Special Topics: Gender and Social Change  
SOC 530/WSS 591, Spring 2009, Section 1

Professor: Dr. Whaley  
Office: Faner 3434 (SOC 3384)  
E-mail: rwhaley@siu.edu  
Ofc Phone: 453-7631  
Dept phone: 453-2494

Class location: Faner 3410  
Schedule: TH 3:30 – 6:00  
Office Hours: TTH 10-12  
T 3-4, W 1-2 & by appt.

This graduate seminar is a sociology of gender course that focuses on changes in the subfield itself and in peoples’ lived experiences in terms of gender, gender relations, and gender stratification. Readings and discussions will trace the development of the sociology of gender over the last several decades. Major concepts and perspectives will be examined. The first part of the course is largely theoretical, taking us through these various ideas and theories. We will discuss how ideas changed over the years, how concepts were rejected outright or reshaped, how gender and feminist social scientists (with an emphasis on sociologists) define, problematize, and theorize about sex and gender as traits, identities, relations, structures, and systems. We will read about the earliest perspectives in sociology of gender and then will make our way through time to some of the contemporary views. The first part of the course seeks to answer the following questions:

How has the meaning of gender and sex changed over time for sociologists? Why?
How has the sociology of gender developed over time? Where did we start and where are we today?

In the remainder of the semester, we will explore ‘objective’ or actual change (or lack of change) related to gender in individuals, groups, and societies. To do this, readings are included that trace changes over time in attitudes about gender, degree of gender inequality, and connections between work, family, and gender to name a few. How have attitudes about gender, gender inequality, and women’s rights changed over recent decades? How has gender stratification changed over time? How far have we come toward equality in various domains? Why?

A theme underlying the course relates to the treatment/consideration/analysis of gender within sociology as a discipline. What role does gender play in our research, methods, and analyses? Sociologists have examined gender (or gender relations or the gender system) in terms of just about every subfield within the discipline itself. Anthologies are divided into sections such as gender and intimate relations, gender and health, gender in the culture, gender and crime, gender and work and so on. Several semesters are needed to do the extensive literature any justice. For this semester I have emphasized major perspectives as they are noted in the field and I have chosen specific subtopics to highlight some of the work we do. The topics are in part based on my own interests but also my interpretation of some of the important areas that have been explored. To allow all of us the opportunity to go broader into the literature, students will examine and present on how different fields approach gender in their theoretical and empirical work today. Students will select a field of study that has involved gender in one way or another (as a categorical variable, as a central organizing theme, as critical theoretical entrée etc.). Students will select an area of interest (one that will be pursued in future research or teaching perhaps), and present a critical assessment of the involvement of gender in that field through an oral and written analysis. For example,
researchers have long acknowledged sex group differences in criminal behavior (or the gender gap in crime) but to what extent has that body of work developed and changed with the larger field of sociology of gender. Is gender simply a descriptive categorical variable, or have criminologists explored gender as an identity, a practice, an institution, or a system. What's been done and where should we go next? One goal of this course is to help students identify research questions (and theoretical inquiries) that utilize the ideas of sex/gender and lay out an exciting research agenda for themselves.

As a graduate level seminar, students are expected to read, discuss, and write at an advanced, sophisticated, and in-depth level, to participate in every discussion, to lead discussions, and to complete written and other assignments. IT IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO READ THE MATERIALS; as a future scholar/academic you need to understand what you read, be able to ask it questions, link it to other literature, situate it in the field as a whole, understand its implications for theory, research, and perhaps policy/action, and so on. Teaching yourself to read at this level takes practice and is a skill that will benefit you in your substantive exam and dissertation.

Materials.

   a. *Handmaid's Tale* (1985) by Margaret Atwood is recommended but not required by week 6 when we will watch the movie based on the book
2. A set of articles, essays, and chapters are also required. All such materials are on reserve in the Sociology office for three hour loan periods. Please share and make your own copies as needed. Many articles are available on-line through our library; you may print these on your own printers. My recommendation is to print these on-line articles on your personal printer and to have the other readings copied by a local copy store to create a packet. I expect discussions to refer specifically to readings, sections, quotes; as such you may want to bring copies of the readings to class (if not, then detailed notes and referent page numbers will be necessary).

Student responsibilities.

1. Attend all classes, complete required reading assignments, and come prepared to ask questions, answer questions, and generally take part in discussions. Participation in discussions is required. 20% of grade.

2. Students (individually or as pairs) will lead the discussion of a set of readings once in the semester. A brief analysis/summary of the readings will need to be distributed to all members of the course, and several discussion questions need to be posed (outline format, 1-2 pages total). The leader will facilitate the discussion by asking provocative questions and also by offering initial or potential answers, and by following up on classmates’ contributions. See #3 for more guidelines. Your presentation should be no more than 15 minutes but you will continue to play a role after the introduction by helping facilitate discussion, linking comments together, and so on. 10% of grade. Students will rank order a short list of preferred sessions and dates will be scheduled by week 2 if not earlier.

3. Two discussion/reaction papers. In about 2 paragraphs, twice in the semester, write about the set of readings for a particular session. The format of this short paper is
similar to what is expected of you to prepare (in note form, not to be turned in) every week. First identify the major contributions of the readings, the concepts, evidence, or theory that interested you the most (for its strengths or its weaknesses). You should situate the readings in the larger literature read in previous weeks (how do they stem from other readings, or how do the readings move beyond other material) and identify the connections between readings on your assigned night. Second, discuss the questions you feel are raised by the readings. (what intrigued you? What did you agree/disagree with? What issue would you want to talk to friends about?) 5% each for 10% of grade

4. Short paper. Students will write a 5-7 page essay that explores one theme that connects required readings (course material) with the fiction books. Instructions will be distributed in class. A good “chunk” of course material should be incorporated into the essay. Due Monday, May 4 by noon. 20% of grade

5. Students will write a 20 page paper that explores, critiques, and/or questions a subfield that has incorporated sex/gender, feminist perspectives, or the sociology of gender. The paper will be due in Week 13 (4/16) when student presentations begin. Topics and presentation dates will be chosen/assigned by the 3rd week of the semester. The presentation and subsequent student facilitated discussion will be 5% of grade. The presentation and the discussion will each be 10 minutes. Students may work in pairs on the research and presentation, but students will right individual (unique) papers. The paper will be 35% of grade.

Other information:
1. Please be aware of the following emergency procedures. Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and health environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on BERT’s website at www.bert.siu.edu, Department of Safety’s website www.dps.siu.edu (disaster drop down), and in Emergency Response Guideline pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency. Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

2. Please make yourself aware of the university’s definition of plagiarism. Learn and use a proper citation format. Correctly paraphrase, quote, or otherwise write about the readings (see me to borrow a writing guide if you have any doubts or want to learn more about writing in sociology).

3. See me in office hours whenever you have questions about the course.
Tentative Schedule

1/15 Week 1.
No readings

1/22 Week 2. Overview of the field


Recommended

1/29 Week 3. Past and present perspectives on the sexes, sex differences, and biology


2/5 Week 4. More on biological views


Miller, E. and Costello, C. Yang. The limits of biological determinism. p592-598

Merz, Sabine N.; Lorber, Judith; Kennelly, Ivy. What is gender?. p598-605,

Risman, B. J. Calling the bluff of value-free science. p605-611,
Udry, J. R. Feminist critics uncover determinism, positivism, and antiquated theory. p611-618,

Firebaugh, Glenn. The ASR review process. p619-621.

Video – Handmaid’s Tale (1990)

**Weeks 5 and 6. Learning and doing gender (learning and constructing gender and transgender lives)**

**2/12 Week 5**


**Recommended**


**2/19 Week 6. Doing gender/social construction of gender**


**Recommended**


**2/26 Week 7. Intersections**


**3/5 Week 8. Gender Institutionalized and Gender as an Institution, Structure, System**


**Break 3/9 to 3/13**

### 3/19 Week 9. Stratification (theories, perspectives)


**Recommended**


### 3/26 Week 10. Gender roles, identity, attitudes then and now.

*Please note, the readings for week 10 may change. Stay tuned for an announcement*


**4/2 Week 11. Inequality and stratification then and now.**  
*To be announced.*

**4/9 Week 12. Work, family, parenting.**  
*To be announced.*

**4/16, 4/23 Weeks 13 and 14. Presentations.**  
Subfield paper due Week 13.  
Presentation.  
Continue reading the fiction books.  
Attendance on both days of presentations required.

**4/30 Week 15. Where do we go from here?**

Herland by Charlotte Perkins Gilman 1992 (1915).  


Feinberg, Leslie. We are all works in progress. p. 548- 552. in Ferber, Holcomb & Wentling (eds.) *Sex, Gender, and Sexuality.* New York: Oxford University Press.

5/4 noon: Short paper due.