Course Statement

When a baby is born, one of the first questions asked is, “What is it?” Of course, what this really means is: “Is it a girl or a boy?” Since the invention of ultrasound and amniocentesis, this query is often raised even before birth. Some prospective parents feel they need to know the sex of their future baby in order to be able to imagine it as a person. This reveals just how essential gender is for our conception of personhood. After birth, our sex largely determines the clothes we wear, the games we play, and how people interact with us. As we grow from babies into children, then teenagers and adults, our gender continues to shape our choice of friends, leisure activities, and employment. Gender also informs the experience of aging. Though having male or female genitalia is a biological fact (for most), the social meaning attributed to it – what we call gender – is socially constructed. In this class, we will explore the ways in which gender is socially constructed and the implications this process has for men and women. By looking across time, place, class, race, ethnicity, and age, we will learn that gender can have distinct meanings in disparate social settings. We will pay special attention to how gender difference translates into gender inequality.

This is a demanding 4-unit class. As such, I expect you to spend an average of 12 hours on it each week. If you are taking three other challenging classes this quarter and/or are working several hours each week, you should think seriously before continuing with this class. There are approximately 900 pages of scholarly (some of it quite challenging) reading over the quarter, and you are responsible for completing each week’s readings before class on Thursday. This means that Thursday quizzes will include questions on the current week. You will need at least six hours during the third week to do the empirical component of the essay and at least six hours during weeks 4-6 to write up the essay, preferably writing several drafts. You will have three scheduled quizzes on the readings and the lectures, which means that cramming for this class is simply not feasible. On the other hand, with careful planning, this class is doable.

Evaluation

- 1 take home empirical essay using readings: 30% (instructions available on class website)
- Highest two grades on three scheduled quizzes, which cover readings assigned for the current week and weeks since the most recent quiz, which usually means over the past three weeks. There will also be questions from lecture. (The first missed quiz is excused
as your lowest grade. After that, missed quizzes are averaged in as zeros. There will be absolutely no make-ups allowed.): 20%

- Final Exam, including multiple choice questions and one long essay question: 40%
- Discussion section: 10%
- If you miss a film, you will need to make your own arrangements to see it outside of class time, e.g. at the library media lab.

Required texts (Available at the ASUCLA Student Store and on reserve at Powell)

- Saguy, Abigail C. 2003. *What is Sexual Harassment? From Capitol Hill to the Sorbonne*

Required Course packet (Available at Course Reader Material, 1137 Westwood Boulevard, phone 310.443.3303, on class website)

Overview

Weeks 1 and 2: An Introduction to the Sociology of Gender
Week 3: Fetuses, Babies, and Children
Weeks 4 and 5: Children
Week 6: Teens and Young Adults
Weeks 7-9: Adulthood
Week 10: Old Age

Detailed Schedule

Week 1, April 4, 6: Introduction


Week 2, April 11, 13: Introduction


Week 3, April 18, 20: Fetuses, Babies, and Children

• Movie: “Brandon and Rachel” (34 minutes, shown in lecture)
• Quiz 1: Thursday, April 20

Week 4, April 25, 27: Children I
• Barrie Thorne, *Gender Play: Girls and Boys at School*, chapters 4-7, (pp. 49-134)
• Movie: “Ma Vie en Rose” (shown in lecture)

Week 5, May 2, 4: Children II
• Barrie Thorne, *Gender Play: Girls and Boys at School*, chapters 8-9 (pp. 135-173)
• Mimi Nichter, 2001, *Fat Talk: What Girls and their Parents Say about Dieting*, “Introduction: Barbie and Beyond,” (pp. 1-9), Chapter 1: In the Presence of the Perfect Girl” (pp. 15-44), chapter 6, “Looking Good among African-American Girls” (pp. 159-80)
• Movie: “Killing Us Softly III” (2000), 34 minutes, shown in lecture.

Week 6, May 9, 11: Teenagers and Young Adults
• Kristen Schilt, TBA, will be posted to class website.
• Guest lecture: Kristen Schilt, “Transexualities.” February 14
• Quiz 2: Thursday, May 11

Week 7, May 16, 18: Adulthood I
• Movie: “The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter” (65 min., shown in lecture)
Week 8, May 23, 25: Adulthood II

- Movie: “Chore Wars”
- Tuesday, May 23: Empirical Essay Due at beginning of lecture (1/2 letter grade off if turned in after first five minutes of class. Every day late, one letter grade off)

Week 9, May 30, June 1: Adulthood III

- Abigail C. Saguy, 2003. *What is Sexual Harassment: From Capitol Hill to the Sorbonne*, Introduction, Chapter 1-2 (pp. 1-72) AND Conclusion (pp. 128-142).
- Quiz 3: Thursday March 9

Week 10: June 6, 8: Old Age

- Calasanti, Toni M. and Kathleen F. Slevin, 2001. *Gender, Social Inequalities, and Aging*, Introduction (pp. 1-12); Chapter 1, “A Gender Lens on Old Age” (pp. 13-28); Chapter 3, “Bodies in Old Age” (pp. 51-72), Chapter 4, “Sex, Sexuality, and Old Age” (pp. 73-92); Chapter 5, “Gender, Social Inequalities, and Retirement Income” (pp. 93-120); Chapter 6, “Retirement Experiences: The Continuity of Work” (121-142).

Final Exam: Tuesday, Monday, June 12, 2006, 3:00pm-6:00pm