Gendered Bodies over the Life Course

Spring 2016
IFS 2056
HSF 2009
MW 9:30-10:45
Office hours: Tu 11-12:30pm

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Course description
This course examines how gender – as it is embedded in individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions of society – gets woven into experiences of our bodies over the entire life course. We’ll explore two major themes: Our bodies bear the imprint of gender inequalities, and efforts to control or contain bodies -- as well as resistance to these efforts -- reflect gender politics. In exploring these themes, we will cover a wide range of substantive topics spanning the life course, including gendered bodies in preschool, menarche, childbirth, breastfeeding, intersexuality, cosmetic surgery, transsexuals, anorexia, sports, violence, Viagra, and widowhood. Adding to the variety, I have included review articles and empirical pieces, work by sociologists and historians, and quantitative and qualitative research.

Course goals
The course is designed not only to provide knowledge about how gender – as one of the major dimensions of inequality – shapes individuals’ lives but also to cultivate skills that are useful beyond the classroom. At the completion of the course, students will be able to do the following:

- Describe ways that gender shapes the embodied experiences of boys and girls, women and men
- Apply various perspectives on gender to the explanation of social phenomena, providing assessments of their relative utility
- Critically examine, interpret, and explain how political, cultural, economic, and social structures shape the current configurations and experiences of gendered bodies
- Critically evaluate empirical social research published in academic outlets or reported in the popular press
- Gather and analyze data using social research methods to evaluate causal arguments, assertions, assumptions, and explanatory evidence
- Evaluate and employ appropriate research methods and technology in the collection and analysis of data
- Develop clear, well-supported arguments expressed in writing

E-Series specific objectives
Students will demonstrate the ability to do the following:

- analyze and synthesize information from within and across disciplines to examine existing questions and problems from a variety of perspectives, formulate novel questions and ideas, and explain these questions and ideas in written and oral formats
- think creatively and flexibly by envisaging new approaches to real-world scenarios or questions
- learn, think, and solve problems independently and in teams -- as is required to engage in the life-long consideration of cooperative solutions to complex problems.

Course requirements
Attendance/participation (15% of final grade): All students are expected to come to class prepared to actively participate in discussions. This means that all readings must be completed before coming to class. I expect students to regularly attend class, arrive to class on time, and be respectful of all students in the seminar. Failure to act in a professional manner during class will influence your final grade in the course. Please note that any unexcused absences will negatively affect attendance/participation grades.
**Sociological Observation Log (30% of final grade):** You will be keeping an observation log during the semester that includes your sociological observations about gendered bodies. It should contain thoughtful reflections on the readings, as well as observations you make about the course topics in your daily life. You will turn in your typed log at three points in the semester, as noted on course calendar. There are several requirements for your log.

1. Reflect on at least two of the readings assigned for each day. The purpose of the log (and our class discussions) is to encourage you to actively engage with the issues raised by the readings, rather than simply passively reading about them. At the end of the syllabus, I’ve listed some questions to think about as you read the articles. These should give you some ideas for your log entries. I’m not setting a word limit; rather, I anticipate that your logs will vary a bit in length, depending on your engagement with the issues. However, I’d expect that sometimes you might write 3-5 sentences about an article, while at other times you’ll write twice that much because you have lots to say!

2. Make sociological observations related to what we’re reading about and discussing in class (e.g., in your everyday life, while reading or listening to news, looking at ads, reading for other classes, listening to songs).

3. Engage in one small-scale “experiment” involving your own breaking of a gendered body norm. Your log should include a discussion of your experience. For an example, I’ll post online an example from the book *Embodied Resistance* on women students’ experiences of breaking leg shaving norms (and a more extreme example in the chapter titled “Rapunzel to G.I. Jane”!)

**Leading class discussion (5% of final grade):** Students will be responsible for leading discussion of the readings (e.g., on a week with three readings, three students will have discussion leading responsibilities). This responsibility involves two tasks. First, you should come to class prepared to provide a very brief summary of the article (no more than 5 minutes). Everyone will have read the article, so the purpose of your summary is simply to very briefly remind the class about the major issues raised by the article (e.g., in an empirical piece, remind us of the specific research question(s), the data used, and the major findings). The second part of your assignment as discussion leader for the article involves bringing to class about 5-6 questions or comments that are designed to stimulate discussion of the article. In developing questions, you should refer to the guidelines I’ve provided at the end of the syllabus. Failure to attend class on the day you are assigned to lead discussion will result in a grade of zero.

**Group project (15% of final grade):** We will conduct group projects in conjunction with our readings on the construction of gendered bodies in childhood. We will take a fieldtrip to a toy store to work in groups collecting data on messages about gender reflected in these cultural products. In preparation for our trip, we’ll work together in class to decide which broad constructs we’ll examine and then develop coding sheets to collect data tapping these constructs. Working in small groups, we’ll collect data and then compile them on our course website. Students will form small groups to analyze components of our data addressing a particular topic or theme that emerged from the observations. Results of these group projects will be presented to the class (including a powerpoint submitted by each group).

**Short description of your final project (5% of final grade):** Early in the term, you will be required to turn in a 1-page paper describing your plans for the final project. Be sure that your 1-page paper clearly states your research question(s). You are encouraged to meet with me in advance of turning in this paper, so that I can give you more guidance.
**Point outline of final project (5% of final grade):** Midway through the term, you will turn in a point outline giving a thumbnail sketch of the main points you’ll make in each section of your paper – the intro, the lit review, methods, results, and discussion. I’ll explain how the “point outline” differs from the “topic outline” that you probably became familiar with in grammar school! I’ll provide a few examples, too. This step will help you organize your thinking about your paper, and it provides me an efficient way to give you feedback on your project as a whole.

**Class presentation of final project (5% of final grade):** The last week of class, you’ll be presenting brief presentations to the class on your final project. The length of the presentation will depend on the size of the class, but each will be no more than 10 minutes (including a few minutes for discussion). It is also possible that we’ll need to schedule an additional session for presentations.

**Final project (20% of final grade):** The final project will be an individual paper on any topic relevant to the course. It will involve a synthesis of relevant literature and a small amount of data collection (through interviews, surveys, participant observation, or content analysis). It will be approximately 10-12 pages long, and will be due by 5pm on **Tuesday of final exam week**. Please upload the paper to our website, using the turnitin link that I provide.

**Readings:** All readings will be posted on the course website.

**Academic Honor Policy**
Students are expected to abide by the Academic Honor Policy of the Florida State University, including the statement on Values and Moral Standards published in The Florida State University General Bulletin. The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “... be honest and truthful and ... [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at [http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy](http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy))

Any student who plagiarizes or otherwise behaves in a dishonest way may be reported to the university administration for further disciplinary action as specified in the Academic Honor Policy. Any form of academic dishonesty will result in a "zero" for that particular assignment or an "F" for the course, at the instructor’s discretion.

**Work Policy**
Students must complete assignments at the times indicated on the syllabus. Students will be permitted to make up coursework that was missed because of verified emergencies and/or medical illness. Please note that medical illness refers to conditions that are serious in nature and require treatment by medical professionals and/or surgical or other treatments. It is also necessary that you contact me *as soon as possible* after missing an assignment due to an emergency or medical illness. In most cases, it is reasonable to expect that you’d email me within 1-2 days of missing an assignment. Please note that each unexcused absence -- in excess of one -- will result in your final grade being docked by half a letter grade – e.g., a final grade of a B would become a B-.

If due dates for course assignments coincide either with the observation of religious holidays or the representation of FSU at official functions, such as intercollegiate debating or varsity sports events, you must contact your instructor in advance of the due date for the assignment for which alternative arrangements will be made.
**Incomplete Grades**
Missing work or uncompleted assignments are insufficient reasons for a grade of Incomplete. An Incomplete grade will not be given except under extenuating circumstances at the instructor’s discretion. Note that College of Social Science guidelines require that students seeking an “I” must be passing the course.

**Americans with Disabilities Act**
Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should do the following: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This must be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the: Student Disability Resource Center 874 Traditions Way 108 Student Services Building Florida State University Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167; (850) 644-9566 (voice); (850) 644-8504 (TDD); sdrc@admin.fsu.edu;  http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/

**E-Series**
The *Liberal Studies for the 21st Century Program* at Florida State University builds an educational foundation that will enable FSU graduates to thrive both intellectually and materially and to support themselves, their families, and their communities through a broad and critical engagement with the world in which they live and work. Liberal Studies offers a transformative experience. This course has been approved as meeting the requirements for the E-Series and is designed to help you become an interdisciplinary and flexible thinker, a lifelong learner, and a team builder. In addition, this course has been approved for the Liberal Studies disciplinary requirement in the Social Sciences and is designed to help you become a critical appraiser of theories and the facts that support them.

To demonstrate college-level writing competency as required by the State of Florida, the student must earn a "C" (2.0) or higher in the course and earn at least a “C” average on the required writing assignments. If the student does not earn a “C” average or better on the required writing assignments, the student will not earn an overall grade of “C” or better in the course, no matter how well the student performs in the remaining portion of the course.
Course Calendar (subject to minor revision)

**Wed., Jan. 6 – WELCOME! 😊**

**Mon., Jan. 11 – Orienting Concepts**


**Wed., Jan. 13 –**
Film: *Killing Us Softly 4*

**Mon., Jan. 18 – Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday**

**Wed., Jan. 20 – Beautifying the body**


**Mon., Jan. 25 -- Creating gendered bodies in childhood**


**Wed., Jan. 27 – Creating gendered bodies in childhood**

Field trip to toy store to collect data for group projects

**Mon., Feb. 1 – Emergence of sexual bodies in adolescence**

*First submission of Sociological Observation Log*


**Wed., Feb. 3 – Reproducing bodies**


**Mon., Feb. 8 – Reproducing bodies**

*Fieldtrip to FSU MOFA to see Judy Chicago’s work – The Birth Project; Tour by Viki Wylder and Teri Abstein*
**Wed., Feb. 10 -- Regulating sexual and reproductive bodies**


EXTRA: Roberts, Dorothy. *Killing the Black Body* (excerpts)

**Mon., Feb. 15 -- Regulating sexual and reproductive bodies**

*1-page summary of final paper topic is due in class today*

Film excerpts

**Wed., Feb. 17 – Bodies challenging dualisms**


Film excerpts

**Mon., Feb. 22 – Consuming food/Carrying weight**


**Wed., Feb. 24 – Consuming food/Carrying weight**

Film excerpts

**Mon., Feb. 29 – (Un)healthy bodies**


**Wed., Mar. 2 – Medicalized bodies**

*Second submission of Sociological Observation Log*


Film excerpts

**Mar. 7- 11 SPRING BREAK 😊**

**Mon., Mar. 14**

Class presentations on our content analyses from “Creating Gendered Bodies in Childhood”

**Wed., Mar. 16 – Active bodies**

*Field trip to 1020 Art for a private tour of a gender-related exhibit*


**Mon., Mar. 21 – Active bodies**  
Film: *Tough Guise*  

**Wed., Mar. 23 – Violent and victimized bodies**  

**Mon., Mar. 28 – Violent and victimized bodies**  
*Point outlines are due in class today*  
*Guest speaker from Refuge House*

**Wed., March 30 – Caring for bodies**  

**Mon., April 4 – Caring for bodies**  
*Fieldtrip to Westminster Oaks Continuing Care Retirement Community; meet Rosemary Rausch at Maguire Marble Hall*  
**Wed., April 6 – Aging bodies**


**Mon., April 11 -- Aging bodies**

Film: *Still Doing It*


**Wed., April 13 – Dying bodies**

*Field trip to Big Bend Hospice*

Peruse their website in advance: http://www.bigbendhospice.org/


**Mon., April 18 – CLASS PRESENTATIONS**

**Wed., April 20 – CLASS PRESENTATIONS**

*Final submission of Sociological Observation Log*

**April 25-April 29 – EXAM WEEK**

*Papers are due on Tuesday, April 26 at 5pm. Please upload them to our course site through the turnitin link.*
QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AS YOU READ THE ARTICLES:

- What is the main question(s) that the author is trying to address? What is the relevance of the question(s)? (e.g., to a gender-stratified society? to gendered individuals? To gendered bodies? To social psychology? To sociology?)
- What theories and perspectives does the author draw on in framing the question(s)? Are these links explicitly made? Or are they more implicit? Are there other relevant theories/perspectives that might illuminate this issue? Or lead to other hypotheses?
- Are there implicit assumptions made by the author (e.g., regarding bodies, human behavior, gender, race, etc.)? Are these assumptions justified?
- What literatures are reviewed? Are relevant ones omitted?
- What data are used in the study? Are there any limitations to this data source? (e.g., think about how, where, and when the sample was drawn, who is included and excluded from the sample, and what specific implications this might have for the questions they are able to address and the conclusions they draw)
- What are the major constructs employed in the study? What are the hypothesized connections among these constructs? How are these constructs operationalized? Are you convinced that variables capture the constructs they are intended to represent?
- What questions are raised, but unanswered, by this study? Why specifically are these important questions to address? How would you go about addressing them?
- What are the limitations of the study? How could one remedy them? (e.g., think about limitations in the theoretical framing of the issue, the methodological limitations, data limitations, etc.)
- What do you make of the author’s conclusions? Are they supported by the results of the study? Why or why not? What evidence or arguments would you find more convincing? Why?
- Does this work make broader theoretical contributions? Does it bear on sociological theories, propositions, or concepts?
- Are there other theories or concepts that would shed light on the issue(s) raised in the article? Think about major sociological theories (e.g., feminist theories, symbolic interactionism, conflict theory, etc.), social psychological theories and concepts (e.g., reference groups, social comparison, identity and role theories, perspectives on the self, etc.), or other perspectives you’ve learned about in other courses, like those in medical sociology (e.g., stress theory, the sick role, labeling theory, stigma, etc.).
- Do readings from other weeks illuminate any of the issues/questions raised in this article? Does this reading lead you to see other research/concepts/issues any differently?
- Think about connections between the topics we’re discussing. What issues are raised for you?