SOC 137a: Gender over the Lifecourse

Instructor: Keridwen N. Luis  
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Office Hours: Thursday, 9:30-11:30  
Office: Rabb 107  
Time: Mon, Wed, 2-3:30  
Location: Pearlman Hall 202  
Class Site: https://moodle2.brandeis.edu/course/view.php?id=6241

Course Description
This course introduces students to the study of gender by examining how gender impacts us over the "lifecourse:" that is, through early development; adolescence; mid-life events such as education, work, and forming families; as we age; and throughout the aging process. Gender is intersectional with other aspects of our identity, such as class, cultural background, race, sexuality, and ethnicity, and this course will examine how these aspects affect individual lives as well as different cohorts over the lifecourse. This course therefore offers a variety of disciplinary perspectives on the subject of both gender and life course studies to illuminate how gender, identity, and one's experience change over time, both as an individual, and in a broader historical perspective.

Although this course focuses on gender and the lifecourse in North America, other global perspectives are incorporated from time to time, both as a reminder that our society is highly diverse and as a way to approach an increasingly globalized world. We will read material from a wide variety of disciplines, including sociology, feminist studies, gender studies, anthropology, history, and history of medicine.

Required Readings:
This class depends largely on recent publications in sociology and the other social sciences, and therefore there are no required texts.

Recommended Books (available in the bookstore/online):
(this is highly recommended and available as a Kindle download)

Course Requirements:
Discussion Participation/Attendance: 25%  
Discussion Questions/Other Class Assignments 25%  
First Essay: 20%  
Final Project: 30%

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. Also, this is a seminar class, and so it is necessary to do the reading beforehand to participate in the discussion. It also makes the class more engaging if we have things to talk about. 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.*

**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.

**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!**

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

**Discussion Questions & Other Class Assignments:** Students will post a set of reading discussion questions to the class blog (due 6:00 pm the evening before class) at least three times during the semester, and will answer one question in an informal paragraph or two. There will be other short assignments, such as in-class writing exercises, out of class assignments, etc. Assignment sheets will be provided for out-of-class assignments.

**First Short Essay:** There will be a short essay due near the middle of the semester; an assignment sheet will be posted on our class website with clearer instructions and starter topics.

**Final Research Project:** Near the end of the semester, students will undertake an original research project on some aspect of gender they are interested in. Students may choose to do library research or to do original research with human subjects.

**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:** 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 citation and APA citation.

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 LATTE to turn in papers this semester.

Latedays/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 latedays/extension days, you MUST note at the top of the paper that "X extension days" or "Y latedays" were used. Otherwise I will mark your paper as late, assuming that you do NOT wish to use your latedays. You may not retroactively use latedays.
3. Papers must be turned in electronically to the class website; this will timestamp your papers automatically. Email may only be used in the event you cannot reach the class website.
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 latedays, not four.

Rules for Papers:
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 LATTE). 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).

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

Class Participation and Courtesy:
I 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. I also expect students to be respectful about different backgrounds and experiences in the classroom. A longer
classroom courtesy sheet, with helpful tips about framing disagreement and opinions, can be found on our class website.

If you have any problems or questions, I encourage you to bring them to me, or to the Director of Studies of the WGS department.

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.

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). 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. Plagiarism will be dealt with according to the Academic Honesty Policy; plagiarized work will result in a failure of the class and further sanctions, at the discretion of Brandeis University, may result.

If you are a student with a documented disability on record and wish to have accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately with your letter from Academic Services. All communications will be kept confidential.

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 Readings and Due Dates

Week 1-2: Understanding Gender and Gender Studies

1/18 No class


**Week 3: Gender at the Intersections**


**Weeks 4-5: Gender in Childhood & Education**


2/15/-2/19 Break

Weeks 6-7: Gender and Adolescence: Sexual Debut, Sex Education, and Coming of Age


First Essay Due


Week 8: Reproductive Choice and Reproduction


Week 9: Home/Work: Domestic and Non-domestic Labor
Research Proposal Due


**Week 10: Gender & Sexuality Again**


**Weeks 11-12: Violence and Gender**

3/28 No Class


**Week 13: The Politics of Appearance and Media**


**Week 14: Gendered Aging**


4/22-4/29: Break

5/2 Last day of class; project presentations; wrap up discussions

Final projects due