

SOSC 2740
GENDER AND SOCIETY
FALL 2017

Wednesday and Friday 1.30-2.50, rm 4620

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Is it true that “men are from Mars and women are from Venus?” Why do women still earn 70% of what a man earns? Why do women hold only 4.4% of Fortune 500 CEO positions? Why do women make up less than 20% of the Hong Kong Government? Who does most of the housework and childcare, and why? Why does Hong Kong have the highest proportion of incarcerated women in the world? Why do so many migrant women come to Hong Kong? Why do boys perform so poorly compared with girls in school? Why are there more female than male undergraduates in Hong Kong’s universities? Are men the new victims of gender discrimination?

The purpose of this course is to answer these questions and others by developing a *sociological mindfulness* about the importance of gender in society. By sociologically mindful, I mean that we will view gender as the product of culture, groups, and organizations. I also mean that we will be paying attention to behaviours and ways of thinking that are so taken-for-granted that we often fail to question them, with an eye to examining the nature of inequality between men and women. The course will be organized around five main topics: 1. Gender and Biology, 2. Gender and Everyday Life, 3. Gender at Work and in the Home, 4. Gender and Intimate Relationships, and 5. Gender in the Global Economy. The focus of our discussions will be on gender issues in Hong Kong.

Intended Learning outcomes

Intended learning activities

An appreciation of how gender roles are socially constructed.	By critically examining accounts of gender that are based on biology and psychology.
Raising awareness of the significance of gender in society.	By collecting data and experiences of inequality between men and women.
An overview of the situation of men and women in education, the workplace, the media and everyday life in Hong Kong	By engaging with popular culture, movies, magazines as well as invited guest speakers from various organizations involved with gender issues in Hong Kong.
An appreciation of the gendered nature of the global economy.	By reading about the situation of migrant workers in Hong Kong

REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Readings

Required Readings:

Any worthwhile university course in the social sciences requires that you do some reading outside of the class *on your own*. I have tried to keep these to a minimum. There will be one or two *required* short articles or book chapters assigned for most classes. These will be included in the course assessment.

Supplementary Readings

Students often tell me that they want to read more about a particular topic. For these students, I have provided some *supplementary* readings. Supplementary readings will not be covered in the course assessment, but they will enhance your understanding of the subject, and students tell me that they find them interesting.

The relevant reading assignments for the subsequent class will be announced at the beginning of each class. You must at least read the *required* articles before coming to class in order to be able to understand the class and take part in it. I may call on you to answer questions about them in class. Do not worry if you don't understand everything in the readings. I will help you with the more difficult points in class.

I shall make all the readings available on the Canvas webpage <https://canvas.ust.hk/courses/7667/files> and in the Reserve Section of the Library.

Examinations

There will be two **closed-book exams**; a Midterm and a cumulative Final (that covers the entire course). Questions will be a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions. They will test your understanding of the required readings and the in-class lectures, exercises and discussions.

Written Assignment and Short Presentation

The written assignment for this course will be an exercise or research experiment that you will conduct in a group of 3-6 students. The exercise/experiment is designed to make you more gender aware of the world around you. It might involve one or more of the following: Analyzing media artifacts for gender bias, observing other people as they react to your gender, and/or interviewing men and women about gendered experiences. If there is time, I will ask you to give a very short (ten minute) PowerPoint presentation to the class on what you found in the assignment. Since some assignments will require a mix of both male and female students, I will assist in assigning you to your groups. Full details of the assignment, groupings, and presentation dates will be announced after the drop-add period (Sept 14th 2017).

The Final Grade

Assignment and presentation (if applicable)	25%
Midterm Exam	35%
Final Exam (cumulative)	40%

Extra Credit

Up to 10 percent **extra credit** may be awarded to individual students who make regular and outstanding contributions to the in-class discussions, or who frequently ask relevant questions.

CLASS SCHEDULE¹

INTRODUCTIONS

- Sept 1st How much do you know about gender and society? Common sense quiz.
- Sept 6th How to be sociologically mindful about gender?

PART I: BIOLOGY, SEX AND GENDER

We begin with a critical examination of various non-sociological explanations of gender differences. Early accounts of gender roles were shaped by religious beliefs. Nineteenth century biologists and psychologists advanced views about the inferiority of women based on evolutionary biology. We examine the current debates about nature and nurture in gender differences. To what extent are the biological differences between the sexes over-exaggerated? And what should we make of these differences? How does gender vary across cultures? How do we learn our gender roles?

- Sept 8th To what extent does biology determine our destiny?
Reading:
Supplementary: Michael Kimmel. The Gendered Society, Ch2. "Ordained by Nature: Biology Constructs the Sexes"
- Sept 13th Biological theories and their critics
- Sept 15th Gender across cultures
Reading:
Required: Michael Kimmel. The Gendered Society, Ch3. "Spanning the World. Culture Constructs Gender Difference"

¹ Dates and readings may be subject to change. Please listen out for announcements in class.

Sept 20th Socialization and education
Reading:
Required: Michael Kimmel. *The Gendered Society*, Ch7. "The Gendered Classroom"

PART II: INEQUALITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

It seems that everyone is a feminist now, with celebrities and politicians wearing T-shirts to proclaim it. But what does feminism mean and why does it matter? We examine the history of the women's movement and the different varieties of feminist thought, along with some of its critics and its counterpart, the men's movement. We also look at gender movements in Hong Kong. How can we become more aware of gender inequality in everyday life? How does language reinforce gender inequality? To what extent is the media gender biased?

Sept 22nd How did sexism become visible? The different "waves" of feminism and the men's movements.
Reading:
Required: Marilyn Frye. "Oppression."
Supplementary: Julia Wood. "The Rhetorical Shaping of Gender: Women's and Men's movements in the United States."
Supplementary: Michael Kimmel. "Angry White Men"

Sept 27th The role of gender and language in inequality
Reading:
Required: Sherryl Kleinman. "Why Sexist Language Matters"
Required: Deborah Tannen. "But What do you Mean? Women and Men in Conversation"

Sept 29th Men and women in the media

Oct 4th What if men menstruated and had babies? Men and Women's Bodies
Reading:
Required: Gloria Steinem: "If men could menstruate"

PART III MEN AND WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE AND AT HOME

While men and women participate in almost equal numbers in the Hong Kong workforce, they remain highly segregated both in terms of rank and occupation. There is also still a large wage gap between them. What prevents women from getting ahead in the workplace? Do men experience discrimination in the workplace too? What legislation protects equal opportunities in the workplace?

Oct 6th The Gender Segregated Workplace
Reading:

Required: Lisa Wade and Myra Marx Ferree. Gender: Ideas, Interactions, Institutions. Ch12. “Work”

Supplementary: Ryan and Alexander: The Glass Cliff

Oct 11th Do men face discrimination? Men’s experiences in the workplace

Reading:

Required: Christine Williams. “The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the Female Professions”

Oct 13th MIDTERM EXAMINATION (in class)

Your Attendance is required.

Oct 18th Who does the housework? Employment and childcare.

Reading:

Required: Arlie Hochschild with Ann Machung; “The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at home.” Chapters 1-3

Supplementary: Groves and Lui: “The “Gift” of help

PART IV: MEN AND WOMEN IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

We will examine the changing nature of marriage, the family and intimacy and its implications for gender. Are men and women really from different planets when it comes to the world of dating and intimacy? To what extent did the sexual revolution of the 1960s liberate women? We also look at new developments surrounding sexual orientation and the fight for gay rights. We look at the social context of sexual violence against women, and legislation on sexual harassment in Hong Kong. Finally, we broaden our focus to look at the gendered nature of violence in international warfare.

Oct 20th Are men more romantic than women? Men, women, intimacy and the changing family

Reading:

Required: Paul England, Emily Fitzgibbons Shafer and Alison Fogarty. “Hooking up and Forming Romantic Relationships on Today’s College Campuses”

Supplementary: Susan Sprecher and Maura Toro-Morn: A study...to determine if men are from Mars and Women are from Venus in their Beliefs about Love and Romantic Relationships

Oct 25th Gender, sexual orientation: the LGBT movement

Required: Travis Kong. “Queers are Ready!? Sexual Citizenship and the Tongzhi Movement”

- Oct 27th The LGBT Community in Hong Kong
Guest speaker: Paul Choi, Goldman Sachs
- Nov 1st Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence
Reading:
Required: Beth Quinn: “Sexual Harassment and Masculinity: The Power and Meaning of “Girl Watching””
- Nov 3rd Are college campuses dangerous places for women? The controversy over “rape culture” on university campuses.
Required: Patricia Yancey Martin: *Fraternalities and Rape On Campus*
- Nov 8th Compromised dating in Hong Kong
Guest: Teen’s Keys
- Nov 10th Domestic violence
Reading:
Required: Michael Kimmel. *The Gendered Society*. Ch. 14. “The Gender of Violence”
Supplementary: Dobash and Dobash. *The Myth of Male Symmetry and Marital Violence*
- Nov 15th The gender of war and peace

PART V: MEN AND WOMEN IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

Popular images of globalization focus on high technology, finance, communication and unlimited opportunities for social and personal advancement. In the final part of the course we focus on the lives of female migrants to understand how globalization is still reliant upon low-wage, and highly gendered and racialized labour.

- Nov 17th Domestic workers in Hong Kong
Reading:
Required: Kimberly Chang and L.H. L. Ling: “Globalization and Its Intimate Other. Filipina Domestic Workers in Hong Kong”
- Nov 22nd Women in developing countries
Guest Speaker: Sujata Balasubramanian
- Nov 24nd Students present their projects
- Nov 29th What’s to be done? Imaging different gender arrangements
Reading:
Required: Michael Kimmel. *Epilogue: A “degendered” society*

RULES AND PROCEDURES

This is quite a large class with a diversity of students from many backgrounds. Most of you will be studying in a second language (English) because this is the only language that we all share. Some of you may not have taken social science classes before. Others are accustomed to different academic environments in which there are different expectations. All this means that we need to have some common rules about how the class is to proceed so that everyone has an opportunity to learn and perform well.

Attendance

The surest way to achieve a high grade on this course is to *attend all the classes*, and whilst doing so, disconnect yourself from *all* electronic devices and participate. The PowerPoint slides shown in the class and placed on the course webpage are intended only as outlines of the main concepts covered. They are not substitutes for class attendance. You are responsible for taking your own notes during the classes and for catching up and obtaining notes from other students if you miss a class.

Students often ask me to put more detailed notes on the course webpage. My experience, however, has been that if you don't have the time or inclination to attend the class, it is unlikely that you will have time or inclination to study the materials outside of class. Further, I do not permit any recording or filming of the classes. I will do my part to make the classes worthwhile, going *slowly*, and making frequent summaries to assist those with language difficulties. I will also go over and help you out with some of the more difficult reading materials in the class. Fair enough?

Coming Late and Leaving Early

The class will not begin until all students are seated and quiet. When students come late to the classroom, they delay the whole class by walking around to find a seat or look for their friends while the class is in progress. They also miss important information that will be covered on the exams. Some instructors solve this problem by locking the doors after the class has begun. This, however, is an extreme measure and sends a negative message. To minimize disruption, I will reserve the seats nearest to the doors on one side of the classroom for late students. On the occasion that you have to come late to the class, please sit at these seats, rather than walk around the lecture theater while the class is in progress.

As with late students, students who leave the class early disrupt the class and miss important information. Each class will have a ten-minute break in the middle. Please wait until the break or the end of the class before leaving (except, of course, in the case of medical emergency or fire).

Mobile Phones, Emailing, Texting and Computers

Mastering a sociological outlook will require your full attention during the classes. Mobile phones disrupt the class. If you are using laptop computers (for whatever purpose, including note taking) or texting on your phone, you will miss important information. You are also turning away from your classmates, the instructor, and the course content, and depriving everyone of a good learning environment.

I used to simply require that electronic devices be switched off during the class. But I have discovered that as long as the devices are in front of you, it is impossible to resist the temptation to play with them or continue to take calls and text messages.

I will therefore require that all electronic devices *not only be switched off, but also put away* in a bag or purse and remain completely *out of sight* while the class is in progress. The class will not begin until this is done. If you continue to text or take phone calls during the class, your name will be recorded and *your Final Grade for the course may be affected*.

Eating and Drinking in the Classroom

Bringing food into the classroom leaves a mess and smell for your classmates. This does not create a conducive atmosphere for learning. Would you like it if your classes were held in a McDonalds restaurant? I wouldn't think so. For this reason, the University prohibits eating in the lecture theaters and classrooms. There are many places where you can eat on campus. Please observe the "No Eating" signs in the classroom, and have your meals before or after the class.

Examinations

Examinations will be closed-book and must be taken without communicating with other students.

This is a large class and it is impossible to schedule make-up exams or re-weight scores for individual students who miss exams, except where medical documentation (by a licensed Western medical practitioner) is provided to say why you cannot attend. In the case of an exam missed due to medical circumstances, it is your responsibility to contact us within a week after the missed exam to arrange a make-up, otherwise your entitlement to a make-up may be forfeited. The exam dates will be announced well in advance which will give you plenty of time to plan. Please do not schedule job interviews or other activities on these dates.

A special note to **international students**: You have been instructed by the University during your orientation that you are required to stay for the entire exam period. Please do not book your flights home before the Final Exam or schedule other trips during the mid-term examination (October 13). There will be no make-up exams or re-weighting of scores should you choose to do this and you will not be given any credit for the exam that you missed.

Policy on re-grading

I have noticed that increasing numbers of students are expecting higher grades for their work. Students often contact me with a request that their work be re-graded with the hope of obtaining a higher score. You will, however, appreciate that the grading of hundreds of assignments and exams requires tremendous resources. We make every effort to grade your work accurately. If you do, however, request that your work/grade is reviewed, please be prepared that your grade may move up *or down* (if, in the latter case, we find your work more deficient than in our original assessment). If you do ask us to look at your work again, please make sure that you have a very strong and clear justification for doing so.

Course Content: Talking about gender and inequality.

In this course we will talk openly in the classroom about topics that some students might consider sensitive or inappropriate for public discussion. These topics may include sexuality (including homosexuality and transgendered persons), pornography, the sex industry, sexual harassment and sexual violence. Moreover, we will talk about these topics in an analytic way. Students who are not comfortable with engaging in discussions about these issues should consider taking other courses offered by the Social Science Division.

Further, when discussing gender, students often want to tell me that the sociological perspective that I present is “biased.” Some students, for instance, want to know more about the biological differences between men and women. Others want to tell me that there is too much attention given to the analysis of inequality between men and women, and that this is not what they believe to be true, or want to hear. Others might argue that discrimination against men should be given equal consideration to discrimination against women.

While we will survey some of the studies that examine the biological bases of men’s and women’s behaviour, this is a social science class (look once again at the course title) and therefore sociological writings on the topic will receive the most attention. Those who want to know about the biological determinants of human behaviour might consider taking a class in the Life Sciences.

Further, you will also notice that a lot of the materials on this course (although not all) have been written by women, and focus on *gender inequality*. This is not surprising since women have traditionally faced more discrimination than men. In addition, an understanding of power and inequality are essential to a full understanding of gender and society. This is not to say that men are never discriminated against. The issue of discrimination against men will be considered on this course too. But, as will become apparent, discrimination against men at the hands of women does not always equate to the discrimination that women face at the hands of men.

In this sense, you might say that every university course you take is “biased” because no single course can cover all perspectives. The goal of the course is not necessarily to eliminate bias, but to appreciate a *better kind of bias*; one that will serve us in improving our lives – which I see to be the goal of all liberal studies. You are not required to agree with all the views put forward on the course, but you must be familiar with them and engage with them. Keep an open mind!