

## **GSWS 1140: Special Topics: Masculinity and Violence**

Class # 27582

Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, Spring 2017

Mondays, 12:00PM - 2:25PM

Cathedral of Learning 402

Instructor: William Scott

Office hours: Tuesdays, 3:00-4:00 PM (or by appointment), Cathedral of Learning 517-D

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### **Course Objective:**

This course – organized around a combination of literary and popular culture texts – explores the subject of masculinity from an interdisciplinary perspective. Its purpose is to examine contemporary and historical representations of masculinity in literature, specifically, and more broadly in culture, asking how and why dominant (mainstream) discourses of masculinity are often associated with various forms of violence. It will investigate, for example, how the contemporary popularity of hyper-masculine celebrities (professional wrestlers and athletes, rap stars, gangsters, etc.) finds itself reinforced by – while, in turn, helping to shape – current literary and cinematic elaborations of masculine violence. In addition to readings that will include novels (Tom Perrotta's *Election* and Alice Sebold's *Lucky*) and non-fiction (Bernard Lefkowitz's *Our Guys* and Michael Kimmel's *Guyland*), the course will also include screening and analysis of three films: *In the Company of Men*, *Tough Guise II*, and *Fight Club*.

### **Required Books:**

—Lefkowitz, Bernard. *Our Guys* (Vintage, 1998); **ISBN: 978-0375702693**

—Sebold, Alice. *Lucky* (Back Bay Books, 2002); **ISBN: 978-0316096195**

—Perrotta, Tom. *Election* (Putnam, 1998); **ISBN: 978-0399143663**

—Kimmel, Michael. *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (Harper Perennial, 2009); **ISBN: 978-0060831356**

Since books at the Pitt Book Center are sold quickly, I recommend that you purchase these titles as soon as possible so that you have the books when you need them for class. Used copies can be purchased through [www.alibris.com](http://www.alibris.com) or [www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com). Make sure to note the ISBN # when purchasing used books to make sure you're getting the same editions that we're using in class. If you purchase your books from somewhere other than the Pitt Book Center, or if you're borrowing them from the library, you will need to have these same editions in order to follow class discussions and assignments.

### **CourseWeb:**

Additional assignments and readings—and any supplementary or optional readings—will be available online through *Blackboard* (Pitt's CourseWeb). Go to “courseweb.pitt.edu,” enter your Pitt user name and password—the same ones you use for your Pitt e-mail—and you'll see a list of the courses in which you're enrolled. Click on “EngLit 0644: Myth and Folktale” and this should take you directly to the website for the course. When you open the folder titled “Course Documents,” you will see a list of folders with different documents in them. Most of these documents are posted as PDFs, although a few may possibly be posted as Word documents. The syllabus and any further materials for the course will also be available here.

### **Course Requirements and Grading:**

–Short essays (3 essays total, minimum of 1,500 words each): 30%

–Attendance and participation: 30%

- Facilitation: 20%
- Group theater project and research statement: 20%

**Final Grade:**

Your final grade for this course directly reflects the cumulative total of credit points you receive for

- 1) the number of short essays you have completed
- 2) the number of class meetings you attend (including participation)
- 3) your facilitation
- 4) your theater project

100-98 = A+	77-74 = C
97-94 = A	73-71 = C-
93-91 = A-	70-68 = D+
90-88 = B+	67-64 = D
87-84 = B	63-61 = D-
83-81 = B-	60 and below = F
80-78 = C+	

**Short Essays:**

Three times during the semester—roughly, every four weeks—you will be asked to write a short essay (minimum 1,500 words each) on a particular problem, question, or theme pertaining to the assigned readings. Essays should be uploaded as WORD docs to CourseWeb by no later than 12:00 PM on the day that they are due. Essays submitted in any other format (PDF, Mac, Linux-based), or in a non-standard version of WORD that I cannot read, will not receive credit. If you are using a Linux-based word processing program, you will have to convert your file to a WORD file on another computer before posting it.

Note: the minimum word count of 1,500 words does not include headers, names, titles, or other writing that is peripheral to your main essay.

I will announce and post the topics for the essays on CourseWeb approximately five to seven days before they are due.

Your essays should address only this topic/question and not include any summary that is not directly relevant to the topic. In addition, your essays should consist mainly of your own words, avoiding citations from other sources.

I will not assign letter grades to your short essays. Instead, I will mark them as either “complete” or “incomplete,” according to whether they meet the requirements for the assignment. To be marked as “complete,” an essay must satisfy all five of the following criteria:

1. Submitted as a standard WORD doc
2. A minimum of 1,500 words in length (not including headers and titles)
3. Addresses the prompt, and made up primarily of your own words and ideas
4. Focused on the specific readings and topic for that assignment
5. Relevant to the specific themes and issues raised in the readings

Essays posted late—meaning: any time after 12:00 PM on the due date—will receive only 50% of the weighted credit for the assignment. Since the essays make up 30% of your total grade for the course, each essay (out of

three) counts for 10% of your grade. This means that, if you post an essay late, you will lose 5% of your total number of points for the course, which will have the effect of lowering a final grade of 90%, for example, to 85%. If, however, you fail entirely to post one of the three short essays, then you will lose 10% of your total number of points for the course (lowering a final grade of 90% to 80%).

Essay due dates—to be posted to CourseWeb by no later than 12:00 PM—are as follows:

Essay #1: Monday, February 27

Essay #2: Friday, March 31

Essay #3: Monday, April 24

### **Class Discussion and First Impressions:**

This is a discussion-based course. Therefore, in addition to mandatory attendance and participation (see attendance policy below), I expect students to play a key role in shaping the direction of class discussions. To that end, our routine in class will be structured to foster your involvement.

“First Impressions:” In the beginning of each class, you will occasionally be asked to give your first impression of the reading—an informal, spontaneous opinion about the course readings assigned for that day. This is meant to be a low-pressure exercise: a time to raise questions or to express what you thought was interesting, baffling, or exciting about the assigned readings.

### **Attendance and Participation:**

Coming to class is mandatory. However, as emergencies sometimes arise, you are allowed one unexcused absence during this 14-week course. Any absence beyond this that is not accompanied by an institutionally recognized letter explaining your absence (such as a doctor’s note regarding a health crisis, a verifiable medical condition, etc.) will be deducted from your total number of points for attendance.

Class Participation: Each student is expected to contribute to class discussions, both verbally and intellectually. This requires keeping up with the assigned readings and coming to class prepared to talk about what you have read. For every class session, I expect that you will

- Have a hard copy of the book with you in class to follow discussions
- Be prepared to respond to questions and comments directed toward you by myself and your classmates
- Print out and bring with you copies of all the additional readings, on the days when you need them for class discussion.

**I reserve the right to deduct Attendance and Participation credit points from any student who demonstrates that he or she is not adequately prepared to participate in class**

### **Facilitation:**

We will divide the class into small “facilitation” groups, each consisting of two to three student facilitators. For the day that they are scheduled, each group will be responsible for

1. Leading (facilitating) class discussion for 30 minutes, with questions and discussion points for the rest of the class, based on the particular set of themes and issues found in whatever section of the readings we are currently discussing.
2. Collaborating and cooperating with each other on all aspects of the facilitation

\*Note that “leading” a discussion does not mean “lecturing,” but posing questions to your classmates for discussion, and moderating the discussion of the class as a whole. The primary goal for facilitators is to create a lively conversation among the students in the class.

### Collaboration

As a facilitator, it is your responsibility to demonstrate that you have collaborated with your partner(s) on every aspect of the work that is necessary for facilitating class discussion. If there is a lack of evidence to prove that you have collaborated with your partner(s) on moderating the class discussion, then you will lose points for your overall facilitation credit.

### Leading class discussion (30 minutes):

On the day for which you are assigned to facilitate class discussion, you and your partner(s) are to

1. Choose several textual passages, scenes, events, or themes from the text(s) that we are currently discussing, which you should plan to examine closely together with the rest of the students in the class. To some degree, your discussion of these passages/scenes/events/themes should be informed by the particular set of themes and questions explored in the other readings for our course
2. Prepare a few questions about the readings that were assigned for that particular day, which you can pose to the rest of the students in the class. These questions should have some clear connection to the themes and concerns of the course itself

In addition to these two basic requirements, your team should also consider using one or more of these other tools for facilitating the class discussion:

- a power point presentation, slides, audio, video, or any other form of media
- ask the students to write something (either creative, analytical, or both) and discuss it in class
- sometime before the class meeting, ask students to read additional short texts, or look at texts online, in preparation for the in-class discussion
- distribute a news story, magazine or blog article, website, or a short critical or theoretical essay, one that is related either to the assigned readings or to the specific topics you would like to discuss with the class

Accompanying handouts, outlines, and excerpts of readings are always helpful for the rest of the class to follow your discussion, so your use of them is greatly encouraged. If you need to make photocopies of handouts, feel free to send me any materials you need to have copied and I'll make sure that you have enough copies to distribute to the class.

**I reserve the right to deduct credit points from any student who has not adequately demonstrated that he or she has satisfactorily completed the requirements for Facilitation**

## **Group Theater Projects:**

We will divide the class into four groups, with five to six students per group. Each group will be responsible for researching, writing, rehearsing, and performing their own original play for the class, on a topic that will be assigned to your group. Plays should be between 15 and 20 minutes in length.

Because this assignment takes the place of a traditional research paper, students must show evidence of the research that they conduct while writing their plays. This research should be recorded in the form of a minimum 700-word research statement and a bibliography with at least three secondary sources (not including any of the readings we are using in class). As this document is a collective expression of the research that has been carried out by the group, the group is free (and encouraged) to collaborate on writing it.

Performances of plays will take place on the final class session of the semester, April 17. Each performance will be followed by a brief discussion and analysis of the play involving the entire class, which I will moderate.

To help you organize and plan your theater projects, the final 15 minutes of every class period will be devoted to separate group discussions, for which attendance is mandatory. At some point before your performance, your whole group is required to meet with me at least once, outside of our usual class session, to go through a rehearsal of your play. I will attend this meeting to offer feedback, suggestions, and whatever help your group needs or requests.

Groups are encouraged to incorporate whatever simple theatrical devices can be used to enhance the impact, or to clarify the message, that their play is trying to convey—including things such as simple costumes, sets, lights, music, dance/choreography, puppets, and visual aids (simple backdrops, slides, power point, video, etc.)

### Improvisation and use of scripts

For each group's final performance, no one will be allowed to read from a script. As a group, you're free to write out as little or as much of your play as you decide. However, I expect you to write down only your most basic ideas regarding plot, action, motivation, and dialogue, and to rely exclusively on improvisation and memory in the actual performance of the play. You can write out the general outline of the play—the basic plot and the actions/characters of the separate scenes—but improvise the dialogue and most of the action within the scenes.

### Research statement and bibliography

By no later than Friday, March 31, 12:00 PM (noon), each group must submit a research statement, accompanied by a bibliography, that explains

- a) how they went about researching the topic for which they were responsible,
- b) what aspects of their topic they are using their play specifically to explore, and
- c) what ideas from their topic they are illustrating and/or what questions about the topic they are trying to answer through their play

These statements, to be emailed to me as WORD docs, must be a minimum of 700 words long, and should be accompanied by a bibliography of secondary sources, which must include a minimum of three sources (not including any of the texts we are using for the course).

Secondary sources must be scholarly articles in books or peer-reviewed journals, and must have been published no earlier than the year 2000.

A simple way to find recently published articles on your chosen topic is to use any of the following online databases available at Hillman Library: “JSTOR,” “Project Muse,” and “International MLA Bibliography” (avoid using Hillman Library’s “Zoom” search engine).

\*Contact Robin Kear for help with research, including finding and using resources at Hillman Library: Our seminar’s own reference librarian, Robin Kear, is in charge of the library’s instructional services. She is available at all times as a “virtual” member of our seminar to work with you, to help you find what you need and incorporate it into your research statements. Her e-mail address is rlk25@pitt.edu, and her phone number at Hillman Library is 412-648-7728.

### **Readings and Assignments**

**January 9:** Course Introduction; Screening and discussion of Jackson Katz, *Tough Guise II*

**January 16 (no class):** Dr. Martin Luther King’s Birthday Observance (University Closed)

**January 23:** Bernard Lefkowitz, *Our Guys*, Introduction and Parts I-III (pp. 3-209)

**January 30:** Bernard Lefkowitz, *Our Guys*, Parts IV-V (pp. 213-341)

**February 6:** Bernard Lefkowitz, *Our Guys*, Parts VI and Updated Epilogue (pp. 345-497)

**February 13:** Alice Sebold, *Lucky*, pp. 3-131

**February 20:** Alice Sebold, *Lucky*, pp. 132-246

**February 27:** *In the Company of Men* (film screening and discussion)

\***Monday, February 27:** Essay #1 due posted by 12:00 PM

**March 6 (no class):** Spring Break

**March 13:** Tom Perrotta, *Election*, pp. 1-104

**March 20:** Tom Perrotta, *Election*, pp. 105-200

**March 27:** Michael Kimmel, *Guyland*, pp. 1-143

\***Friday, March 31:** Essay #2 due posted by 12:00 PM; Research statement and bibliography for Group Theater Project due by 12:00 PM

**April 3:** Michael Kimmel, *Guyland*, pp. 144-289

**April 10:** *Fight Club* (film screening and discussion)

**April 17:** Student Plays

\***Monday, April 24:** Essay #3 due posted by 12:00 PM

## **University and GSWS Program Policies and Statements**

### **Disability resources and services:**

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890 as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. For more information, visit <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/drs/>.

### **Academic integrity and plagiarism:**

Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz, exam or paper will be imposed. For the full Academic Integrity policy, go to: [www.as.pitt.edu/faculty/policy/integrity.html](http://www.as.pitt.edu/faculty/policy/integrity.html).

Violation of the Academic Integrity Code requires the instructor to submit an Academic Integrity Violation Report to the Dean's Office.

### **Classroom recording policy:**

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

### **E-mail policy:**

Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address.

### **Cell phone and laptop policy:**

All cell phones and other electronic communication devices are to be turned to the off setting during class. Laptops are to be used for note-taking only.

### **Non-discrimination policy:**

As an educational institution and as an employer, Pitt values equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic and cultural diversity. Accordingly, the University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, disability, or status as a veteran. For more information, visit <http://cfo.pitt.edu/policies/documents/policy07-01-03web.pdf>

### **Gender-Inclusive language guidelines:**

Aspiring to create a learning environment in which people of all identities are encouraged to contribute their perspectives to academic discourse, the University of Pittsburgh Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program provides guidelines and resources regarding gender-inclusive/non-sexist language ([gsws.pitt.edu/node/1432](http://gsws.pitt.edu/node/1432)). Following these guidelines fosters an inclusive and welcoming environment, strengthens academic writing, enriches discussion, and reflects best professional practices.

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (e.g. first-year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

These guidelines fulfill the best intentions of the University of Pittsburgh's Non-Discrimination Policy: <https://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/07/07-01-03.html>.

**Content warning and class climate:**

Our course readings and classroom discussions will often focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging topics. As with any course in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program, course topics are often political *and* personal. Readings and discussions might trigger strong feelings—anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the readings; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers' understanding of the readings; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom.

I expect everyone to come to class prepared to discuss the readings in a mature and respectful way. If you are struggling with the course materials, here are some tips: read the syllabus so that you are prepared in advance. You can approach your instructor ahead of time if you'd like more information about a topic or reading. If you think a particular reading or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, you can arrive to class early and take a seat by the door so that you can easily exit the classroom as needed. If you need to leave or miss class, you are still responsible for the work you miss. If you are struggling to keep up with the work because of the course content, you should speak with me and/or seek help from the counseling center.

**Sexual misconduct, required reporting, and Title IX:**

The University is committed to combatting sexual misconduct. As a result, you should know that University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence, to the University's Title IX office so that the victim may be provided appropriate resources and support options. What this means is that as your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me, or of which I am somehow made aware.

There are two important exceptions to this requirement about which you should be aware:

A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here: <http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report/confidentiality>

An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as part of an academic project, classroom discussion, or course assignment, are not required to be disclosed to the University's Title IX office.

If you are the victim of sexual misconduct, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:

- Title IX Office: 412-648-7860
- SHARE @ the University Counseling Center: 412-648-7930 (8:30 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F) and 412-648-7856 (AFTER BUSINESS HOURS)

If you have a safety concern, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Police, 412-624-2121.

Other reporting information is available here: <http://www.titleix.pitt.edu/report-0>