

CA 315: Gender and Communication

Dr. Brett Lunceford

MTWRF: 12.40-2.35PM

UCOM 1219

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Course Description

This course examines the differences and similarities in how culturally constructed notions of gender operate in society.

This course has three primary goals. Students will:

- Recognize and assess how gender is rhetorically constructed in society.
- Apply theories of gender and communication to their own experience.
- Understand and evaluate how differences and similarities between genders influence communication patterns and relationships.

These goals will be assessed in two ways. During in class activities and discussion, students will have opportunities to explore how we perform gender roles. Students will also have the opportunity to reflect on their own personal experiences and apply communication and rhetorical theory to these experiences through journal assignments.

I expect that each student will come to class prepared to discuss the readings for the day. According to the University of South Alabama's Academic Policies and Procedures, "Each hour of lecture usually requires two hours of outside preparation. Thus, a student carrying sixteen semester hours should be prepared to spend at least 48 hours in class and study per week."

Required Texts

Wood, Julia T. *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture*. 7th ed. Belmont, CA: Thompson/Wadsworth, 2007.

Other readings will be available through the library's online course reserves.

Class Climate

The questions that we will grapple with have no easy answers and issues surrounding gender are often emotionally charged. People often have strongly held beliefs concerning these issues and there are likely to be times where you disagree with someone else. This is appropriate and, to some degree, desirable. However, respect for others in the class is an essential component of this class. Arguments should be made in a spirit of inquiry rather than as personal attacks. My primary goal is to maintain a class climate in which differing viewpoints can be safely expressed.

Moreover, because of the nature of this course, you are likely to hear some very personal experiences from your colleagues. For that reason, what is shared in this course should remain in this course.

Attendance Policy

This is a junior level course, so I assume that by now you recognize the value of regular class attendance. This course relies heavily on in-class discussion. Excessive absences will negatively impact your grade in this course. If you are not present, you are not able to participate and it is impossible to make up the discussion. You get two absences free—no questions asked. However, after these absences, each absence will decrease your final grade by 5 points (half a letter grade), so use them wisely. In addition, there may be in-class activities that are impossible to make up. If you are absent, please do not email me asking, “What did I miss?” You missed 115 minutes of discussion and perhaps an assignment. Make friends with your classmates and get the notes from them and/or come to my office hours.

Academic Honesty

From the Student Academic Conduct Policies: “Any dishonesty related to academic work or records constitutes academic misconduct including, but not limited to, activities such as giving or receiving unauthorized aid in tests and examinations, improperly obtaining a copy of an examination, plagiarism, misrepresentation of information, or altering transcripts or university records. . . . Penalties may range from the loss of credit for a particular assignment to dismissal from the University” (*The Lowdown*, p. 249). In short, don’t do it. I don’t like to bust students for plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty but I will. It isn’t fair to others and it isn’t fair to yourself. If you have any questions on what constitutes plagiarism, see <http://www.southalabama.edu/univlib/sauer/plagiarismforstudents.html>.

Assignments

Journal: Throughout the course, I will ask you to write on specific topics related to gender and communication. These assignments should provide opportunities for reflection and application of the topics to your own life. I expect that you will bring in material from the readings and lectures to inform your discussion. In other words, although this is an opportunity to reflect on your own experiences, to do well on these assignments, you must make this something other than a diary and apply theory to your experience. Each entry should be 2-3 pages long (double spaced, times new roman font, 1 inch margins, single spaced heading). Journal entries are due on the day that they are listed in the schedule.

Participation: Participation is more than simply showing up. In order for you to succeed in this class it is imperative that you come prepared, having read the assignments for the day and ready to discuss them.

There will be no final exam in this course; the journal will serve that purpose.

Grading Scale

There are a total of 100 points available in this course:

Journal: 80

Participation: 20

A=90-100; B=80-89.99; C=70-79.99; D=60-69.99; F=below 60

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with bona fide disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodation. The Office of Special Student Services will certify a disability and advise faculty members of reasonable accommodations.

If you will need special accommodations please talk to me as soon as possible.

A Note on my Teaching Philosophy

I believe that every student in my class has the ability to succeed in this course. My goal is to create a comfortable environment in which you can explore and improve your ability to think critically and skillfully present your ideas to an audience. I do not “give” grades; students earn grades—no one is entitled to get an “A” in a class unless they earn it. I cannot grade on effort—I must grade what you actually do. My job is to push students to do their best and to then exceed that standard. I recognize that this is futile unless I also provide the support and assistance that each student needs to excel. Therefore, I provide office hours and expect students to use them and am generally available through email. I assume that attaining a university degree is your first priority. If this is not the case, it is less likely that you will excel. Some of you are here because you want to get a better job. I believe that education should do much more than job training, but if you see it as job training, at least take it seriously. Recognize that you will probably be required to work 40 hours a week (or more) from 8am until 5pm. If you are chronically late, they fire you. If you do not do your work, they fire you. If you drop the ball, you probably will not get a raise, they may fire you, and in some cases legal action may be taken against you. Bottom line—you do your part to excel and I will be there to help you reach that goal.

Reading Schedule

Week 1

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| May 26 | Introduction to the Course |
| May 27 | Wood, Chapter 1: Communication, Gender, and Culture |
| May 28 | Wood, Chapter 2: Gender Development |
| | Journal Entry 1: When did you first know that you were different from the other gender? |
| May 29 | Wood, Chapter 3: Women’s Movements |

Week 2

- June 1 Wood, Chapter 4: Men's Movements
- June 2 Wood, Chapter 5: Verbal Communication
- Journal Entry 2:** How does your gender talk?
- June 3 Wood, Chapter 6: Nonverbal Communication
- Journal Entry 3:** What are the nonverbal patterns that you have observed in your gender?
- June 4 Looking for Love
 Groom, Carla J., and James W. Pennebaker. "The Language of Love: Sex, Sexual Orientation, and Language Use in Online Personal Advertisements." *Sex Roles* 52, no. 7-8 (2005): 447-61.
 Smith, Christine A., and Shannon Stillman. "What Do Women Want? The Effects of Gender and Sexual Orientation on the Desirability of Physical Attributes in the Personal Ads of Women." *Sex Roles* 46, no. 9/10 (2002): 337-42.
- 5 Participation points:** Bring in a personal ad to discuss in light of the readings.
 Activity and Discussion: Clothing
- 5 participation points:** Dress as gendered as possible. If you are female, dress as feminine as possible and if you are male, dress as masculine as possible. Be prepared to explain why you chose each article of clothing.
- Journal Entry 4:** Why did you choose the clothes? What do you think the other gender will wear?

Week 3

- June 8 Wood, Chapter 7: Becoming Gendered
- June 9 Wood, Chapter 8: Close Relationships
- June 10 Wood, Julia T. "A Critical Response to John Gray's Mars and Venus Portrayals of Men and Women." *Southern Communication Journal* 67, no. 2 (2002): 201-10.
- Journal Entry 5:** How is your conception of relationships different from your significant other? What do you have in common?
 June 11 Wood, Chapter 9: Education and Gender
- Journal Entry 6:** How do you think this class would be different if it were not mixed gender?
- June 12 Wood, Chapter 10: Organizations and Gender

Week 4

- June 15 Wood, Chapter 11: Media and Gender
- Journal Entry 7:** Do you think the media portrays your gender fairly? Which media?

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| June 16 | Activity and Discussion: Advertising Journal Entry 8: Find two advertisements: One that portrays your gender well and another that does so poorly. Explain why you chose these advertisements and discuss the implications for these portrayals. |
| June 17 | Video: Sut Jhalli, Dreamworlds |
| June 18 | Activity and Discussion: Music 5 Participation points: Bring in a song that you think portrays a gender in a particularly interesting way. |
| June 19 | Wood, Chapter 12: Violence |
| Week 5 | |
| June 22 | Last Day of Class: What have we learned about gender and communication? |

Regarding Changes in Course Requirements

Since all classes do not progress at the same rate, the instructor may wish to modify the above requirements or their timing as circumstances dictate. For example, the instructor may wish to change the number and frequency of exams, or the number and sequence of assignments. However, the students must be given adequate notification. Moreover, there may be non-typical classes for which these requirements are not strictly applicable in each instance and may need modification. If such modification is needed, it must be in writing and conform to the spirit of this policy statement.