

Sex, Gender, and Culture
ANTH 215-B01
Summer Session I, 2011
Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00 pm – 4:10 pm
Room: Hurst 104

Instructor

Mahri Irvine (doctoral student and adjunct professor, AU Dept. of Anthropology)

Email: mahri.irvine@american.edu

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30 am – 12:30 pm

Office: Cubicle D-1 in the lower level of Battelle-Tompkins

Course Overview (from AU Schedule of Classes)

How economic systems, social structures, and values construct and redefine biological distinctions between women and men. Includes gender in egalitarian societies; origins and consequences of patriarchy; gay and lesbian cultures; gender, politics, and social change. Case studies from tribal, state-level, and post-colonial contexts. Usually offered every term. Prerequisite for General Education credit: ANTH-110 or LIT-150 or RELG-185 or SIS-140 or SOCY-110.

Course Overview (a more detailed version)

This course examines how ideas about sex, gender, and sexuality are culturally constructed through social structures and economic systems, and how cultural, political, and economic structures redefine biological distinctions between women and men. In this course, we will engage with readings and films to help us identify and challenge taken-for-granted notions about sex, gender, and sexuality. We will explore how gender is constructed in different cultures. The course will also focus on the possible origins and consequences of patriarchal systems; how capitalism influences gender identities and self-perceptions; LGBTQ communities; gender, politics, and social change; and how sexism, racism, and classism interconnect to create different barriers and challenges for different groups of people. This course is designed to help you develop a critical understanding of issues that surround the intersection of sex, gender, and culture. We will draw on examples from different cultures and different parts of the world to better understand how contemporary notions of gender, sexuality, race, bodies, desire, and identity contribute to the world(s) we live in. The readings in this class are a mixture of theoretical discussions and ethnographic studies.

Trigger warning: Please note that during this course, we will discuss potentially painful topics such as sexual violence and domestic violence. Please contact the instructor if you believe that you will have difficulty attending class for these discussions, and she will try to work out alternative arrangements with you.

Connection to the General Education Program

Students who have successfully completed a foundation course within General Education Area III may use this course to satisfy the second-level requirement in General Education Area III. ANTH 215 directly builds on discussions about culture, and descriptions of lived experiences, that foundation courses such as ANTH 110 (Human Mirror) or LIT 150 (Third World Literature) provide. Because this

course falls within level II of the General Education program's course offerings, a successful grade in this course requires a higher level of performance than is required at level I. Therefore, you should pay special attention to the course requirements and class rules outlined in this syllabus.

Learning Objectives

This course strives to help you succeed in meeting the following learning objectives, as outlined in AU's General Education program.

1. **Written and Oral Communication:** In order to strengthen your written communication skills, you will write five response papers that critically engage to class readings and films. You will be encouraged to write clearly, in an organized manner, and to fully address each essay prompt or question. Your oral communication skills will be strengthened through class discussions; you will be encouraged to clearly articulate your opinions and arguments in a logical manner, drawing on class readings and films to support your claims.
2. **Critical Thinking, including Information Literacy:** This course will strengthen your abilities and skills in critical thinking; this will ideally be achieved by carefully reading the assigned articles, taking notes during class films, and making connections between the statements and arguments presented by authors, film makers, classmates, and your professor. You will also be asked to ascertain the validity and strength of authors' and filmmakers' arguments through critical analysis.
3. **Ethics:** In this course, you will be encouraged to think about how ideology and hegemony influence your own personal ethics when making judgments or assumptions about other people or cultures based upon your understandings of gender, race, class, and sexuality, among other things. Ideally, the knowledge you gain about ideological value systems will help you better understand how your own ethical standards of interpersonal communication might be affected by your cultural upbringing.
4. **Aesthetics:** We will watch a number of films (primarily documentaries) about gender, sexuality, and culture. Through these films, you may gain a greater appreciation of how filmmakers visually document their arguments.
5. **Perspectives of Race, Class, Culture, and Gender:** This course heavily emphasizes interconnecting identities resulting from cultural constructions of gender, sexuality, race, and class. The course also strives to help you better recognize and understand how intersectional oppressions, based upon combined biases such as sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism impact different individuals and communities in different ways. Additionally, you will learn about people's differing world views and self-perceptions based upon their own gendered, raced, and classed identities.
6. **A Global Point of View:** In this class, we will learn about and discuss cultural constructions and perceptions about gender and sexuality from cultures around the world. This emphasis on multiple, global cultures will help you strengthen your understanding of how gender roles are culturally constructed, and how globalization influences different cultures in different ways.

Grading Scale

93% - 100%	A	60% - 62%	D-
90% - 92%	A-	73% - 76%	C
87% - 89%	B+	70% - 72%	C-
83% - 86%	B	67% - 69%	D+
80% - 82%	B-	63% - 66%	D
77% - 79%	C+	0% - 59%	F

Textbooks and Course Materials

One book is required for this course. You can purchase it at a number of bookstores or online:

Bedford, Simi

1991 *Yoruba Girl Dancing*. New York: Penguin Books USA Inc.

All other course readings will be posted to Blackboard.

What you can expect from me

I will strive to:

- create a safe and engaged learning environment
- give you clear guidelines for how to succeed in this class, including grading rubrics for the assignments
- provide you with helpful feedback about your writing and your ideas
- meet with you to discuss your work when you request assistance or guidance

What I expect from you

During this course, you should:

- read the syllabus carefully and plan out your schedule to complete your assignments on time
- refer to the syllabus if you have questions about due dates or course requirements
- commit to following the course guidelines and meeting the course objectives
- interact with other students and the instructor in a respectful way
- contact me immediately if you are having difficulties with the material, or other issues in life, which might negatively impact your grade or class participation
- avoid anxiety about your grades; instead, focus on doing the assigned work and actively participate in class

Academic Conduct and Integrity

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course.

Please see more information about integrity and plagiarism in this syllabus' section about the "Expectations for Written Work" section of this syllabus.

Difficulties in the Class

If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please do not hesitate to consult with me. In addition to the resources of the department, many services are available to support you in your efforts to meet the course requirements and get the most out of this class:

Academic Support Center: (x3360, MGC 243) offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, Supplemental Instruction, and services for students with learning disabilities and ADHD. Writing support is available in the ASC Writing Lab or in the Writing Center, Battelle-Tompkins 228.

Counseling Center: (x3500, MGC 214) offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus mental health resources.

Disability Support Services: (x3315, MGC 206) offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical, medical, or psychological disabilities.

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please notify me as soon as possible (ideally within the first week of class) with a letter from the Academic Support Center or Disability Support Services so that we can make arrangements to address your needs.

Ground Rules

Technology:

Please turn your cell phones to vibrate/silent before class begins. If you need to answer a call during class due to an emergency situation (i.e. sick family members or childcare problems) please let me know ahead of time.

I will permit the use of laptops in class for note-taking and reading assigned articles only. I expect you to refrain from checking email, using Facebook, shopping, or engaging in other irrelevant activities while in class. If you abuse this policy, you will no longer be allowed to use your laptop. I will ask you to sign an agreement that indicates you will only use your laptop for relevant classroom activities.

Late Assignment Policy:

All assignments are due on the dates indicated in this syllabus. If there is a legitimate reason that you were unable to submit your assignment (i.e., an emergency appendectomy), you will need to document your excuse (i.e., a doctor's note). Bear in mind that working on projects for other classes, or being distracted by life events, will not count as legitimate excuses for a late assignment. Read through the syllabus carefully and plan your schedule in advance so that you have adequate time to complete your assignments. Late assignments will be deducted one letter grade for each 24-hour period that they are late.

Expectations of Written Work:

Your work should meet minimum standards of college writing. I will not grade work that has extensive spelling or grammatical errors; I will return poorly written papers to you and you will be expected to revise and resubmit within a timeframe we agree upon. If you have difficulty writing at the college level, please visit the college writing center for assistance.

Your submitted work (written papers and your final class presentation) should also include proper, AAA-style citations for any ideas, writing, or images that are not your own. Please review the handout about plagiarism given out in class. If you have any questions about plagiarism or proper citations, ask me. I am *required* to report any incidents of plagiarism to the university administration, and I will follow this policy. Do not plagiarize. When in doubt, cite!

Course Requirements

I. Participation	
A. Attendance	10%
B. Class Discussion	20%
C. Submission of questions/comments/critiques	5%
II. Response Papers	50%
III. Presentation	15%
Extra Credit Option	up to 5%

I. Participation

A. Attendance

You are allowed one unexcused absence (you do not need to contact me with an explanation). However, any work that is due on the day of your absence is still due, and you should submit it by the deadline (unless you have a doctor's note indicating that you were unable to complete the assignment on time). Any additional absences will count against your course grade. Please note that I will take attendance at the beginning of each class, and if you are late, you run the risk of being marked absence. Please be on time for each class. If I notice that you have a habit of always being late, your participation grade will be negatively impacted. Being on time shows respect for your classmates, me, and yourself, and ensures that you will not miss important information.

B. Class Discussion

Before each class session, you are expected to read all of the assigned readings prior to the beginning of class, and to think about them critically in preparation for discussion. Participation in class means engaging in discussions without dominating the conversation; pay attention to your level of participation. You are expected to act in a professional manner, meet deadlines, and contribute positively to the class. This includes respecting other people's opinions even if you disagree with them. Please be mindful of these expectations.

If you prefer not to speak in class, I expect you to visit me during office hours (or another mutually agreed-upon time) to discuss the readings. Make sure that you either participate in class discussion, or visit me to show that you are engaging with the readings.

C. Submission of Questions/Comments/Critiques

To help you prepare for class discussions, and to ensure that you are reading the articles, you are required to submit ONE question, comment, or critique for EACH article, by 12 pm on the day of class. You are required to submit these through Blackboard in the Discussion area. You can respond to other

people's questions or comments as long as your responses are thoughtful (i.e., a response consisting of "I agree" does not count!).

II. Response Papers

Instead of a large end-of-term research paper, you will write five short response papers; there will be a total of six response paper assignments, so you get to skip a week of your choosing. Each paper should be three pages long, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins all around. Response papers will be due on THURSDAYS by 11:59 pm. Questions/prompts for the response papers will be assigned a week ahead of time so that you have enough time to complete the readings and the paper. If you feel that you need additional prep time, please talk with me and we will make arrangements to help you succeed in meeting the due dates.

Most of the time, you will receive questions/prompts relating to either the Monday or Wednesday batch of readings. I strongly encourage you to write a rough draft of your paper by the relevant class session. You can then take notes from the class discussion and make modifications to your paper, so that you can meet the deadline without too much stress.

III. Presentation:

Your final end-of-term project will be a 10-minute presentation about gender and/or sexuality within culture. Select a topic that is of interest to you and related to some of our class readings and films. Develop a research topic about how gender and/or sexuality is represented, performed, or ideologically produced within a culture, and how other identity constructions such as race, class, and/or religion impact this topic. Be sure to choose a topic that allows you to pursue your own research goals or personal interests. If you have questions or concerns about choosing a topic, please visit me during office hours or contact me through email.

If you feel that you are unable to present in front of the class, please contact me immediately and we will discuss an alternative arrangement for this assignment.

A note on the weekly topics listed in the syllabus:

You will undoubtedly notice that even though each week has a different topic listed, most of our readings and films will address intersecting identities and how these multiple identities and socially constructed categories continually overlap, and impact different people in different ways. Therefore, when writing your discussion papers and engaging in class participation, I encourage you to think about, and refer to, earlier class readings and films if you make connections or identity recurring themes. You will also notice that many of our readings and films focus on violence, or other forms of oppression; this emphasis on violence is not meant to be depressing, but rather to help you recognize, and better understand, the multiple forms of gender-based and sexuality-based oppression that are often created through ideological value systems.

I have also crafted the syllabus with the goal of avoiding the normalization of white, middle-class people's experiences and the exoticization of "other" people's experiences. Therefore, you will notice that articles and films about people of color, impoverished people, and people in "developing" countries will be presented alongside articles and films about white, middle-class people. This is an attempt to transform the problematic dichotomy of "us" versus "them" which is often reproduced on class syllabi. I have also attempted to include articles and films about heterosexual men alongside articles and films about women and sexual minorities; this is another effort to challenge assumptions that a class about gender is really only a class about women and LGBTQ people. After all, in order to better understand sex, gender, and culture, we need to learn about and discuss the cultural construction of heterosexual male identities just as much as the construction of other gendered and sexed identities.

Monday, May 16*Welcome and Introductions*

Film:

Sun, Chyng Feng and Miguel Picker

2001 Mickey Mouse Monopoly: Disney, Childhood, and Corporate Power. Media Education Foundation. Northampton, MA.

Assignment: Class Discussion

Wednesday, May 18*Ideology and Culture*

Readings:

Allison, Anne

1991 Japanese mothers and obentos: The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus. *Anthropological Quarterly* 64:195-208.

Althusser, Louis

1971 Ideology and ideological state apparatus (Notes toward an investigation.) *In Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Pp. 127-186. New York City: Monthly Review Press.

**Note: this is a difficult reading, and you are only expected to thoroughly read pages 162-177.*

Film:

BBC and Open University

2008 Divide of the Sexes: Gender Roles in Childhood. 60 min.

Assignments: submit questions/comments/critiques on Blackboard; be prepared to discuss the readings
Response Paper due by 11:59 pm on Thursday

Monday, May 23*Hegemony and the Gender Binary*

Readings:

Fausto-Sterling, Anne

Dueling Dualisms. *In Sexing the Body*. Pp. 1-29.

Reddy, Gayatri and Serena Nanda

Hijras: An "Alternative" Sex/Gender in India. *In Culture, Sexuality, and the Body*. Pp. 275-282.

Williams, Raymond

1977 Hegemony. *In Marxism and Literature*. Pp. 108-114. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, Raymond

1977 Hegemony. *In Marxism and Literature*. Pp. 115-120. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Film:

Thomas, Antony and Carleen Ling-an Hsu

2006 Middlesexes: Redefining He and She. 75 min. Home Box Office/Granada Television.

Assignments: submit questions/comments/critiques on Blackboard; be prepared to discuss the readings

Wednesday, May 25

Inequality: Questions, Theories, and Problems

Readings:

Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks

1992 African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race. *Signs* 17(2):251-274.

Kandiyoti, Deniz

1997 Bargaining with Patriarchy. *In The Women, Gender and Development Reader*. Pp. 86-92. New Jersey: Zed Books, Ltd.

Moore, Henrietta

1988 Gender and Status: Explaining the Position of Women. *In Feminism and Anthropology*. Pp. 12-41. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Film:

Jhally, Sut

1999 Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity. 85 min. Media Education Foundation. Northampton, MA.

Assignments: submit questions/comments/critiques on Blackboard; be prepared to discuss the readings
Response Paper due by 11:59 pm on Thursday

Monday, May 30

NO CLASS (Memorial Day holiday)

Enjoy your day off! Relax, meditate, spend time with your family and friends!

Wednesday, June 1

Capitalism, Class, and Consumption

Readings:

Bettie, Julie

2000 Women Without Class: Chicas, Cholas, Trash and the Presence/Absence of Class Identity. *Signs* 26(1):1-35.

Brodkin, Karen

2006 Toward a Unified Theory of Class, Race, and Gender. *In Feminist Anthropology: A Reader*. E. Lewin, ed. Pp. 129-146. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Frank, Katherine

2002 Stripping, Starving, and the Politics of Ambiguous Pleasure. *In Jane Sexes it Up: True Confessions of Feminist Desire*. M.L. Johnson, ed. Pp. 171-206. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows.

Hartmann, Heidi

1996 The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union. *In Radical Political Economy: Explorations in Alternative Economic Analysis*. V.D. Lippit, ed. Pp. 165-196. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe.

Film:

Feingold, David A.

2003 Trading Women. 77 min. Documentary Educational Resources. Watertown, MA.

Assignments: submit questions/comments/critiques on Blackboard; be prepared to discuss the readings
Response Paper due by 11:59 pm AND submit Presentation Proposal by 11:59 pm on Thursday

Extra Credit Opportunity: Special Event on Saturday, June 4, 7:30 pm

You have the opportunity to attend a short play called “Finding Our Place,” which focuses on the lives of formerly incarcerated women in the Washington, DC area. The play costs \$10 and will be held at GW University’s theatre. You can write a response paper about what you learned from this performance, and how it relates to our class readings and films, for extra credit worth up to 5 percent of your overall grade. If you cannot afford to pay \$10 for a ticket, talk to me about volunteering at the event, and you can watch the show for free. More information will be given in class.

Monday, June 6

Race, Ethnicity, Citizenship, and Belonging

Readings:

Echeveria, Begoña

2002 Gendered Pedagogies: ‘Authentic Basqueness’ as Male Domain. *In Gendered Practices in Language*. S. Benor, M. Rose, D. Sharma, J. Sweetland, and Q. Zhang, eds. Pp. 23-44. Stanford: CSLI Publications.

Jerolmack, Colin

2007 Animal Practices, Ethnicity, and Community: The Turkish Pigeon Handlers of Berlin. *American Sociological Review* 72:874.

Mwaria, Cheryl

2001 Biomedical Ethics, Gender, and Ethnicity: Implications for Black Feminist Anthropology. *In Black Feminist Anthropology*. A.M. Gilliam, ed. Pp. 187-210.

Film:

Yang, Mayfair Mei-hui

1997 *Through Chinese Women's Eyes*. 53 min. Women Make Movies. New York.

Assignments: submit questions/comments/critiques on Blackboard; be prepared to discuss the readings

Wednesday, June 8

Body Images and Identities

Readings:

Courtenay, Will H.

2000 *Constructions of Masculinity and their Influence on Men's Well-Being: a Theory of Gender and Health*. *Social Science and Medicine* 50:1385-1401.

Duncan, Duane

2007 *Out of the Closet and into the Gym: Gay Men and Body Image in Melbourne, Australia*. *Journal of Men's Studies* 15(3):331-346.

Hoodfar, Homa

1997 *The Veil in their Minds and on Our Heads: Veiling Practices and Muslim Women*. In *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*. L. Lowe and D. Lloyd, eds. Pp. 248-279. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Urla, Jacqueline and Alan C. Swedlund

1995 *Measuring Up to Barbie: Ideals of the Feminine Body in Popular Culture*. In *Culture, Sexuality, and the Body*. Pp. 282-295.

Film:

Jhally, Sut

2010 *Killing Us Softly 4*. 45 min. Media Education Foundation. Northampton, MA.

Assignments: submit questions/comments/critiques on Blackboard; be prepared to discuss the readings
Response Paper due on Thursday

Monday, June 13

Kinship and Families

Readings:

Donner, Henrike

2005 *'Children are Capital, Grandchildren are Interest': Changing Educational Strategies and Parenting in Calcutta's Middle-Class Families*. In *Globalizing India: Perspectives from Below*. J. Assayag and C. Fuller, eds. Pp. 119-139. London: Anthem Press.

Gutmann, Matthew

2007 Imaginary Fathers, Genuine Fathers. *In* The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City. Pp. 50-88. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lewin, Ellen

2009 Who's Gay? What's Gay? Dilemmas of Identity among Gay Fathers. *In* Out in Public: Reinventing Lesbian/Gay Anthropology in a Globalizing World. E. Lewin and W. Leap, eds. Pp. ???
Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Pribilsky, Jason

2004 'Aprendemos A Convivir': Conjugal Relations, Co-parenting, and Family Life Among Ecuadorian Transnational Migrants in New York and The Ecuadorian Andes. *Global Networks* 4(3):313-334.

Assignments: submit questions/comments/critiques on Blackboard; be prepared to discuss the readings be prepared to engage in class discussion

Film:

Zou, Roger J. and Elizabeth Dukal Flander

2007 Kingdom of Women: The Matriarchal Mosuo of China. 55 min. Silkrain Media.

Wednesday, June 15

Violence, Gender, and Sexuality

Readings:

Hayden, Robert M.

2000 Rape and Rape Avoidance in Ethno-National Conflicts: Sexual Violence in Liminalized States. *American Anthropologist* 102(1):27-41.

Rhoads, Robert A.

1995 Whales Tales, Dog Piles, and Beer Goggles: An Ethnographic Case Study of Fraternity Life. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 26(3):306-323.

Film:

Simmons, Aishah Shahidah

2006 NO! The Rape Documentary: Ending Sexual Assault and Violence Against Women. 94 min. AfroLez Productions. San Francisco.

Guest Presentation:

Joseph Vess, from *Men Can Stop Rape* (Washington, DC)

Assignments: submit questions/comments/critiques on Blackboard; be prepared to discuss the readings
Response Paper due by 11:59 pm on Thursday

Monday, June 20*Agency and Resistance*

de Keijzer, Benno

2004 Masculinities: Resistance and Change. *In Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*. S. Ruxton, ed. Pp. 28-49. Oxford: Oxfam.

Elsanousi, Magda Mohammed

2004 Strategies and Approaches to Enhance the Role of Men and Boys in Working for Gender Equality: A Case Study from Yemen. *In Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*. S. Ruxton, ed. Pp. 162-176. Oxford: Oxfam.

Goldstein, Donna M.

2003 What's So Funny About Rape? *In Laughter Out of Place: Race, Class, Violence, and Sexuality in a Rio Shantytown*. Pp. 259-274. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Haney, Charlotte

2010 Child Sexual Abuse and the Reproduction of Femininity in the United States. *Voices* 10(1):27-30.

Assignments: submit questions/comments/critiques on Blackboard; be prepared to discuss the readings

Note: We need four volunteers to do their final presentation on June 20th!

Wednesday, June 22

Assignments: Final Project Presentations due in class AND Response Paper due by 11:59 pm on Thursday

End-of-Class Celebration