

FEB. 07 2003

SOCIOLOGY 3010  
**SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER**  
(Winter 2003)  
Grande Prairie Regional College

Instructor: Alan Segal

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Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays: 15.00 - 16.00    Tuesdays and Thursdays: 14.00 - 15.00  
Or by Appointment

Course Description:

An inquiry into contemporary and historical concepts, assumptions, and expressions of gender, and their political, personal, cultural, and social implications.

Course Prerequisite: SOCIOLOGY 1000

**Required Reading:**

Taking sides: Sex and gender, Second Edition - Elizabeth Paul, Editor

Dreams of trespass - Fatima Mernissi

Gender - Anna Tripp, Editor

**Recommended Reading:**

Gender in Canada - E.D. Nelson & Barrie Robinson

## Assignments:

### *Essay/Project*

- Due the last class of the semester
- All assignments will be marked on a 1-9 scale
- **Late assignments will be penalized 1 stanine per day, including weekends.**
- You may write on any topic that interests you, even one not addressed in class discussions or lectures, providing it is relevant to the course.
- If you choose to write an essay, do not write a descriptive report. The essay must be an analytical exploration about the ideas you express.
- Additional research is expected. Five sources must be used beyond the assigned books for the course. At least three must be academic, such as might be located in books or journals, or original documents. The remaining minimum of two can be informal sources: interviews, conversations, popular media of any kind, internet websites, etcetera. Be precise; reason rather than merely express opinion, and be grammatical. Grammatical mistakes may affect your mark. The required length is 1500 words. Essays that are too brief will be assessed a ½ stanine penalty.
- All papers must include references in the text itself, as well as a "Works Cited" section. Should either reference section be omitted, your assignment will be reduced by 1 stanine per section. Documentation must follow MLA style. If a style other than MLA is used there will be a reduction of ½ stanine.
- All written assignments are to be submitted by email. However, too often my system cannot open an attachment. Cutting from your word processor, and pasting into an email format, appears to work more reliably.
- If you opt for a different kind of major assignment, for example a fine arts project, critical thinking must still be evident. Consult with me about how this might be done.
- In these types of assignment, a 750 word paper explaining the sociological significance of what you hand in must also be provided.

### **Three Journals**

- Journals are due the first classes of each month, starting in February. Each is worth a maximum of 1.5 stanines. The usual evaluation, however, will be 1.
- Each journal is minimally the equivalent of one typewritten page, double spaced.
- Anything pertaining to gender, sexuality, identity, ideas introduced in class discussions or lectures, class interaction, etc., is suitable. Observations about, and suggestions for, the course are also suitable. No research is necessary or expected. The journals are an informal type of

communication with me.

- Journals must have your name and course number clearly identified.

### Discussion Bonus

- Because class discussion is a vital aspect of this course, you may (but not necessarily will) receive a bonus mark for the QUALITY of your class discussion, based on a combination of the frequency and quality of the participation.
  - You will be eligible only if you display commitment to the course by doing your reading and completing the required assignments. **Although attendance is not relevant to the regular assignments for the course, it is important to your eligibility for a bonus mark. If you are absent for more than 3 classes, you will not receive a bonus grade.**
  - The bonus mark will have a range of 1-3.
1. This course has a webCT discussion forum. I will look in on it periodically, but I will not participate unless requested to do so. Participation in this, as in class discussion, is not mandatory, but if you do contribute I might gain a better sense of your overall contribution to our discussions. I will treat webCT involvement of this type as I would in-class comments.

### Tabulation of Marks

- The total of all stanine marks available for assignments is 13.5.
- Your marks will be totaled out of 18.5, a percentage will be obtained, and the percentage will be re-converted to a final stanine grade according to the following table.

| Stanine Grade | Percentage Equivalent |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| 9             | 90 - 100              |
| 8             | 80 - 89               |
| 7             | 70 - 79               |
| 6             | 60 - 69               |
| 5             | 55 - 59               |
| 4             | 50 - 54               |
| 3             | 40 - 49               |
| 2             | 20 - 39               |
| 1             | 0 - 19                |

NOTE: No class averaging will be done.

## DISCUSSION SEQUENCE

### 1. Dreams of trespass: Chapters 1- 12

- Describe the harem that Mernissi experienced. How many kinds of harem were there?
- What were the harem's limits, frontiers, and possibilities?
- How did the harem as an idea and a practise, influence men's lives?
- The harem contained different women with a variety of ideas and opinions. Prepare to offer a continuing overview of these currents as we proceed through the book.
- What was the boundary between adulthood and childhood in the harem? Were there differences between male and female childhood?
- What is an allegory? What was allegorical about the story of Scheherazade?
- What was the cultural and gender significance of World War 2 to the people in Mernissi's life?
- Why was Asmahan important to, at least, the women of the harem?

### 2. Dreams of trespass: Chapters 13- 22

- The visit of Egyptian feminists was an important event for many of the women in the harem. Why?
- All societies distinguish between commonplace and special occurrences. What distinctions are mentioned in these chapters? Does Princess Budur fit into this distinction?
- What is the significance of the cinema and the terrace being forbidden? In any society, we can find forbidden experience. Of what social value, if any, is both the idea and the practise of something being forbidden? Is prohibiting behaviour the same thing as forbidding it?
- Why do puberty and attending school acquire significance in Mernissi's life? Why mention "skin" and "politics" in the same title?
- What endows any social or personal experience with significance?

### 3. Theoretical overview. Tripp: Introduction

- What ideas does Tripp identify as central to the essays she has selected in her book? Are you able to identify concepts she believes are crucial to understanding gender?

4. Sides: Introduction; Issues 1-3; Tripp: Chapters 2 & 9

- What dilemmas are posed by Paul in her discussion of belief and knowledge?
- What assessment do you have of the comment on page 8 regarding gender-neutral and de-gendered societies?
- What criteria might we use to ascertain if a natural human state exists?
- What logical relationship is Hausman trying to establish between gender and narrativity? What does she mean by narrativity?
- What concepts would you utilize to explain identity?
- What does Woolf communicate when she writes of women and fiction? Are fiction and narrativity the same thing? Whether it can or not, is our insight into gender enhanced by her what she states in her essay?
- What makes sex role nonconformity dysfunctional? What is dysfunction, and do we benefit socially from using such terminology?
- How do we build men? Do you agree with Fausto-Sterling's perspective of what men are and how we engender them? How do we build women?

5. Sides: Issues 4 & 6

- Are correlation and causation the same thing? If not, explain the difference between them. Do political considerations enter our appraisal of either analytical approach?
- How do you explain communication? What logic suggests communication is or is not gendered?

6. Tripp: Chapter 4; Sides: Issues 9 & 10

- Why does Rich call for more feminist criticism? Although she writes of literary criticism, do her ideas apply well to cultural criticism? If so, what concepts particularly are suited for this? Which, if any, are not?
- On what basis could we argue that something is universally wrong? Is this stance viable especially with regard to gender, or is it a position applicable to most of the questions we have about life?
- Prepare to discuss the question at the top of page 191.
- Identify gender constraints, and the prospects for freedom from them. Should we contemplate the issue in such stark ways? What is freedom in this case? What is constraint?

7. Tripp: Chapters 5 & 7

- What does colonial discourse mean to Mohanty?
- What critique of western feminist scholarship is presented here? Does the critique have important implications for us in contemporary North American society?
- What is the relationship of race to white masculinity? How would you explain masculinity? Is there a reasonable basis to 'racialize' masculinity?

8. Sides: Issues 11 - 14

- Might fetal sex selection entrench or transform gender as a social category?
- A very controversial suggestion is the linkage of gender, and masculinity, to social violence. Are you persuaded by the logic of this position? If so, do you agree that domestic violence is a gender crime?
- Do you connect parenting ability with gender?

9. Tripp" Chapter 10

- What are the discontents of femininity?
- Assuming for a moment that you accept Rose's assertions, how would you explain sociologically the emergence of discontent?
- How does discontent intersect culture? How does psychoanalysis fit into Rose's position?

10. Tripp: Chapters 13 & 14

- What does Butler mean by "critically queer"? What relationship exists between performative power and queer trouble?
- Given Elam's thoughts, do you choose gender, sex, neither, or....? What is the argument presented, such that the question can even be raised?

11. Sides: Issues 17 - 19

- Is a fixed definition of gender identity a problem?
- Do we benefit sociologically from thinking of transgendered consciousness as a form of blended

gender substance?

- What is selfhood?
- What input does culture have in the splitting referred to by Reitz?
- Will cyberspace enable us to transcend gender? If people present themselves as other genders on the internet, are they modifying the boundaries of gender?
- What understandings of gender do you detect in Turkle's and Kendall's work?