

The Social Construction of Gender Spring 2022

INSTRUCTOR

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Sign-up Office Hours: Mondays 9:00-11:00am

<https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/gusgs>

CLASS MEETING

Mondays and Wednesdays noon-1:15pm,
1:30-2:45pm
Sever 212

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Gender is one of the most important characteristics determining a person's place in society. Gender organizes our expectations for others as well as for ourselves, and enables/inhibits an individual's possibilities. While gender is a dominant feature of social life, it is a complex concept that is undergoing constant modification and reinterpretation. In this course we will grapple with the meaning of gender as a social construct and investigate the ways gender influences individuals' daily lives. In Unit 1, we examine one of the most influential texts in gender studies, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*. We work to parse, interpret, and ultimately evaluate the central idea in Butler's notoriously difficult text. In Unit 2, we engage with two sociological articles that theorize the ways gender organizes social life. We apply ideas from the theoretical texts to analyze the ways gender—as both a macro-level social institution as well as a individual-level frame of perception—influenced the 2016 sexual harassment scandal at Fox News depicted in the film *Bombshell*. In Unit 3, we engage with four sociological research papers that examine the ways gender affects social life in discrete contexts: (1) workplace experiences of trans people who have presented as both women and men, (2) the relationship between gender norms and the egg/sperm markets, (3) variation in gender-role attitudes across Europe, and (4) the paradoxical positioning of young straight men incorporating elements of “gayness” into their identities. In this final unit, students design and execute an individual research project investigating the meaning of gender and its effects in a specific context.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. 10th Anniversary ed., Routledge, 2006,
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203824979>.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

- Unit 1 Essay: 20%
- Unit 2 Essay: 25%
- Unit 3 Annotated Bibliography: 10%
- Unit 3 Essay: 35%
- Engagement: 10%

COURSE FORMAT

Readings: Readings should be completed prior to class. You must keep up with the readings to participate in class discussions and complete assignments. The course's one required text is available at the Harvard Coop: <https://tinyurl.com/W22-EXPO-20-267>. All of your other assigned readings are available on Canvas.

Engagement: I expect you to be an active participant in the course. Please bring your questions and comments to class and don't be shy about bringing them up. In addition to always being prepared for class, engagement can take many forms: contributing to class discussion, responding to peers' drafts in peer review and workshop, responding to discussion questions or discussion threads on Canvas, and preparing for and contributing to conferences.

Missing Class: If you miss a class, do not ask me if you missed anything. Of course you did!--but please don't ask me to fill you in. I suggest sharing contact information with a classmate early in the semester for this reason.

Course Etiquette: All phones must be silenced and put away during class. You may not agree with everything we read and discuss, but I expect you to have an open mind and demonstrate your knowledge of the sociological perspective. Debates are expected and welcome in this class, however, I will not tolerate personal attacks.

Electronic submissions: You will submit your work electronically this semester through our Canvas site. As you send or upload each document, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have saved the document in a form compatible with Microsoft Word. It is also your responsibility to ensure that the file you are sending is not corrupted or damaged. If I cannot open or read the file you have sent, the essay will be subject to a late penalty.

Email communication: I ask that you allow me 36 hours to respond to any weekday email; emails received over the weekend should receive a response on Monday. In return, I expect the same of you. That is, I will never expect you to respond to an email in less than 36 hours or over the weekend.

OFFICE HOURS

I will be holding Sign-up office hours from 9am-11am on Tuesdays. Sign-up:
<https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/gusgs>

If you are having any difficulties with the material or assignments for the course or if you are having any personal problems that are affecting your ability to complete assignments on time, you should take advantage of office hours early in the semester. I will be much more able to appropriately adjust course expectations when I have been made aware of problems early on rather than at the last minute.

Remember that office hours are an important resource if for no other reason than getting to know your instructors could help you in the future when you may need letters of recommendation.

HARVARD COLLEGE: WRITING PROGRAM ON ATTENDANCE

The Writing Program attendance policy is intended to make sure that you get everything you can out of your Expos course. Because Expos has fewer class hours than some other courses; because the course is largely discussion-based; and because instruction in Expos proceeds by sequential writing activities, your consistent attendance is essential to your learning in the course.

While I of course encourage you to be present every day in class, you are allowed two unexcused absences for the semester with no consequence. Some absences (religious holidays and medical situations) are automatically considered excused; some family circumstances may also be counted as excused absences. If you miss two unexcused classes, I will ask you to meet with me to discuss any issues that may be keeping you from attending, and to advise you on your plan for catching up on the missed work. If you miss a third class, you will be required to meet with your Resident Dean about those absences, so that your Dean can give you any support you may need to help you get back on track in the class. Missing four classes--the equivalent of two full weeks of the semester--puts you at risk for missing crucial material necessary to complete your work. Unless there is a medical or other emergency issue preventing consistent engagement with the class, students who miss four classes will receive a formal warning that they are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade.

In the case of a medical problem, you should contact me before the class to explain, but in any event within 24 hours; you should also copy your Resident Dean on that message. In the case of extended illness, you may be required to provide medical documentation. Absences because of special events or extracurricular involvement are not excused absences. If such circumstances lead you to want to miss more than two unexcused absences, you must petition the Associate Director of the Writing Program for permission.

HARVARD COLLEGE WRITING PROGRAM POLICY ON COMPLETION OF WORK

Because your Expos course is a planned sequence of writing, you must write all of the assigned essays to pass the course, and you must write them within the schedule of the course (not in the last few days of the semester after you have fallen behind). If you are unable to complete your work on time due to medical or family issues, please contact me before the deadline to discuss both the support you might need as well as a possible new arrangement for your deadline. Communication about your situation is essential so that we can determine how best to help you move forward. If we have not already discussed your situation and you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of an essay by the final due date in that essay unit, you will receive a letter reminding you of these requirements and asking you to meet with me and/or your Resident Dean to make a plan for catching up on your work. The letter will also specify the new date by which you must submit the late work. If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of the essay by this new date, and if you have not documented a medical problem or been in touch with your Dean about other circumstances, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you think you will require some flexibility in deadlines or participation in the course for reasons of a documented disability, please schedule a meeting with me early in the semester so we can discuss appropriate accommodations. (To be eligible for such accommodations, you need to have provided documentation to the Accessible Education Office ahead of time. Please let me know if you are unfamiliar with that process.) The Accessible Education Office works closely with Expos courses, and we will develop a plan that is appropriate for your needs. Please note that it is always your responsibility to consult with me as the need for those accommodations arises.

POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

One of the essential elements of the Expos curriculum is the work we do on effective source use, appropriate acknowledgement of sources, and expectations for citing sources in academic writing. In each unit, we will work on strategies for working with the ideas of other authors and sources, and for developing your own ideas in response to them. Most forms of academic writing involve building on the ideas of others, contributing ideas of your own, and signaling clearly for readers where each idea comes from. This complex relationship with sources is part of our work through the whole semester, and you should always feel free to ask me questions about this material.

As we become familiar with the expectations of an academic audience, we will also work on strategies to avoid errors in citation and unintentional plagiarism. As with all your courses, the expectation in Expos is that all the work that you submit for this course must be your own. That work should not make use of outside sources unless such sources are explicitly part of the assignment. Any student submitting plagiarized work is

eligible to fail the course and to be subject to review by the Honor Council, including potential disciplinary action.

POLICY ON COLLABORATION

As in many academic situations, our Expos class will be a setting that involves frequent collaboration—we will develop ideas together through class discussion, peer review, and draft workshops. The following kinds of collaboration are permitted in this course: developing or refining ideas in conversation with other students and through peer review of written work (including feedback from Writing Center tutors). It is a form of academic integrity to acknowledge the impact someone had on your essay; you can do this in a footnote at the beginning of the paper. As stated in the *Student Handbook*, “Students need not acknowledge discussion with others of general approaches to the assignment or assistance with proofreading.” However, all work submitted for this course must be your own: in other words, writing response papers, drafts or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden.

POLICY ON COURSE MATERIALS

The work we do together in class—discussions, exercises, workshopping essays—is intended for the members of our class. Students are not allowed to record class and are not allowed to post video or audio recordings or transcripts of our class meetings. (Students needing course recordings as an accommodation should contact the [Accessible Education Office](#).) While samples of student work will be circulated within the course (*and all work you do may be shared with your classmates*), you may not share fellow students’ work with others outside the course without their written permission. As the *Handbook for Students* explains, students may not “post, publish, sell, or otherwise publicly distribute course materials without the written permission of the course instructor. Such materials include, but are not limited to, the following: video or audio recordings, assignments, problem sets, examinations, other students’ work, and answer keys.” Students who violate any of these expectations may be subject to disciplinary action.

POLICY ON FEEDBACK AND CONFERENCES

Feedback is central to Expos. There are educational reasons for the types of feedback I’ll give you: they complement one another throughout the writing process and help you think about receiving feedback from different audiences at different stages of writing. There are also educational reasons for the amount and timing of the feedback I as your instructor will offer. The goal of all my feedback is that you learn to incorporate the principles I’m identifying into your *own* thinking and your revision, so that eventually you are making more independent decisions in your essays about what a reader needs to understand or what the most effective structure might be. If I as your instructor were to read a draft multiple times, offering several rounds of feedback, I would then in effect be taking over some of those decisions for you, and you would not

be gaining the autonomy as a writer that you need to achieve this semester.

I do accept a few thoughtful questions by email about specific instances in your revision-in-progress: a follow-up question about whether a thesis is now clearer, or whether some added sentences of analysis make your explanation of evidence stronger. In those instances, you are taking the important step of identifying what in your writing and thinking is *most* in need of targeted feedback, and you are articulating the specific question you have about something you've tried out in the paper. (When you do want additional feedback, the [Writing Center](#) is a very helpful resource. Here too, you will use that resource better when you arrive with specific and targeted questions.)

There are also important reasons that I schedule one draft conference per student for each essay in Units 1 and 2. Conferences are important opportunities for thinking together about questions in your argument and strategies for revision; during conference week I am meeting with all 30 students and attempting to offer the same level of intensive work with everyone. If I were to grant a second full conference to any student, for reasons of equity I would need to offer a second meeting with everyone, and it is not possible to schedule a second round of meetings in an already busy unit.