

Women, Men and Culture

GENA 2192 Spring 2023
Thursday 3:30pm—5:15pm
NAH 115

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Course description

In her book *The Second Sex*, Simon de Beauvoir famously wrote: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” What did she mean? Aren’t you born a woman or a man? Isn’t it given? Or do you *become* a woman and a man as guided by the culture you are part of? If, indeed, culture plays a guiding role, then can you be somebody other than a man or a woman?

In this course, we will combine anthropological and interdisciplinary approaches with rich ethnographic examples to understand the category of gender. Gender describes how we identify ourselves and categorize others as “men,” “women” or belonging to other gender, and how these categories have implications for social interactions, power relations, the organization of labor, and other aspects of life. We will question what it means to be masculine, feminine, or gender nonconforming as related to ways of living, speaking, maintaining health, eating, and decorating our bodies. We will learn how biological and sexual differences are interpreted and acted upon in different societies. By doing so, we will also develop a better understanding of our own gender assumptions and expectations.

The course will illuminate the experiences of women, men, and differently gendered individuals across different societies: in the Americas, Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Pacific. Based on a series of captivating articles, documentaries, YouTube videos, games, and other class activities, this course will invite you to reflect on gendered aspects of beauty, sexuality, health, money, inheritance, political power, knowledge, kinship, and technology. We will also debate about how gender intersects with other collective categories such as race, social class, religion, and citizenship. Students are expected to participate actively in the lecture.

Course objectives

By the end of this course, students will

- Understand the concept of gender and the cross-cultural variations of gender categories
- Develop a critical awareness to gender inequality locally and globally
- Critically evaluate and/or compare the experiences of men and women as related to their social class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and citizenship

Required readings

All readings are posted on Blackboard. Keep in mind that some readings may be changed during the semester. Please, make sure to consult Blackboard before each class.

Assessment

Forum participation – 30%

For 6 weeks of your choosing, you will need to submit two reading responses to a Blackboard forum in either of the following formats:

- your own post + one comment on your classmate's post
- two comments on your classmates' posts

These responses do not have to be long—they could be as brief as two-three sentences but they must meet the following criteria:

- be pertinent to the main arguments of the texts (demonstrate that you have read the texts)
- be meaningful and original (demonstrate that you have thought about the texts)
- be polite and respectful

You should have 12 posts by the end of the semester. Two posts of the chosen weeks should be posted on Blackboard before the class.

Midterm test – 30%

This is an in-class test based on the main concepts and facts from the course readings and lectures. The test will include multiple-choice, true-or-false, and fill the gap questions. There will be 50 questions, and the test will last 50 minutes, after which we will proceed to a short lecture. **NO MAKE-UP EXAM**

When: Week 7, March 2

Photo-ethnography – 40%

This is a locally based mini-ethnographic project that uses photography as a means of delivery. Chose a research question related to the readings and topics discussed in this course and pertinent to Hong Kong.

Your main method will be observation and photo-documentation, including at least one full hour of careful observations. Places you can observe:

- a physical place: a grocery store, a bus, a coffee shop, a community center, etc.
- an event: a concert, a mass, a sports event, a birthday party, etc.
- a museum exhibition or art installation

This project is not a simple description of your observations but should also include analysis. Your main goal is to demonstrate the ability to apply anthropological concepts and approaches to a discussion of gender issues in Hong Kong. You should provide a nuanced, critical, comprehensive analysis that is free from ethnocentric biases and supported by academic evidence. Your project should be based on your original work (photos taken by you, observations conducted by you, arguments developed by you).

There should be at least 10 meaningful photos supplemented by 150–200 word captions per photo with a longer introduction.

For examples of photo-ethnographic essays, see *Writing with Light* series at <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/editors-forum/writing-with-light>

Due: May 11, 23:59

Grading scale and criteria

Grade	Exam and overall %	Forum posts	photo essay
A	95-100	12 posts are submitted on time	<p>your essay demonstrates a nuanced understanding of class material and concepts; information is accurate, the data is relevant</p> <p>The photographs and texts are original, of a required length and format, and submitted on time</p>
A -	90-94	11 posts are submitted on time	<p>Your essay demonstrates a nuanced understanding of class material and almost all concepts; information is factually accurate; arguments are convincing, even if occasionally contain minor errors; the data is relevant</p> <p>The photographs and texts are original, of a required length and format, and submitted on time</p>
B+	85-89	10 posts are submitted on time	<p>Your essay demonstrates an overall good understanding of class material but may lack clarity, contain several minor errors, and / or slightly deviate from required length and format. The data is somewhat relevant</p> <p>The photographs and texts are original and submitted on time.</p>
B	80-84	9 posts are submitted on time	<p>Your essay demonstrates an overall good understanding of class material but may lack clarity, contain many minor errors, and / or deviate from required length and format. The data is somewhat relevant</p> <p>The photographs and texts are submitted on time. They are original, although there might be minor problems with citations and attribution</p>
B -	75-79	8 posts are submitted on time	<p>Your essay demonstrates an overall good understanding of class material but lack clarity, contain minor errors and a few major logical flaws, and / or deviate from required length and format. The data is somewhat relevant</p> <p>The photographs and texts are submitted on time. They are original, although there might be minor problems with citations and attribution</p>
C +	70-74	7 posts are submitted on time	<p>Your essay demonstrates an acceptable level of understanding of class material but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws, and/or often deviate from required length and format. The data is not clear and a bit irrelevant</p> <p>The photographs and texts are submitted on time or a day late. They are original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution</p>
C	65-69	6 posts are submitted on time	<p>Your essay demonstrates an acceptable level of understanding of class material but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws. Your work does not follow the required length and format. The data is not clear and a bit irrelevant</p>

			The photographs and texts are submitted on time or a day late. They are original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution
C -	60-64	5 posts are submitted on time	Your essay demonstrates an acceptable level of understanding of class material but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws. Your work does not follow the required length and format. The data is not clear and a bit irrelevant The photographs and texts are submitted a day or two late. They are original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution
D +	55-59	3-4 posts are submitted on time	Your essay demonstrates minimal understanding of class material. It lacks effort, hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints. The data is not clear and irrelevant The photographs and texts are original, but citations are absent. The writing considerably deviates from the required length and format (answers are too short), and/or is submitted a few days late.
D	50-54	1-2 posts are submitted on time or all are submitted after the class time	Your essay demonstrates minimal understanding of class material. It lacks effort, hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints. The data is not clear and irrelevant The photographs and texts are original, but citations are absent. The writing considerably deviates from the required length and format (answers are too short), and is submitted many days late.
F	0	No posts are submitted at all	The essay is submitted more than a week late without an excuse or not submitted at all. It is extremely short, factually incorrect, biased, and/or contain instances of plagiarism.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: January 12 Introduction to the course

Week 2: January 19 Is being a woman or a man our only option?

- BBC (2016) Do we need more than two genders? <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-35242180>
- The Indian Express (2017) Indigenous tribes embraced gender fluidity prior to colonisation, but Europeans enforced specific gender roles <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/indigenous-tribes-embraced-gender-fluidity-prior-to-colonisation-but-europeans-enforced-specific-gender-roles>
- Optional: A map of gender-diverse cultures. Click and explore on your own. In PBS, 2015 https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/content/two-spirits_map-html/

January 26. No class. Lunar New Year

Week 3: February 2 Have men and women equally contributed to human evolution?

- Vivek Venkataraman, The Conversation (2021) Ancient men were hunters and women were gatherers. Right? Wrong. In Scroll.in <https://scroll.in/article/989275/ancient-men-were-hunters-and-women-were-gatherers-right-wrong>
- Michael Greshko (2017) Famous Viking Warrior Was a Woman, DNA Reveals. In National Geographic <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/viking-warrior-woman-archaeology-spd>

Week 4: February 9 Are men and women's brains wired differently? Do they have different talents and preferences?

- Lise Eliot (2019) Neurosexism: the myth that men and women have different brains. In *Nature* <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-00677-x>
- Sonshinemagazine (2018) Animals, aggression and entitlement: Boys' clothes on the High Street <https://sonshinemagazine.com/magazine/animals-aggression-and-entitlement>

Week 5: February 16 Do women and men talk differently?

- Deborah Cameron: Speak up, I can't hear you. In *The Guardian*, October 2, 2007 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/oct/02/gender.familyandrelationships>
- Alisha (2020) It's Not Just You: In Online Meetings, Many Women Can't Get a Word In. In *New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/14/us/zoom-meetings-gender.html>

Week 6: February 23 Do men and women like different foods?

- Eva Wiseman (2010) The truth about men, women and food. In *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2010/oct/17/gender-eating-men-women>
- Rachel Sugar (2021) The politics of "dude food." In *Vox* <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/22178806/diners-dudes-diets-emily-contois>

Week 7: March 2 Do all women have maternal instinct? What about men?

In-class test today

- Jennifer Neal (2017) The Maternal Instinct Is A Myth And We've Got The Science To Prove It. In *Medium* https://medium.com/@jenniferneal_39017/the-maternal-instinct-is-a-myth-and-weve-got-the-science-to-prove-it-de435786adbf
- Sarah Gibbens (2018) Is Maternal Instinct Only for Moms? Here's the Science. In National Geographic <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/mothers-day-2018-maternal-instinct-oxytocin-babies-science>

March 10. No class

Reading week

March 16. No class

I am at a conference overseas. The class will be rescheduled.

Week 8: March 23. Do women and men have different sexuality?

- Brandon Ambrosino (2017) The invention of 'heterosexuality.' In *BBC* <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20170315-the-invention-of-heterosexuality>
- Joanna Moorhead (2018) A strong libido and bored by monogamy: the truth about women and sex. In *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/oct/13/a-strong-libido-and-bored-by-monogamy-the-truth-about-women-and-sex>
- Tony Silva (2021) Why some straight men have sex with other men. In *The Conversation* <https://theconversation.com/why-some-straight-men-have-sex-with-other-men-160140>

Week 9: March 30 Are diseases gender-specific or gendered?

- Patti Neighmond (201) When Men Get Breast Cancer, They Enter A World Of Pink. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/02/08/465578231/when-men-get-breast-cancer-they-enter-a-world-of-pink>
- Laura Beil (2016) More men are developing eating disorders. Why are we treating it as only a women's disease? <https://www.statnews.com/2016/12/28/male-eating-disorders>

Week 10: April 6. Should women be beautiful and men be strong?

- Rachel Lubitz (2016) Makeup isn't suddenly genderless. It always has been. In *Mic* <https://www.mic.com/articles/160407/makeup-isn-t-suddenly-genderless-it-always-has-been>
- Jamilla Rosdahl (2014) Why do we find muscular women wildly perplexing? In *The Conversation* <https://theconversation.com/why-do-we-find-muscular-women-wildly-perplexing-21846>

Week 11: April 13 Does globalization affect women and men in the same way?

Week 12: April 20 Why are women paid less? Is gender equality achievable?

Week 13. April 24 (Make-up class) Methods in the anthropology of gender: How to conduct ethnographic observations and write a photo-essay