

SOC 0446: SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER

University of Pittsburgh

Fall 2009

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00 to 11:50 a.m. in TBA

Course information available on Courseweb

Submit research reports to TURNITIN:

http://www.turnitin.com/static/pdf/tii_student_qs.pdf

TURNITIN class ID = xxxxxxxx password = xxxxxxxx

Professor

Dr. Lisa D. Brush

Office: 2425 Posvar Hall

Telephone and voicemail: 412-648-7595

Office Hours: Tu Th 2:30-4:00

Electronic Office Hours: Send email to Dr. Brush at lbrush@pitt.edu. Do not expect a response between 5 pm Friday and noon Monday.

Course Description and Objectives

The socially elaborated differences between women and men, viewed through what social psychologist Sandra Bem calls the "lenses of gender" (androcentrism, gender polarization, and biological essentialism), are key organizing principles in contemporary societies. This course introduces and uses sociological methods, theories, and materials to help students survey the institutions that structure gender differences and form the contexts that shape social life. The focus is on the contemporary United States, although some empirical evidence will come from other cases. Because differences among women and among men are important factors in social life, we will also attend to relations of race-ethnicity, class, and sexuality. We will study research from a variety of methodological and theoretical approaches.

Learning Goals

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Use the lenses of gender to deepen your understanding of women, men, the relations between us, and society.
- Identify and give the significance of some of the central concepts and empirical phenomena of the sociology of gender.
- Use and interpret various data arrays to illustrate and analyze key concepts and empirical phenomena in the sociology of gender.
- Identify and analyze the gendered social institutions that organize individual and collective life (what Rubin terms the "sex/gender system").
- Marshall and assess evidence about the social construction of gender difference and dominance.
- Explain in your own words some of the key theoretical arguments in feminist sociology.
- Abstract a research article.
- Abstract an argumentative or theoretical article.
- Apply what you have learned about data arrays and research and theoretical articles to write up and present a brief research report.

Course Requirements

In order to pass this course, you are required to:

- Attend lectures and recitations.
- Complete and present assignments for recitations.
- Serve as the class recorder for two class sessions, and post your notes to the class discussion board (on COURSEWEB) within 48 hours of the class.
- Complete and submit via TURNITIN.com a brief research report. Present your report in recitation.
- Take the two midterms and the final examination.

You are responsible for all material presented in class sessions and recitations. A significant proportion of class and recitation time will be devoted to analyzing course materials and readings. Therefore, *attendance and preparation are paramount*. Indeed, *attendance is mandatory*, and class participation in various forms contributes enormously to your final grade. **If you miss more than two of the scheduled recitation sections, you will automatically receive a failing grade ("F") in this course.** If for some reason -- you are a scholar-athlete, for example -- you know now that

you will be unable to attend recitations on more than two occasions, you should not be enrolled in this course. Please drop promptly so another student may have your seat.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Over the course of the semester, you are allowed three (3) free passes. That is, you may skip class or decline to answer when I call on you *three (3) times* over the course of the semester without penalty. *If you have more than three classes for which you either passed or were physically absent, you will lose two (2) points from your accumulated total toward your final grade for each additional absence.* I do not care why you miss class or choose to pass. Being bedridden with avian flu or mononucleosis or tertiary stage syphilis, visiting the doctor to care for a chronic or acute condition, caring for a child or friend, working mandatory overtime, missing the bus, being stuck in traffic, representing the University of Pittsburgh in athletic competition, suffering the aftereffects of binge drinking, attending a funeral, or taking a mental health day to sit in the sun or ice skate are *all your business*. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. Although you may chose to notify me beforehand if you know in advance you will not be in class, you are not required to do so, nor are you required to produce an “excuse” for an absence (note from your doctor, documentation from a funeral director, etc.). The policy is the policy and you’ll either be there or not. Use your passes wisely, especially if you are a scholar-athlete and you know you will miss some classes in order to compete or if you are a parent and know you are likely to miss some classes to fulfill your familial responsibilities.

“Attending class” is both physical and mental. Handy reminders:

DO listen carefully.	DO NOT wear headphones or earbuds.
DO respond to others’ questions and comments. Restate, extend, agree, disagree, connect to an earlier point, or connect to the reading.	DO NOT leave your cell phone or other telecommunications device on. DO NOT set it to vibrate. Turn it OFF. Pick up your voicemail or text messages on your own time. (The <i>only exception</i> is parents of children subject to seizures; please see me if this is the case for you.)
DO ask questions. It is OK to interrupt with questions. If I’m on a roll, I promise I’ll get back to you.	DO NOT read the newspaper or other non-course-related materials during class. DO NOT surf the internet or answer email from your laptop.
DO quote from or direct collective attention to the reading. Please.	DO NOT use body language to express disagreement or contempt. No eye-rolling, gagging sounds, etc.
DO bring your text and course packet to class.	TRY NOT to sleep during class. Know that I am likely to call on sleepers.

Listening and taking careful notes (on readings as well as class sessions) are important ways of learning.¹ Asking questions, sharing your thinking aloud, and explaining important concepts in your own words are also important. The University of Pittsburgh is committed to helping you develop computational, written, and verbal presentation skills. Therefore, as difficult as it may be if you are a “shy person,” verbal participation in discussion will be rewarded. If you suffer from an anxiety disorder sufficiently severe to prevent your participation in class discussions, you should either document your condition as part of a request for the reasonable accommodations to which you are entitled (see Dr. Brush and policy on accommodation for people with disabilities below) or drop this course promptly so another student may have your seat.

If you know you have trouble participating in discussion, prepare and prompt yourself. In addition to your texts and notebook, bring to class a 3x5 card with a question from the reading or discussion from the previous class, and ask it at the beginning of our time together. Let me know so we can strategize on your behalf.

Note: The midterms and final examinations will cover material from readings and class sessions. Do not expect to do well on the midterms and final examinations if you do not attend class sessions *and* do the assigned readings.

Long experience tells me that enrolling in this course will reward you in direct proportion to what you put into it. Whatever you do, don't just sit there. Say anything you can defend against reasoned argument. Treat your colleagues' contributions with respect. That means taking them seriously and challenging them as well as extending basic courtesy. You have my professional pledge that I will do the same for you. I especially appreciate students who present principled positions that contrast sharply with the positions set out in the assigned readings.

The learning you do in this course will be assessed through quizzes, two midterm examinations, a brief research report (including a data array), and a final examination. There will also be the occasional informal writing (in class) and homework assignment to help you prepare for discussion (and to give you a chance to practice skills such as abstracting articles).

¹ One good technique is called “double-entry” note taking. Divide each page in half with a vertical line (if you are working on a laptop or PDA, create a table with two columns). In the left-hand column, *summarize* or give the gist of the argument or point. In the right-hand column, *respond* with your queries, qualms, comments, etc. This works equally well for class notes and for reading notes (and you can cross-reference readings and class sessions).

Quizzes

The quizzes are designed to help you check your progress in keeping up with the reading, and to give you practice in the question format you will encounter on the midterm and final examinations. You should of course be doing the reading, anyway, and the quizzes will help you make sure you have understood important points in the readings.

The quizzes will consist of multiple choice questions focused on key concepts *found in the readings*. Sometime during recitation, you will have seven minutes to complete the quiz.

Each quiz will be scored on a scale of 1 to 10. Keep a record of your scores here:

Quiz One ___/10
Quiz Two ___/10
Quiz Three ___/10
Quiz Four ___/10
Quiz Five ___/10
Quiz Six ___/10

Your point total for the quizzes equals the average of your 5 highest scores. To calculate, drop the lowest score, sum the remaining scores, and divide by 5 = ___ out of 10. It is possible that I will count the points on your sixth quiz (that is, your lowest score) as extra credit points, so it's not a bad idea to take all six even if you have aced all five to that date.

Altogether, the quizzes are worth 10 percent of your grade. For dates, see schedule.

Midterms

There will be two midterm examinations. The midterms will be in the same format as the quizzes: multiple choice. They will cover material from both the readings and class sessions. They are designed as opportunities for you to demonstrate what you have learned, apply concepts from the readings and lectures to specific problems, and extend the learning process to the examinations. Students in previous semesters have reported that the exam questions are somewhat harder than the quiz questions. Your midterm examination scores will contribute 30 percent of your grade. Midterms will be administered at the Testing Center on the 8th floor of Alumni Hall on 5th Avenue. Keep a record of your scores here:

Score on midterm 1 = ___/20 Score on midterm 2 = ___/20

Research Reports. Please see assignment packet for details.

Use this worksheet to keep track of your performance.

Score on research report = ___/15

Absences or passes (you have three freebies, then they begin to count against you) dates: ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

Final Examination

The final examination, which will be worth one-quarter of your final grade, will be in multiple choice format. The final examination will be cumulative (that is, it will cover material from the whole semester). The final examination will be comprehensive (that is, it will cover materials from readings and class sessions). It is designed to evaluate the degree to which you understand and can apply the key concepts and skills from the entire course. The final will be administered at the Testing Center on the 8th floor of Alumni Hall on 5th Avenue.

In sum, the relative contributions of the quizzes, midterm and final examinations, research report, and participation to your final grade will be as follows:

- Two midterm examinations @ 20 points each = 40 percent
- One research report and presentation @ 15 points = 15 percent
- One final examination @ 25 points = 25 percent
- Average of best five quizzes @ 10 points each = 10 percent
- General participation and homework, including abstracts & recitations = 10 percent

Grading will be criteria-based, not norm-based, and there will be no curve. That is, if you demonstrate (through your accumulated points on the quizzes, midterm and final examinations, research report, and participation and homework) mastery of 90 percent or more of the material (that is, accumulate 90 or more points), you will earn an "A." To receive a "B," you must demonstrate mastery of at least 80 percent of the material (that is, accumulate at least 80 points); for a "C," at least 70 percent (that is, accumulate at least 70 points); for a "D," at least 55 percent (that is, accumulate at least 55 points). If you fail to accumulate 55 points, you will receive an "F" for a final grade. Students who earn seven (7) or more points above the minimum cut-off for a given grade will receive a "+" grade. For example, if you accumulate 78 points, you will receive a "C+." Remember: *You will be docked two points per absence after your 3 "free passes".* You can, logistically speaking, flunk yourself by failing to attend class or do the

homework assignments I often use to check attendance. Although it is quite easy to do this, it is a really, really bad idea. I also get very cranky with people who are consistently late to lecture. I won't lock the doors two minutes after our starting time. But PLEASE don't try my patience and the good will and powers of concentration of your fellow students by coming in 10-15 minutes after class has begun. If you arrive late to recitation, you are likely to have less time to complete your quiz; if you miss it altogether, you will be considered absent for the day. Remember: **If you miss more than three class sessions, you will lose 2 points (that's 2% of your final grade) per additional absence. If you skip more than two recitations, you will fail the course.** And of course if you miss recitation, you will miss the opportunity to accumulate points by taking the quiz.

Use the point records above to help you assess your performance and determine what level of participation and performance on the final examination you will need to accumulate points that represent a satisfactory (to you) level of learning in this course:

Quiz average (best of 5) ___/10
Midterm Examination 1 ___/20
Midterm Examination 2 ___/20
Research report ___/15
Participation & homeworks (est.) ___/10
Subtotal before final (approx.) ___/75
Final Exam (what you need to receive the grade you want)___/25
Estimated final point total ___/100

A few notes on expectations

I expect you to read the materials before you come to class. Think of this reading as an active task. Read not just to absorb information, but to make your mark on the text by engaging with it. The quizzes are designed to help you read this way, as are abstracts, informal writing exercises, and class and recitation discussions.

I expect you to adopt a critical stance not only toward the readings but also toward the class and recitation discussions and the meanings of your experience. Class discussions and research reports are all appropriate places for voicing your questions and criticisms, and for "making your mark." If you find something unclear or controversial in class, highlight it in your notes and raise it when the moment seems right, even if that means interrupting me. I know it can take some courage to stop the Dr. Brush Juggernaut, but show some spine. *You are partners with me in learning, here. If you don't let*

me know when I haven't been clear, I can't try to explain in a way that will help you understand. Rest assured that if you are confused, so are other people; just wave your arm and we can all benefit from taking time to think about what I'm saying!

I expect you to treat the contributions of your classmates with respect. You do not have to agree with one another, and your disagreements may be impassioned. However, I will not tolerate displays of contempt or bullying. Given those limits, you are expected to show some backbone when it comes to taking risks in expressing your views, even or perhaps especially if you think they may be controversial.

I expect you to accept challenges to your own opinions and understandings of the world with grace. Listen carefully, respond thoughtfully.

This course is designed to help you learn about some specific dimensions of the society in which you live by raising fundamental issues about women, men, and the organization of social life. The ideas and evidence you will learn about may challenge "common sense" notions of society and the relations between men and women, some of which you may have adopted as your personal beliefs. As a result, you may find that beliefs you cherish as personal values are also challenged -- politically or empirically or both -- in this course. Fine. I expect you to present and bolster your personal beliefs with sound argument and empirical evidence, preferably drawn from the course materials (or at least with concrete notions about what evidence you would find persuasive). Your research report is the ideal venue for you to "prove it." Appeals to personal experience are admissible empirical evidence in discussions (although not for your research report), and you should be prepared to compare your experiences with those you learn about in readings and discussions. You should also be prepared to handle methodological critiques of appeals to common sense and personal experience as the *primary* source of evidence about the social world. Appeals to personal belief systems are also admissible, and you should be prepared to explore the basis for those beliefs and their relevance for the issues at hand. In particular, be prepared to question the sources of those beliefs, the interests they serve, and whether you can sustain them in the face of arguments and evidence to the contrary. Speak up about these issues in class, in recitation, and on the class discussion board.

The exceptionally wise philosopher of science, Karl Popper, provided the following sage advice about civility in rational, critical discussion (the heart of any scientific enterprise):

... We must not expect any critical discussion of a serious issue, any 'confrontation', to yield quick and final results. Truth is hard to come by. It needs both ingenuity in criticizing old theories, and ingenuity in the imaginative invention of new theories. ...

Serious critical discussions are always difficult. ... Many participants in a rational, that is, a critical, discussion, find it particularly difficult that they have to unlearn what their instincts seem to teach them (and what they are taught, incidentally, by every debating society): that is, to win. For what they have to learn is that victory in debate is nothing, while even the slightest clarification of one's problem -- even the smallest contribution made toward a clearer understanding of one's own position or that of one's opponent -- is a great success. A discussion which you win but which fails to help you change or to clarify your mind at least a little should be regarded as a sheer loss. For this very reason no change in one's position should be made surreptitiously, but it should always be stressed and its consequences explored.

Rational discussion in this sense is a rare thing. But it is an important ideal, and we may learn to enjoy it. It does not aim at conversion, and it is modest in its expectations: it is enough, more than enough, if we feel that we can see things in a new light or that we have got even a little nearer to the truth. (*The myth of the framework: in defense of science and rationality*, p. 44)

In short, feel free to say anything you are prepared to defend against reasoned argument. Question everything.

Academic Integrity

Enrollment in this course makes you a member of an academic community. The University of Pittsburgh enforces expectations for the members of its academic communities. These standards are designed to ensure the integrity of your education and of the evaluation process. Read the *Guidelines on Academic Integrity: Student and Faculty Obligations and Hearing Procedures* with great care. The expectations of academic integrity are central to the intellectual liveliness and standards of this academic community. As a student, you have a responsibility to be honest and to respect the ethical standards of your chosen field of study. You will have violated these standards if you:

- Refer to unauthorized materials.
- Provide unauthorized assistance.

- Receive unauthorized assistance.
- Possess, buy, sell, copy, or use unauthorized materials.
- Act as or use a substitute in an evaluation setting.
- Present as your own, for academic evaluation, the ideas or words of another person without proper acknowledgement and citation of sources (in other words, if you plagiarize).

Academic integrity is not limited to these points, but these are the most important elements. They will be enforced without fail in this course. Do your own work. Figure out what you want to say and say it in your own words. Cite your sources when you quote or paraphrase. Violate these community standards and you will flunk so fast your head will spin. Please note that I am REQUIRED by the academic integrity policy of the University of Pittsburgh to report to the Dean's office any violations; not only will you flunk the course, but you will be in serious trouble with the University administration. You definitely do not want to come to the attention of the Dean's office because you were caught violating the academic integrity policy. Besides, reporting you requires a ton of very cranky-making paperwork, and you don't want to make me cranky. Just don't go there.

TURNITIN will provide you with a report assessing the percent of material in your report that repeats material from other sources.

Reasonable Accommodation

If you have a disability that makes it difficult for you to complete the requirements for this course in the manner specified in the syllabus, please see me with documentation from the Office of Disability Resources and Services (216 William Pitt Union; x8-7890) and we will make appropriate arrangements. Be sure to report to DRS well in advance of the first exam, and file the proper paperwork with them before both midterms and the final.

Course Materials

The required readings for this course are:

Laura Kramer, *The Sociology of Gender* (2nd Edition), Roxbury Publishing Co. (Los Angeles, CA: 2005). This textbook is available at the University Book Center.

A selection of required readings, available on-line via electronic course reserves.