website writers know what they know because they went to the library or looked in academic journals to find out what scientists, sociologists, psychologists, and other scholars say on these issues. You should do the same. If you ABSOLUTELY can't figure out where to look, ask me or our teaching assistant. We'll be happy to point you in the right direction . . . once. The reason I ask for other sources is to help strengthen your arguments with some facts or "expert testimony". Use them that way . . . not as examples or to get definitions of words or, even more uselessly, biographies of your characters. Do not just string together a bunch of quotes, appropriately cite them, and call it a day. If you use a quote, explain the quote and then apply the quote to your argument. Please draw on the skills you learned, presumably, in your first year English classes here at Vanderbilt. Like I said in class, I expect town meetings to read like argument papers.

Most of you use MLA for citations. Please use the following format in this class

- In the text with no quotes (Pitt 2010). The 2010 is the year.
- In the text with quotes (Pitt 2010:91). The 91 is the page number
- In the text, a lead in with no quote When Pitt (2010) argues that appropriate citation matters, he seems to . . .
- In the text, a quote with a lead in As Pitt (2010) suggests, "it is important to cite appropriately." (91)
- In the bibliography for a book Pitt, Richard. (2010). *The Other Side of Citations*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press
- In the bibliography for an article Pitt, Richard. (2010). "The Other Side of Citations." *Interesting Journal* 16, 201-222

Do NOT use footnotes for citations; use the format above and use a regular bibliography. If you cite something that you found on a webpage that has a paper version, cite the paper version. Do NOT include the web address. If you only have a web addresses, that does not count as one of your five sources. Page lengths on assignments are MINIMUMS. Your papers can be as long as they need to be to get your entire point across or to complete the assignment. One of the things that I find is that some students get to the end of four pages and just stop. The goal is not to fill up pages. The goal is to make a comprehensive argument. Don't just state the obvious and expect us to take your word for it. Explain what you're trying to tell us. Don't forget . . . SINGLE SPACED WITHOUT (!) WITHOUT (!) WITHOUT (!) the kinds of spaces between the paragraphs you see in this email. USE INDENTS TO SEPARATE YOUR PARAGRAPHS!

These papers will be graded with the following rubric in mind:

- **THESIS:** Your point should be easily identifiable (read: stated in the first paragraph), sophisticated, and clear.
- **STRUCTURE:** Your paper should be organized in a way that I can easily move through it in a way that is appropriate for an argument paper. You should have strong transitions from point to point. Your paragraphs should support the topic sentences that begin them.
- **EVIDENCE:** This is an argument paper. You need to support your points with evidence or examples. Just because you say it doesn't make it so. If you say "studies say" or "researchers suggest," I'm going to expect to see those studies pointed to in your paper.
- **LOGIC AND ARGUMENTATION:** All of the ideas in the paper need to flow logically. Consider a rule-of-three, where you make ONLY three strong arguments in the paper. That way you don't wander too far away from your thesis. Your argument needs to be reasonable and sound. You also need to anticipate and successfully defuse counter-arguments. This should be easier after the meeting.
- **MECHANICS:** Writing style matters. I'll pay attention to sentence structure, grammar, diction, punctuation and citation style, spelling errors and typos, run-on-sentences and comma splices.