

WGS 358: Masculinity/Power/Culture

Rachel Steck and David Gutterman

Eaton 311, MW 12:50-2:20

Course Description

In this course we will be examining some of the most vital and challenging issues of politics and identity: What is the relationship between sex, sexuality, and gender? How should we understand the construction of notions, habits, and ideals of masculinities? How do men and women experience masculinity in different contexts? How are governing ideas of masculinity generated, defined, sustained, and changed?

To explore these concerns we will read a wide variety of texts, listen to podcasts, and watch a series of films. This course is not a lecture class; the primary mode of teaching will be facilitated class discussion.

Learning Objectives

In this course, students will:

- * think critically and creatively about sex, gender, and sexuality
- * discuss the relationship between personal and political identity
- * draw connections between theory and praxis
- * develop understanding of the intersection of culture and power

Course Readings

All of the texts for the class are available through the course WISE site or online.

Course Requirements

Reading and Participation Assignments:

This is a seminar class not a lecture course. We are going to be talking and listening to one another, engaging in a collective enterprise of exploration. Concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality are central to notions of individual and collective identity and are vital sources of meaning in most of our lives. These issues get to the very heart of how we understand ourselves and the world we share. Accordingly, we can and should expect that we will not all agree with one another regarding the topics we will be discussing. This course should neither be seen as an opportunity to compel others to “achieve” a proper identity, nor as a space for trying to impress people by how normative or anti-normative one can be. Vital to the success of this class is the commitment we make to listening and speaking with one another with respect and thoughtfulness.

The reading assignments for this course are rigorous and challenging. You are required to *thoughtfully* read every assignment. When we say that you are required to read, we do not mean that you should mechanically scan every page, but that you should *grapple with the ideas*. Mark up your text, read with a pen and paper, and write down ideas, questions, quotations, and points of confusion or contention. *Read for comprehension rather than completion, pondering every idea rather than looking at every word*. This means that you may need to read a section, think about it, read it again, write about it, discuss it, and then read it again. So, “do the reading” means “engage yourself with the ideas of the texts.”

The reading load will be quite heavy at times. To stay afloat, plan for a sufficient amount of time to complete the assignment, and read aggressively. Remember to make use of your resources. Come to my office hours and form reading groups with your classmates. Talk to one another!

Reading in this way will assist you in the second requirement: Your regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. Unexcused absences from class will have serious and significant detrimental effects on your final grade. **Come prepared to participate by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course material, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion.** Moreover, class participation does not simply entail speaking, but also listening in an engaged and respectful manner to the thoughts of your classmates.

There is one more crucial facet of class participation. Each student will be responsible for *writing a series of one-page reaction papers* throughout the semester. We will be breaking the class into four groups. Each day the students in one group will be responsible for writing and distributing one-page papers reacting to the assigned texts. These papers should be informal (but by no means sloppy or careless). The aim of these papers is *not* to summarize the material, but to respond to the texts in a manner that will shape our collective analysis of these texts. ***The papers are required to be posted on the WISE course platform by 9:00 PM the night before the given class meeting.***

To be clear, these short essays are a vehicle for participating in class discussions and will be assessed as part of your class participation grade. Submitting thoughtful reaction papers, but rarely speaking in class is not sufficient for receiving high marks for class participation. Likewise, speaking often in class, but submitting careless reaction papers is also not sufficient for high marks for class participation.

One more note about reading and participation: *Throughout the semester, we will be distributing additional articles, essays, and other texts for us to read and discuss.* We will also be sending out links to websites, screening short videos, playing radio programs and podcasts. These additional readings are not yet listed on the schedule of events below, but will complement the other reading assignments, pick up on themes from our class discussions, and keep us in touch with ongoing developments in American culture. These supplemental texts and resources will contribute to the dynamism of the class, and let us add that *you are each strongly encouraged to suggest texts and resources that we can discuss as a class.*

Writing Assignments:

In addition to the response papers, there are two other types of writing assignments in this course. First, there are three short “observation essays” exploring a series of issues we will be addressing in class. Students will be required to both write these essays and present their observations and conclusions in class. Second, there is a final project that will include a longer 8-10 page paper and a more formal presentation. These projects will be developed in consultation with Professors Steck and Gutterman.

**** Note:** A penalty of 1/3 grade per day will be imposed on assignments submitted late (one day’s lateness would reduce a B+ to a B). We generally do not grant extensions, but if extraordinary circumstances arise, please consult with us as soon as possible -- *and certainly prior to the due date of the paper.*

***** Another note:** We fully appreciate that students like fast and thorough comments on their writing assignments. Unfortunately “fast” and “thorough” do not often go together well. We will strive to return your final papers in a timely fashion. *As a general rule, you should receive your papers back within two weeks of turning them in.*

**** Of Special Note: We take plagiarism very seriously. The OED defines plagiarism as “the action or practice of taking someone else’s work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one’s own; literary theft.” Plagiarism takes many forms, but the common denominator is presenting someone else’s words or ideas as your own. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, we encourage you both to err on the side of caution and to seek advice from us or from the Writing Center. Students found guilty of plagiarism will receive a zero for the assignment AND WILL BE REPORTED TO THE DEAN.

***** Wait, another note: It is our intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is our goal to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, perspective, and other background characteristics.

***** Statement Concerning Disabilities: Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information the instructor should know of, or who need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible, no later than the first week of the term.

Grading

Class participation (including response papers)	30%
Observation Papers (Three 1000-1200 word essays, 10%/essay)	30%
Final Paper and Presentation	40%
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<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

Schedule of Events

1. W 9/1: Introduction
James Braly, “Oliver’s Pink Bicycle” The Moth (audio)
2. M 9/6: Labor Day – No class
3. W 9/8: Judith Halberstam, “Introduction to Female Masculinity: Masculinity Without Men.” *Female Masculinity*. Durham, Duke UP, 1998.
R.W. Connell, “The History of Masculinity,” The Masculinity Studies Reader, Ed. Adams and Savran, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002.
4. M 9/13: Michael Kimmel, “Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity.” Theorizing Masculinities. Ed. Brod and Kaufman. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994.
bell hooks, “Reconstructing Black Masculinity,” Black Looks: Race and Representation. Cambridge: South End Press, 1992.
5. W 9/15: Alfredo Mirande, “‘Macho’: Contemporary Conceptions,” Hombres y Machos: Masculinity and Latino Culture. New York: Westview Press, 1997.

Richard Majors, "Cool Pose and Masculinity."
Master Lee, "Chink," The Moth. (audio)

6. M 9/20: Representation of Masculinity, Round 1
7. W 9/22: Representations of Masculinity, Round 2
8. M 9/27: Anne Fausto-Sterling, "How to Build a Man." Constructing Masculinity. Ed. Berger, Willis, and Watson. New York: Routledge, 1995.
Donna Haraway, "The Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Women)
9. W 9/29: Anne Fausto-Sterling, "How to Build a Man."
Donna Haraway, "The Cyborg Manifesto."
10. M 10/4: Film: *Tropic Thunder* (2008).
Paper #1 Due
11. W 10/6: Military Masculinity
Carol Cohn, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals." *Signs*, Vol. 12, No. 4, Within and Without: Women, Gender, and Theory. (Summer, 1987), 687-718.
Tim Kaufman-Osborn, "Gender Trouble at Abu Ghraib," W Stands for Women: How the George W. Bush Presidency shaped a New Politics of Gender, 141-162.
12. M 10/11: Brian K. Vaughan and Pia Guerra, *Y the Last Man*
Film: *Waltz with Bashir/The Hurt Locker*
13. W 10/13: *Waltz with Bashir*
14. M 10/18: Fashionably Male
Visual Project: Presentation of Masculinity in Fashion
15. W 10/20: Visual Project: Presentation of Masculinity in Fashion
16. M 10/25: Diego Rinallo, "Metro/Fashion/Tribes of Men: Negotiating the Boundaries of Men's Legitimate Consumption." Consumer Tribes. Ed. Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar. Burlington, MA: Elsevier, 2007.
Dean Spade, "Dressed to Kill, Fight to Win.
Episodes of Queer Eye for the Straight Guy
17. W 10/27: Film: *Fight Club*
Paper Due – 1000 words
18. M 11/1: *Fight Club* Cont.

19. W 11/3: Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex"
Catharine MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence," *Signs*, Vol. 8 No. 4, Summer 1983, 635-658.
20. M 11/8: Jonathan Weaver, "Proof is in the Punch: Gender Differences in Perceptions of Action and Aggression as Components of Manhood." *Sex Roles* (2010) 62:241–251.
Kristin L. Anderson and Debra Umberson, "Gendering Violence: Masculinity and Power in Men's Accounts of Domestic Violence." *Gender and Society*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Jun., 2001), 358-380.
Robert Sapolsky, "Testosterone Rules." *Discover*, 18(3):45-50
<http://www.anapsid.org/hormones.html>.
21. W 11/10: David Popenoe, "Life Without Father," Lost Fathers: The Politics of Fatherlessness in America, Ed. Cynthia Daniels. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000, 33-50.
Maggie Gallagher, "Father Hunger." Lost Fathers: The Politics of Fatherlessness in America, Ed. Cynthia Daniels. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000, 163-182.
22. M 11/15: V. Lawson Bush, "How Black Mothers Participate in the Development of Manhood and Masculinity." *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 73, No. 4, (Autumn, 2004), pp. 381-391.
Julie Willet, "A Father's Touch," *Sexuality & Culture* (2008) 12:275–290.
Scott Coltrane, "Elite Careers and Family Commitment: Its (Still) about Gender," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 596, (Nov., 2004), 214-220.
23. W 11/17: Paper #3 Due -- Celluloid Masculinity
Film: *Lonestar*
24. M 11/22: John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity." The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader. Ed. Ablove, Barale, and Halperin. New York: Routledge, 1993, 416-431.
Hanna Rosin "The End of Men"
25. W 11/24: Thanksgiving -- No Class
26. M 11/29: What is the Future of Masculinity & Evaluations
27. W 12/1: Presentations, Day 2
28. M 12/6: Presentations, Day 3
29. W 12/8: Presentations, Day 4