Gender and Fandom

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Office Hours: Monday, 10:30 to 12:30pm
Office: Raab 107
Time: Mon-Wed 3:30-4:50
Location: Lown 203
Class Site: https://moodle2.brandeis.edu/course/view.php?id=14884

Short Course Description
This course examines the gendered experiences of those who identify as "fans" through the lens of anthropology, sociology, and gender studies. We will examine a wide variety of fandoms and ask questions such as, how does fandom shape gender expression? How does gender shape fandom? How are class, race, and cultural background implicated in fan expressions? How do fans create community? Who is welcomed and who is excluded from fan communities? We will examine particular fandoms, including online fandoms, sports fandoms, and sci-fi/fantasy fandoms, among others, and read works by sociologists, anthropologists, and the fans themselves.

Course Description
What makes a "fan?" This course investigates the ways in which fandom is constructed in various contexts, focusing particularly on how media, fans, fan behavior, and the structure of fandom itself are gendered. Why do certain fandoms consist of mainly women, while others consist of mainly men? What social interactions and mores are different in fan interactions as opposed to non-fan interactions? Why do we have particular stereotypes of "fans" and where do these overlap other stereotypes ("geek," for example)? What can the study of fandom teach us about human interactions as a whole? Do fans count as a sub-culture?
We will examine the construction of fan communities, fan language, and fan studies itself. We will then use fandom as a way to approach larger questions of how human communities are built, how gender is created, changed, and manipulated, and how class, race, and the body are all used to both challenge and support hegemonic cultural meanings. We will unpack gender as an organizing force, examine community, communitas, and nostalgia, and delve into the attraction of fandom itself.

This course will use basic anthropological tools, although knowledge of anthropology or sociology is not a prerequisite. We will read a wide variety of works, ranging from anthropological, sociological, and gender theory to self-reflective works by fans themselves.

Course Goals
Students will gain a general understanding of anthropological method and learn to apply it to cultural groups which are familiar and non-exotic. We will work against the "fetishization of the exotic" and uncover complex social workings in cultures students may already be familiar with. Students will also learn basic gender theory and analysis, as well as intersectional theory, and learn to apply it to specific human interactions. We will also gain a general understanding of the phenomena of fandom and of the scholarship currently available in this area.

Required Readings: Required books will be available at the bookstore and on reserve at the library. I also recommend trying the Advanced Book Exchange, at http://www.abebooks.com, a consortium of independent used booksellers which I have found very useful in the past for finding multiple copies of used books (in varying conditions and prices).
Additional required articles—marked in the syllabus with the word reserve in **bold** print—will also be available to students via our course website.

Please note that online articles, marked in bold with the word **Online**, are available via link from the syllabus and our website.

**Required Books:**
ISBN: 0415533295

**Recommended:**

**Course Requirements:**
- Syllabus Quiz: 5% first two weeks
- Attendance/Class Participation: 15% throughout class
- Other Class Assignments: 20% throughout class
- Short Essay: 25% [mid-term]
- Final Project: 35% final day of class

**PLEASE NOTE:** I do not use LATTE to calculate final grades, as it is inaccurate (the rounding does not agree with my grade schema) and does not take participation, discussion section, or attendance into account. I strongly recommend that you ignore LATTE’s grade calculation.

**General Requirements:** Class attendance and participation are both essential to this class. For this reason, unexcused absences will impact your grade; the discussion we do in class cannot be replicated by simply doing the reading. Although this is not a writing intensive course, the papers are another vehicle for you to reflect on the reading topics and to introduce your own ideas; creativity, critical thinking, and good analysis are all highly encouraged. **Please note that reading must be completed before class.**

No cell phones, pagers, or other communication devices will be permitted in class, unless you are an EMT or other medical professional on call. **Laptops will also not be permitted without my prior consent.** Students observed using cell phones will be marked absent; this will have an effect on the final course grade. **Laptops may be used during discussion to look up material relevant to the discussion only!**

**Email Policy:** Emails will be answered within 24 hours, except for weekend days (when I cannot guarantee to check my email as regularly). I do not check email between the hours of 9 pm and 8 am. Please keep emails short and to the point; longer commentary may be better discussed during office hours. Written work should be turned in via our course website, as this is more secure than email; email should be used as a last resort.

**Written Work/Assignments:** All written work will be graded on presentation (grammar, writing skills, proper citation, etc.), arguments (flow, use of texts, coherent and clear thesis), and grasp of the ideas presented in class as well as on your own original theory and take on the material.
Assignment sheets will be available on our website and due dates are specified in the syllabus. Written work submitted later than fifteen minutes after the due date will be lowered by a third of a grade for each day late, except in cases of illness or emergency. Written work should be submitted via our website.

**Specific Assignments:** Please note that more detailed assignment sheets will be available on our website in the folder marked "Class Assignments."

**Other Class Assignments:** Students may be asked to post discussion questions or to do other assignments as prep for discussion. There will be other short assignments (see “Vid Presentation,” Week 12) etc. Assignment sheets will be provided for out-of-class assignments.

**Short Essay (Ethnographic/Blog-Style Essay):** Students will write a 5-7 page essay responding to a particular topic using some of the theoretical material we have been reading as a lens. A more full assignment sheet will be provided on our class website; please read this before doing the assignment.

**Final Research Essay:** Near the end of the semester, students will undertake a short original research project on some aspect of fandom they are interested in. This may take the form of a research paper or a multimedia presentation, and other forms will be considered if you consult me about them in advance. More complete assignment sheets will be made available to you on our class website; please read these before doing the assignment.

Please note: These descriptions are for your information only. In all cases the assignment sheets will supersede the syllabus in matters of assignment detail. Be sure to read the assignment sheet before doing the assignment.

**Written Work:** Assignment sheets will be made available on the class website, and due dates are specified in the syllabus. Written work submitted later than fifteen minutes after the beginning of class on the due date will be lowered by a third of a grade for each day late, except in cases of illness or emergency. **All sources MUST be cited.** Please use **in-text citation.** For example:

American teenage girls seem to be in a liminal state, for "as a society, we discarded the Victorian moral umbrella over girls before we agreed on useful strategies and programs--a kind of 'social Gore-Tex' to help them stay dry" (Brumberg 1997: 201).

**Works Cited:**

NOTE. Proper anthropological citation utilizes the LAST NAME of the author, the YEAR of the publication date, and the PAGE number, in that order (Chicago in-text citation). **I will also accept MLA and APA citation.**

I will not accept footnote or endnote citation.

EVEN MORE IMPORTANT NOTE: NO FORM OF CITATION ALLOWS YOU TO OMIT PAGE NUMBERS ENTIRELY. PERIOD. If page numbers exist, you must include them for direct quotes and specific summary material.

Be sure to include the works cited page. All papers must be word-processed, spellchecked, double-spaced, and possess reasonable margins and page numbers. I highly encourage you to proofread as grammar and punctuation are essential parts of writing well, and writing is one of the main tools of the social sciences. Clear and readable prose is also highly esteemed! **We will be using our course site to turn in papers this semester.**
Important Policies on Written Work:

I will grade a paper down by an amount of my choosing for omitting any of the above (Works Cited page, name, title, etc.).
I will grade a paper down for incorrect or made-up citation format.
I will lower a grade by 4 points (from an A to an A-, and so on) for any paper that refers to men and women as “males” or “females” (noun use; of course it is fine to use the adjectives “male” and “female”). It is objectifying and dehumanizing to refer to human beings this way and I will not encourage it. We are not lab rats.

Late Days/Extension Days: I use a system with my upper-level classes that works like this: You are granted one week (seven days) of extension at the beginning of the semester. You do not have to ask ahead of time to use these days, you may simply exercise this privilege of being a little flexible about due dates. You may divide them up however you wish -- turn one paper in a week late, or three papers in each two days late. Please note the following rules:
1. You may divide your days up however you wish.
2. When you turn in any paper that uses late days/extension days, you MUST note at the top of the paper that "X extension days" or "Y late days" were used. Otherwise I will mark your paper as late, assuming that you do NOT wish to use your late days. You may not retroactively use late days.
3. Papers must be turned in electronically to the class site; this will timestamp your papers automatically. Email may only be used in the event you cannot reach the class site.
4. Weekend days count. For example, if you turned your paper in on a Monday after it was due on a Tuesday, you would need to use six late days, not four.

Rules for Paper Turn-ins:

All papers must be in PDF, RTF, or Microsoft Word (DOC or DOCX) format. No exceptions. I cannot accept links of any kind (to your work), nor will I follow them; I cannot look at GoogleDocs while they are on Google (you will need to export your document and upload it to our course site). This is for your legal protection as well as mine (regretfully). I cannot look at or share documents using any shared document platform (this is not because you and I do not understand the technical aspects thereof; it has to do with the problems of tracking document changes and turn-in dates).

Papers must be turned into/posted to our course site, unless you have technical difficulties, in which case you may email them directly to me.

Academic course turn-ins tend to be very picky about time -- even if you are 30 seconds late, it will mark the paper late. I am less picky and capable of looking at the timestamp; DO NOT PANIC. If you turned in your paper within a reasonable timeframe, you are fine.

I am happy to look at and comment on no more than 2 paragraphs of your paper via email (you may also ask whatever specific questions you have!). If you would like to discuss a full draft with me, please come to my office hours or make an appointment (I can give you more complete advice; also comments on a whole draft via email are "pre-grading" which I feel is unfair to your fellow students). You do not have to print out your paper to come to office hours unless you prefer to work that way; I have a computer and you may bring one too if you wish. You can come to office hours with a paper draft, half a draft, an outline, or just to discuss pre-writing -- this is all fine!

Class Participation and Courtesy:

We require and expect all students to treat each other with courtesy. Courtesy includes being prepared, being on time, and being respectful of the material and your colleagues’ work with it. Honor the labor of the author and your colleagues, don’t just dismiss work; analysis before critique.
Harassment, whether physical, sexual, or verbal, will not be tolerated in this class. We may be discussing some sensitive and sometimes upsetting topics; I expect this classroom to be a space for growth for students to express their views.

Respect confidentiality, for both our discussion and your own experience. What we share in this room is confidential. If you want to adduce examples which do not come from the texts, don't give names: we will be discussing sensitive subjects (this goes as well for your papers, if you are giving personal experiences or doing fieldwork). A friend gave me this excellent advice for talking about issues, and not individuals: "plots, not characters."

It is possible to disagree respectfully: rather than telling people that they are wrong, do what is called "reflecting" before responding. For example, "You seem to be saying that X is Y," (reflection) "however, I have a different opinion, which is that X is Z, because of A." Also, be sure not to disagree with people (i.e. "you are wrong,") but with their actual statements ("I do not agree with X equalling Y").

Don't be afraid to speak up, as everyone has something to contribute. We are all learning. Not every student must volunteer an opinion in every class, but your opinions count -- be sure to share them. As an adjunct to this, share the floor! Let others speak (and if you are afraid that you will forget your point, write it down). We also don't have to share our insights with the whole group -- let's also do smaller discussions in class, and one on one discussions as well. We can also use the forum for discussion and students are welcome to email the professor with questions or discussion points, even anonymously.

Use "I statements" for your opinions rather than assuming that what you think should be universal. This can also be helpful for distinguishing between personal opinion and facts which can be backed up by documented scholarly evidence.

Expressions of bias are hurtful even if unintended. Even if you did not mean to step on my foot, it's best if you move when I tell you that it hurts. Similarly, when someone says something that another person finds biased and hurtful, it's best to cease and apologize, even if that's not what the first person intended. Intent is not magic and will not prevent bias from happening; we all carry around unconscious misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, racism, and a host of other prejudices because of how society is. I encourage all students to try to be graceful about listening when their bias is brought up (and I promise to do my best, myself).

If you have any problems or questions, I encourage you to bring them to me, or to the Office of the Dean of Students.

These class courtesy rules were created with the help of my 2017 Graduate Feminist Theory class at Brandeis University, and Hanne Blank.

LAST IMPORTANT NOTES SPECIFIC TO THIS COURSE:

No one is permitted to post comments on ANY of the internet materials in the name of this class. While of course I would not (and cannot!) restrict you from your own social media consumption and participation in your own name, I do not want members of the class representing themselves as students of this class and posting comments in fandom communities. That way lies madness (and also very irritated fans). If you happen upon a fandom community that makes you exclaim “these are my people!” then by all means join them, but you should do so with all due respect for the conventions and culture of that online community (in general: lurk first).

This class is a place where all fans (and non-fans) are welcome. With the obvious exception of fandoms that advocate for the subjugation and death of any people, all fans are welcome in this class, regardless of their fandom. All fandoms are equally welcome, and should be treated with equal courtesy.
Regrade Requests: In the event of a grade dispute, I will re-evaluate the entire work according to my grading rubric. A higher grade is not guaranteed; a lower grade may result. You may always request to see my grade rubric.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is expected of all students. All work turned in must be the work of the student whose name appears at the top of the paper, except where you have specifically requested and received permission for a collaborative effort. All students are expected to cite their sources fully (whether from texts, interviews, or online). Summary information from class texts is not considered “common knowledge” and must be cited. Ignorance is not an excuse: misrepresentation of another person's work as your own is plagiarism under any and all circumstances. If you have any questions on when or whether to cite, please do not hesitate to ask. You may not turn in work for this class which you have previously turned in for other classes or for this class, except in the case of an explicit rewrite assignment. Plagiarism will be dealt with according to the Academic Honesty Policy; plagiarized work will result in a failure of the assignment and possibly the class and any further sanctions decided by the Board of Academic Integrity.

Required Statement: Four-Credit Course (with three hours of class-time per week) Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.). Please note that you may need to spend more than 9 hours of study time depending the varying amount of reading, writing, assignments, etc. per week.

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately with your letter from the Accessible Education Office. All communications will be kept confidential.

Credits: Many thanks to Hanne Blank and my grad students of Spring 2017, whose proposed class courtesy rules have been invaluable to the creation of this syllabus.

Background Reading: For students interested in why I have made certain choices on this syllabus. On Why There Are Trigger Warnings:

On the Laptop Rule:

On Emailing Your Professor Asking Whether You Missed Anything of Importance After You Missed Class for Whatever Reason:

On What Is Really Going On:

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Schedule of Topics and Due Dates

How to use this syllabus:

Each day’s reading usually begins with a theoretical piece, which serves as a lens for the lecture and discussion on fandom for that day. Following, I have arranged the subsequent articles in order of importance -- the first 2 to 3 should be read closely, and after that you can skim if you need to. Recommended articles are provided for your information (in case you want to delve deeper into this subject, perhaps for an essay) -- they are not required, but I may reference them in class.

Part 1: Introduction to the Class: Identity, Community, and Fandom

8/29 What is fandom? Why fandom? Why fandom and gender?
Reading: None

9/2 No class; Brandeis holiday

9/5 From Fandom as Pathology to Fandom as Community

Part 2: Doing Gender Through Fandom: Sports

Warnings: Domestic violence: Jones; Discussions of war: Jansen & Curry. Offensive racial stereotypes, discussed and analyzed: Williams, Moore, Watson, Ng

9/6 Brandeis Monday: We will have class
Sports Masculinities


9/12 Sports Femininities


Part 3: Women in Fandom(s)

9/17 What does it mean to be a female fan?


9/19 & 9/24  No class; Brandeis holidays

9/25  Brandeis Monday: NO CLASS due to campus schedule conflict

Instead of class, please view the film GTFO on our LATTE site.

9/26  Doing fandom “wrong”: anti-fans, fan conflict, and “bad fandoms”


10/1  No Class; Brandeis holiday

Part 4: Fandom and Performance -- Literal and Virtual Bodies

10/3  Cosplay


10/8  Online Identity


Avatar Creation Assignment Due

Part 5: Fandom Violence and Gender

Warnings: Violence: all readings; Domestic violence (personal accounts): Crosset, Sabo et al.; Sexual harassment (depictions, personal accounts): Pinachefsky, Valentine

10/10 Violence as Gender Performance: Sports


Guest Speakers: Alex and Zoe, on Library Resources

10/15 Violence as Gender Performance: Other Fandoms


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**10/17 Gamergate**

Important Warning: A number of these articles are online and deal with Gamergate. I cannot advise strongly enough not engaging in commenting. DETAILED DEATH AND RAPE THREATS ARE QUOTED IN THESE ARTICLES.


**Recommended:** Lees, Matt. 12/1/2016. “What Gamergate should have taught us about the ‘alt-right.’” *TheGuardian.com* (online news) [https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/dec/01/gamergate-alt-right-hate-trump] Online


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**Part 6: How (Not?) to Suppress Women’s Writing: Gender and Fandom Practices**

10/22 Fanfiction
Reading: Russ, Joanna. 1984. *How to Suppress Women's Writing*. Austin: University of Texas Press. Please read "Prologue" through "Isolation" (pages 1-61). The rest of this work is also highly recommended. Reserve.


10/24 Fandom as Gift Economy


Part 7: The Wild Unicorn Herd: Race in Fandom

Warnings: Offensive racial stereotypes and language (in the context of analyzing same): all readings

10/29 Fans of Color and Race in Fandom


**First Essay Due**

**10/31 Race and Gaming: Who Gets an Avatar?**


**1-Page Proposal for Final Research Project Due**

**Part 8: Sexuality and Erotics in Fandom**

**Warnings:** Discussion of sexuality: all readings; explicit material: Lackner et al (but not really, it’s an academic paper), Kabi.

**11/5 The complexity of fandom erotics**


Green, Shoshanna, Cynthia Jenkins, and Henry Jenkins. 1998. "Normal Female Interest in Men Bonking: Selections from the *Terra Nostra* Underground and *Strange Bedfellows,*" in
11/7  *Queer Fans*


Lothian, Alexis, Kristina Busse, and Robin Anne Reid. 2007. "'Yearning Void and Infinite Potential': Online Slash Fandom as Queer Female Space." *English Language Notes* 45(2): 103-111. Reserve.


**Part 9: Fandom Production (Case Study: Vids)**

*Warnings:* Vids contain explicit material: violence, partial nudity.

11/12  *Introduction to Vidding*


work.html] The vid included ("Women's Work") is also required (but be careful of highly explicit violence). [Vid: http://archiveofourown.org/works/719415?view_adult=true] Online.


Other Required Vids:
luminosity and sisabet. 2007. “Women's Work” (fanvid, Supernatural). [http://archiveofourown.org/works/719415?view_adult=true] Online. (You may have watched this in conjunction with Micol’s “Women’s Art and Women’s Work,” above)
The Guild. 4/2/2013. "I'm the One Who's Cool" (music video) at The Guild. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFhgupR565Q] Online.


11/14 Vid Presentations in Class
Written portion of Fanvid Assignment due.

11/19 Vid Presentations Continue

Vid Groups

Warnings: Vids contain explicit material: violence, nudity, sexual material.

Viewing Lists: (with thanks to futuransky and the Wiscon Vid Party)

IMPORTANT NOTE: Students will be assigned to one of the five viewing lists during the previous week. Students are only required to view all the vids on their own viewing list, although of course you are welcome to view them all, if you have time. Students will discuss their films with their group in discussion section and select one to present to the whole class, with commentary and discussion. Please see assignment sheet.

Please note that any of the vids below may contain violence, explicit sexual material, nudity, and offensive racial characterizations/stereotypes.

Group 1: Masculinity and the Female Gaze


Recommended: Clucking Belles (Sandy and Rache).  2002. "(I Like 'em) Big and Stupid." (fanvid:multi)  
[http://relative-obscurity.org/belles/cb.html]

**Group 2: Multiple and Cyborg Femininities**


Artisticazurite. 9/4/2015. “Shut Up and Dance” (fanvid: Steven Universe) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbq35EcWXRo]

Kiki_miserychic. 8/12/2014. "Flawless" (fanvid: Disney Princesses) [http://archiveofourown.org/works/2126589?view_adult=true]


PASSWORD REQUIRED: Starwork


**Group 3: Beyond the Magical Negro**

[https://vimeo.com/219530019]


Talithia78. 2006. "White' and Nerdy" (fanvid: Psych) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1quni9PMBMk&nohtml5=False]


Anoel. 8/1/2018. “Tightrope” (fanvid: Black Panther) [https://archiveofourown.org/works/14819279]


Recommended: Chalia. 5/27/2012. "Parable" (fanvid: Octavia Butler's Parable of the Sower series)  
[http://chalia.dreamwidth.org/129661.html]  (You may want to look up the narrative she is vidding, Parable of the Sower and Parable of the Talents, by Octavia Butler.) Warnings: implied violence.


**Group 4: Meta/Narrative: Vids About Vidding and Fandom**

fiercynn, Scribe. 4/11/2016. “We Didn't Start the Fire” (fanvid: multi/meta)  
[https://archiveofourown.org/works/6521773]

[https://vimeo.com/25803388]

Ghost_lingering. 2/17/2015. "Silent Fandoms" (fanvid: multi/meta)  
[http://ghost-lingering.dreamwidth.org/166967.html]

Flummery (Seah and Margie). 2005. "Walking on the Ground" (fanvid: multi/meta)  
[http://flummery.org]


Recommended: Giandujakiss. 8/11/2012. "A Different Kind of Love Song" (fanvid: multi/meta) [http://giandujakiss.dreamwidth.org/785401.html]

Group 5: There's No Such Thing as Apolitical


Bonus Round! Fandom Erotics, Slash, and the Queer Gaze (Optional/Recommended)

Thingswithwings. 10/19/2012 “The Glass” (fanvid: multi) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZLRAmqQ7ng&t=1s] (note commentary below!)

Charmax. 7/2/2008. "I'm Your Man." (fanvid: multi) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cAb1OAb93w]


Thingswithwings. 8/7/2018. “Gettin’ Bi” (fanvid: multi) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGm1aErFA90]

Recommended: Thingswithwings. 2/14/2015. "I Am What I Am." (fanvid: Batman TV series) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qksfGiU7J-A]


Thanksgiving Recess 11/21-11/25

Part 10: Fandom as Culture: Transgression and Small World Theory Redux
11/26


11/28


Neville, Lucy. 2018. “"The Tent's Big Enough for Everyone": online slash fiction as a site for activism and change.” Gender, Place & Culture 25(3): 384-398. Reserve.


Bonus Round: Final Topic Suggested by Class
12/3  Reading: TBD!

12/5  Reading: TBD!

12/10  Final Papers Due
Reading: No reading! General class discussion and party!