

COM 407: Gender and Communication

The University of Nevada, Reno

Fall 2018

Professor: Dr. Jenna N. Hanchey
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Office Hours: W 12pm-2pm
Office Location: Lincoln Hall 306

Course Time: MW 4-5:15pm
Course Location: AB 209

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines gender as a social practice that remains vital to identities, relationships, and institutions in contemporary society. It treats gender as something we *do* through communication, rather than as something we *are* or *have*. In this course, we will explore how a communicative understanding of gender can help us to recognize, interrogate, and disrupt manifestations of gendered inequality in everyday life. By considering how gender never stands alone, but is constituted in and through relations to race, class, culture, sexuality, and embodiment, we examine a variety of contexts in which gender is ensconced in unequal systems: body image, health, sport, education, work, violence, security, health, ability, and politics.

This course satisfies Core Objective 10 of the Silver Core Curriculum:

Students will demonstrate an understanding of diversity through courses that focus on topics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, physical ability, language, and/or social class with an emphasis on the analysis of equity. Students will apply and evaluate approaches or modes of inquiry used to analyze diversity and equity and the social barriers to these goals.

The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for the course are as follows. Students who complete COM 407 will be able to:

- Define historical and contemporary developments in gender theory.
- Evaluate the concept of gender as it relates and interacts with related concepts including sex and sexuality.
- Identify gendered communication practices.
- Invent and explore alternatives to produce, consume, and enact gender beyond the usual gender binary.
- Critically analyze the relationship between gender and major social institutions, such as language, family, education, intimacy, work, and media.
- Apply individual gendered biographies and trajectories to larger world contexts.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

- Wood, J., & Fixmer-Oraiz. (2015). *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, & Culture (12th edition)*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Online readings on the syllabus or announced in class, which will be posted to WebCampus.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Participation

150 pts.

In order to earn participation points, you are expected not only to be present, but to contribute to class discussion through analysis of the readings, reflections on your own gendered experiences, and other activities.

Your participation grade will be comprised of 50 points for everyday participation and 100 points for reading quizzes.

- 1) *Everyday Participation* (50 pts)

Classroom discussions offer a unique opportunity and environment to “unpack” complex questions about gendered performances and institutions. Participation will be based on: how attentive/engaged you are; how well you listen to other participants; how respectful you are of others’ views (even when disagreeing); and how well the points you make, questions you ask, and ideas you introduce contribute to the overall discussion. If you attend, read, and contribute respectfully to discussion, you can expect to receive all participation points. **If you are absent 5 or more times, you can expect a 0 in participation.**

Note that in order to participate *well*, you will need to complete the reading. This class is heavily based on discussion; I expect you to come to class having read thoroughly and formed incisive questions about the topics being investigated in class that day. Class activities and discussion will revolve around your thoughts and ideas about the readings – you have to *have* thoughts and ideas in order for it to work! That does not mean you have to understand everything you read; we will work through complex concepts and situations in class.

2) Reading Quizzes (10 x 10pts = 100 pts)

On ten random days throughout the semester, we will begin class with a short reading quiz. These quizzes will ask specific questions about the day’s assigned reading and your own thoughts on it. Your answers should refer clearly to the reading and demonstrate that you read thoroughly and attentively.

Gender Autobiography

50 pts.

This project is meant to give you a chance to reflect on how you see your own gender identity, and how it has been constructed in your life. The autobiography can be creatively constructed. You must have written portions of gender analysis, but you may also incorporate artwork, poetry, song lyrics, or media that has influenced you. Your autobiography should attend to the following:

- 1) A characterization of your gender identity—address *reality* (i.e., how you think you really are, or what you live up to currently), *fantasy* (i.e., how you wish to be, or to what you would aspire in the absence of constraint), and *fear* (i.e., the kind of gender identity you especially wish to avoid, or how you do *not* want to come off)
- 2) How your gender relates to other aspects of identity—How does your gender identity interact with your body shape/physical appearance, age, race/ethnicity, class, religion, sexuality, culture/nationality, ability/disability, mental/physical health, or other factors? Choose the factors that are most significant to your gender, and explain why.
- 3) How your gender has changed over time or changes in relation to situation—To what extent is your gender identity stable, and how has it changed over time? In what contexts does your gender identity tend to shift and why? Think more complexly than simply “I have always been a woman/man/androgynous”—how have the ways you express womanhood/manhood/androgenity and what it means to you have shifted and changed over time.
- 4) How your gender has been influenced by people, media, and experience—Who has had an impact on your gender formation? What media have you been exposed to, and how has it influenced your gender expression? What are some formative (positive or negative) gender experiences?

Journal Article Analysis

50 pts.

In class, you will be assigned one peer-reviewed journal article to read out of the following options: Bennett, “Passing, Protesting and the Arts of Resistance,” Dubrofsky & Ryalls, “The Hunger Games,” Edgar, “R&B Rhetoric and Victim-Blaming Discourses,” or McFarlane, “Circuits of Discipline.” You will read it carefully to analyze how the author crafted a research project interrogating gendered inequalities, in order to gain some insight into how you might do so yourself in your final paper. You will turn in a paper answering the following questions (Detailed instructions will be handed out in class): What is the thesis of the essay? What is the method of the essay, and on what level(s) are they analyzing gender? What theories does the essay use or create? How is the essay structured? Finally, offer your own analysis of the thesis, structure of the essay, and the essay’s overall clarity. In class, you will form a group with those who analyzed the same article as you and present a brief discussion of your article. You will be graded primarily on your written work, but may lose points if you do not

participate in discussion.

Research Project

250 pts.

The primary goal of the semester is for you to develop a piece of original inquiry into a gendered problem or issue. You will work on this project throughout the semester, and have time in class to ask questions and workshop your ideas. **You may work individually, or with one co-author.** More information about this process and specific requirements will be provided by me throughout the semester.

1) *Research Proposal* (50 pts)

In the proposal document, you will describe the gendered context/problem that you wish to investigate, your research question, your level of research into gender (individual, interpersonal, organizational, or societal) and how it fits the question you are asking, your method of research and how it can answer the question you are asking, and why you believe this research is important.

2) *Final Research Paper* (150 pts)

The final paper is the culmination of all your thought, reflection, and work in the class. It should be a high-quality investigation into a gendered problem, taking into account all of the feedback received on your Research Proposal and in class. It should be well-written, and make a clear argument based on an analysis of your chosen gendered context using established theory and method. It should include at least 8 peer-reviewed academic sources. More instructions will be forthcoming.

3) *Final Presentation* (50 pts)

The final paper presentations will be in-class, and should be viewed as an opportunity to celebrate your hard work and learn about different gendered contexts from other students. The presentation will be graded purely on the information you present about your project, and *not* on your public speaking ability.

Presentation class days are mandatory, and 5 pts will be deducted from your presentation grade if you miss a presentation day.

GRADING

Grades are determined based on the number of points earned out of a maximum of 500 points. There is no extra credit given in this class, and there will be no rounding or curving of grades. Final grades are calculated as follows:

A	93%-100%	465-500 pts
A-	90%-92.9%	450-464 pts
B+	87%-89.9%	435-449 pts
B	84%-86.9%	420-434 pts
B-	80%-83.9%	400-419 pts
C+	77%-79.9%	385-399 pts
C	74%-76.9%	370-384 pts
C-	70%-73.9%	350-369 pts
D+	67%-69.9%	335-349 pts
D	64%-66.9%	320-334 pts
D-	60%-63.9%	300-319 pts
F	0%-59.9%	0-299 pts

In each assignment, you will earn a grade based on the following guidelines:

- A = Exceeds course requirements. Exceptionally well-prepared and executed completion of assigned work, indicating significant effort, individualized creative style, and demonstrating a thorough grasp of the material. For written assignments: writing is insightful and error-free; message is communicated clearly; research is exceptional; your argument is creative and nuanced.
- B = Meets and sometimes exceeds course requirements. Student demonstrates fundamental mastery of the material. Work is well-prepared and demonstrates considerable effort. Is distinctly superior to an average or “C” effort. For written assignments: writing is generally effective with respect to clarity, directness, and conciseness; some uneven or awkward passages are apparent, as are a few errors in grammar or punctuation. Research slightly exceeds the requirements.
- C = Meets course requirements. Satisfactory completion of assigned work at a level of effort and competency normally expected of the majority of students (i.e., basic completion, average performance, reasonable effort and preparedness). Student demonstrates minimum mastery of the material. This is average work that fails to stand out in any way. For written assignments: writing is reasonably clear, concise, and direct; uneven or awkward passages are apparent, as are multiple errors in grammar or punctuation. Minimum research done.
- D = Basic course requirements are only partially met. Student does not demonstrate minimum mastery of the material. Receiving this grade indicates the unsatisfactory completion of assigned work, either through misperceived objectives or the failure to grasp key concepts. This work is below average. For written assignments: The message is not communicated clearly, directly, or concisely. There is considerable unevenness or awkwardness in passages, and work is characterized by errors in grammar or punctuation.
- F = Basic course requirements are not met. Student demonstrates little or no mastery of the material. Receiving this grade indicates either a failure to complete the assigned work, or failure to grasp key concepts due to lack of reasonable effort. Work is below the minimum level of acceptance. For written assignments: Writing lacks style, content, and format associated with a college-educated individual.

COURSE POLICIES

All written assignments must be typed in Times New Roman 12 pt. font, double-spaced, with 1 in. margins (check these—sometimes margins are automatically set to 1.25 in, and must be changed). **Late work will be marked off 10% each day for the first three days it is late. After three days, late work will be given a 0.**

Readings must be completed on the day they are listed on the course schedule. Be sure to read thoroughly, and take notes while reading; some of these readings are very theoretically and conceptually challenging. In-class discussions are intended to *complement* (not duplicate) the readings. Do your best to approach a text with an open mind toward a given author’s disposition and message. This means trying to understand how and why they are arguing what they are, which is typically more time-consuming than simply comprehending an author’s message. Give each author a generous reading!

Communication for this course will be maintained exclusively through WebCampus. Please make sure you are checking it often for updates from me, as well as readings, assignments, and grades.

Discussion of Graded Assignments

It is your right and responsibility to take an active interest in how you are evaluated in this or any class. If you believe you have been graded unfairly, please come visit me in office hours to talk about it. Be prepared to make a well-developed case regarding the evaluation. Your argument must be related to your assignment as presented, and based on how it compares with the criteria for the assignment (not how hard you tried, how you think it compares with someone else’s work, or how it will affect your final grade in the class or GPA). **Any grade appeals must occur or be scheduled no sooner than 24 hours after but no later than one week after receiving the evaluation.**

Attendance

This course is heavily discussion based. Failure to engage in class dialogue on a regular basis will result in a lower participation grade (see participation point distribution above). In addition, **failure to attend class on presentation days will result in a 5-point deduction (for each missed class) from your grade at the end of the semester.** In order to be excused from a day of class, you must provide documentation for all absences within a week of their occurrence. Medical absences = emergencies, not standing doctor's appointments. These should be scheduled at another time.

Classroom Behavior

People and ideas must be treated with respect. Please avoid disruptive behavior that makes it difficult to accomplish our mutual objectives.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is a serious offense in this course. University policies on academic dishonesty (see below) will be strictly enforced). Using the words and ideas of others is borrowing something from those individuals. It is always necessary to identify the original source of supporting information; you must cite the source of any material, quoted or paraphrased, that you use in your work. Proper documentation requires both referencing these sources in the text of your writing, and in a reference section at the end of your essay.

Putting your name on a piece of work indicates that the work is *yours* and that the praise or criticism is due to *you* and no one else. Putting your name on a piece of work in which any part is not yours, is *plagiarism*—unless the borrowed thought or wording is clearly marked and the work is fully identified. Keep in mind that plagiarism is a form of theft. Taking words, phrasing, sentence structure, or any other element of another person's ideas, and using them as if they were your own, is stealing. Simply paraphrasing the work of another without acknowledging the information source is also plagiarism. Merely restating another individual's ideas in different words does not make the ideas yours. ALL assignments are to be your original work. Using papers or presentations from previous semesters or other classes, even if they are your own, is still considered plagiarism.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include filing a final grade of "F"; reducing the student's final course grade one or two full grade points; awarding a failing mark on the coursework in question; or requiring the student to retake or resubmit the coursework. For more details, see the [University of Nevada, Reno General Catalog](#).

Disability Services:

Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me or the [Disability Resource Center](#) (Pennington Achievement Center Suite 230) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

Audio and Video Recording

Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.

Harrasment and Assault

The University of Nevada, Reno is committed to providing a safe learning and work environment for all. If you believe you have experienced discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, or stalking, whether on or off campus, or need information related to immigration concerns, please contact the

University's Equal Opportunity & Title IX office at 775-784-1547. Resources and interim measures are available to assist you. For more information, please visit the [Equal Opportunity and Title IX](#) page.

Academic Success Services

Your student fees cover usage of the [Math Center](#) (775) 784-4433, [Tutoring Center](#) (775) 784-6801, and [University Writing Center](#) (775) 784-6030. These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Subject to change with sufficient advance notice.)

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
<i>Understanding Gender and Sex</i>			
M 8/27	Introduction and Course Expectations		
W 8/29	Gender & Sex: Conceptual Groundings	(1) Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz, Introduction (2) Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz, Chapter 1	
M 9/3	NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)		
W 9/5	Gender & Sex: Theoretical Groundings	Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz, Chapter 2	
<i>Constructing Gender and Sex</i>			
M 9/10	Constructing Gender	(1) Oyěwùmí, (Re)constituting the Cosmology and Sociocultural Institutions of Òyó-Yorùbá (2) Wilson, How We Find Ourselves (3) Lacey, A Lifestyle Distinct	
W 9/12	Constructing Sex	(1) Fausto-Sterling, Of Gender and Genitals (2) Blithe & Hanchey, The Discursive Emergence of Gendered Physiological Discrimination in Sex Verification Testing	
M 9/17	Constructing Masculinity & Femininity	(1) Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz, Chapter 7 (2) Kane, "No Way My Boys are Going to be Like That!"	
W 9/19	Constructing Our Gendered Lives		DUE: Gender Autobiography
<i>Investigating Gendered Problems</i>			
M 9/24	Levels of Investigation: Part 1 Intimate, Organizational, Societal	EITHER Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz Chapter 9, 10, OR 11 (Assigned in class)	
W 9/26	Levels of Investigation: Part 2 Intimate, Organizational, Societal		
M 10/1	Asking Good Research Questions, Writing Good Papers		DUE: Journal Article Analysis
W 10/3	NO CLASS (DR. HANCHEY'S AT A CONFERENCE)		
<i>Gendered Problems in Context</i>			
M 10/8	Bodies	(1) Gay, excerpts from <i>Hunger</i> (2) Waling, "We Are So Pumped Full of Shit by the Media" (3) Tolentino, The Beauty Bridge	
W 10/10	Health	(1) Benjamin, Eggs for Sale (2) Excerpts from <i>The Remedy</i>	
M 10/15	Sport	(1) Crosby, Chased by the Double Bind (2) Enck, All's Fair in Love and Sport	
W 10/17	Education	(1) Jones & Myhill, 'Troublesome Boys' and 'Compliant Girls' (2) Harris, Show Them a Good Time	
M 10/22	Work	(1) Schilt, Just One of the Guys (2) Bruni, "Have You Got a Boyfriend or are You Single?"	
W 10/24	Violence	(1) Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz, Chapter 12 (2) Ott & Aoki, The Politics of Negotiating Public Tragedy	
M 10/29	Security	(1) Browne, "What Did TSA Find in Solange's Fro?" (2) Cloud, "To Veil the Threat of Terror"	DUE: Research Proposal

W 10/31	Methods/Analysis Workshop	IF Interviewing, read Lindlof & Taylor, pp. 199-211 & pp. 246-256 IF Using Media, read Brummett, Chapter 3	
M 11/5	Theory Workshop		
W 11/7	NO CLASS (DR. HANCHEY'S AT A CONFERENCE)		
M 11/12	NO CLASS (VETERAN'S DAY)		
W 11/14	Ability	(1) Schalk, Metaphorically Speaking (2) Yergeau, Neuroqueer Rhetorics	
M 11/19	Politics	(1) Wanzer-Serrano, "We Refused to Cave In" (2) Vasby Anderson, Every Woman is the Wrong Woman	
<i>Deconstructing Gender</i>			
W 11/21	Final Paper Workshop		
M 11/26	Final Paper Workshop		
W 11/28	Rethinking Ourselves, Rethinking our Futures	(1) Lorde, The Transformation of Silence in Language and Action (2) Lorde, The Master's Tools will Never Dismantle the Master's House (3) Moraga, La Güera	
M 12/3	Final Paper Presentations		(Attendance is mandatory)
W 12/5	Final Paper Presentations		(Attendance is mandatory)
M 12/10	Final Paper Presentations		(Attendance is mandatory)
M 12/17 2:30pm	Course Wrap-Up		DUE: Final Paper

References

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