

CA 315: Gender and Communication
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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

All 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.

Here is the policy set forth by the Department of Communication:

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the Student Academic Conduct Policy. By registering at the university, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Conduct Policy, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the code. Please see *The Lowdown* for the complete **Student Academic Conduct Policy**.

Each instance of academic dishonesty will be reported to the chair of the department. The student involved will receive written notification describing the alleged violation and the recommended penalty, along with a copy of the policy. The written notification will inform the student that if it is determined that previous incident(s) of Academic Misconduct have occurred, an additional or higher level charge may be brought.

The student involved has ten (10) Class days from receipt of the written notification to submit a written response to the instructor and request a conference with the department chair and the instructor.

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 are also specific assignments that will enhance participation in the course. These are listed in the schedule.

There will be no final exam in this course; the journal, assignments, and class discussion will serve that purpose.

Grading Scale

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

Journal: 60

Participation Assignments: 40

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 have a specific disability that qualifies you for academic accommodations, please notify the instructor/professor and provide certification from Special Student Services. (OSSS is located in Room 270 of the Student Center (460-7212).

Keep in mind that OSSS prohibits me from making any retroactive accommodations, so if you will need special accommodations please talk to me as soon as possible. Moreover, I can make no accommodations unless you are registered with OSSS.

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

June 29: Introduction to the Course

June 30: Myths Perpetuated by Popular Culture’s Versions of Gendered Communication

MacGeorge, Erina L., Bo Feng, and Ginger L. Butler. “Gender Difference in Communication Values of Mature Adults.” *Communication Research Reports* 20, no. 3 (2003): 191-99.

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.

July 1: Sex and Gender—What’s the Difference?

Journal Entry 1: When did you first realize that you were different from the other sex?

Aylor, Brooks, and Marianne Dainton. “Biological Sex and Psychological Gender as Predictors of Routine and Strategic Relational Maintenance.” *Sex Roles* 50, no. 9/10 (2004): 689-97.

July 2: Activity and Discussion: Music

Assignment 1 (5 points): Bring in a song that you think portrays a gender in a particularly interesting way.

Carpentier, Francesca Dillman, Silvia Knobloch-Westerwick, and Andree Blumhoff. “Naughty Versus Nice: Suggestive Pop Music Influences on Perceptions of Potential Romantic Partners.” *Media Psychology* 9, no. 1 (2007): 1-17.

Week 2

July 5: No Class

July 6: Becoming Feminine

Kelly, Deirdre, Shauna Pomerantz, and Dawn Currie. "Skater Girlhood and Emphasized Femininity: 'You Can't Land an Ollie Properly in Heels'." *Gender & Education* 17, no. 3 (2005): 229-48.

Toerien, Merran, Sue Wilkinson, and Precilla Choi. "Body Hair Removal: The 'Mundane' Production of Normative Femininity." *Sex Roles* 52, no. 5/6 (2005): 399-406.

July 7: Becoming Masculine

Jandt, Fred, and Heather Hundley. "Intercultural Dimensions of Communicating Masculinities." *Journal of Men's Studies* 15, no. 2 (2007): 216-31.

Slater, Philip. "Are Boys Being Trained for Obsolescence?" *ReVision* 30, no. 1/2 (2008): 66-70.

July 8: Communication Theory Review

Watzlawick, Paul, Janet Beavin Bavelas, and Don D. Jackson. *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1967. (pp. 48-71).

July 9: Gendered Communication

Journal Entry 2: How does your gender talk? Do you see differences from what we have read?

Eagly, Alice H. "The His and Hers of Prosocial Behavior: An Examination of the Social Psychology of Gender." *American Psychologist* 64, no. 8 (2009): 644-58.

Week 3

July 12: Nonverbal Communication

Journal Entry 3: What are the nonverbal patterns that you have observed in your gender?

Guéguen, Nicolas. "The Effect of a Woman's Smile on Men's Courtship Behavior." *Social Behavior & Personality* 36, no. 9 (2008): 1233-36.

Henningsen, David Dryden, Falon Kartch, Nancy Orr, and Amanda Brown. "The Perceptions of Verbal and Nonverbal Flirting Cues in Cross-Sex Interactions." *Human Communication* 12, no. 4 (2009): 371-81.

Knöfler, Tobias, and Margarete Imhof. "Does Sexual Orientation Have an Impact on Nonverbal Behavior in Interpersonal Communication?" *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 31, no. 3 (2007): 189-204.

July 13: Activity and Discussion: Clothing

Assignment 2 (5 points): Come to class dressed as gendered as possible. If you are female, dress as feminine as possible; if you are male, dress as masculine as possible; if you identify as androgynous, dress as gender neutral as possible. Be prepared to explain why you chose each article of clothing.

Journal Entry 4: Why did you choose the clothes? Be specific about each article of clothing. What do you think those not of your sex will wear?

Kuruc, Katarina. "Fashion as Communication: A Semiotic Analysis of Fashion on 'Sex and the City'." *Semiotica* 171, no. 1-4 (2008): 193-214.

Lunceford, Brett. "Smearred Makeup and Stiletto Heels: Clothing, Sexuality, and the Walk of Shame." In *College Sex - Philosophy for Everyone: Philosophers with Benefits*, edited by Michael Bruce and Robert M. Stewart. Hoboken, NJ Wiley/Blackwell, 2010.

July 14: Activity: Looking for Love

Assignment 3 (5 points): Bring in a personal ad to discuss in light of the readings.

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.

July 15: Relational Communication Part I

Heyman, Richard E., Ashley N. Hunt-Martorano, Jill Malik, and Amy M. Smith Slep. "Desired Change in Couples: Gender Differences and Effects on Communication." In *Journal of Family Psychology*, 474-84, 2009.

Parr, Patricia, Rebecca A. Boyle, and Laura Tejada. "I Said, You Said: A Communication Exercise for Couples." *Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal* 30, no. 3 (2008): 167-73.

July 16: Relational Communication Part II

Journal Entry 5: How is your conception of relationships different from your significant other? What do you have in common?

Elliott, Sinikka, and Obera Umberson. "The Performance of Desire: Gender and Sexual Negotiation in Long-Term Marriages." *Journal of Marriage & Family* 70, no. 2 (2008): 391-406.

Week 4

July 19: Getting It On: Communication, Sexual Activity and Gender

Hughes, Mikayla, Kelly Morrison, and Kelli Jean K. Asada. "What's Love Got to Do with It? Exploring the Impact of Maintenance Rules, Love Attitudes, and Network Support on Friends with Benefits Relationships." *Western Journal of Communication* 69, no. 1 (2005): 49-66.

Jonason, Peter K., Norman P. Li, and Margaret J. Cason. "The 'Booty Call': A Compromise between Men's and Women's Ideal Mating Strategies." *Journal of Sex Research* 46 (2009): 460-70.

July 20: Media and Gender

Journal Entry 6: Do you think the media portrays your gender fairly? Which media?

Engstrom, Erika. "Unraveling the Knot: Political Economy and Cultural Hegemony in Wedding Media." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 32, no. 1 (2008): 60-82.

Lindgren, Simon, and Maxime Lelievre. "In the Laboratory of Masculinity: Renegotiating Gender Subjectivities in MTV's *Jackass*." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 26, no. 5 (2009): 393-410.

July 21: Gender and Culture

Droogsma, Rachel Anderson. "Redefining Hijab: American Muslim Women's Standpoints on Veiling." *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 35, no. 3 (2007): 294-319.

July 22: Activity and Discussion: Advertising

Assignment 4 (5 points): Find two advertisements: One that portrays your gender well and another that does so poorly. Be prepared to explain to the class why you chose these advertisements and discuss the implications for these portrayals.

Levine, Elana. "'Having a Female Body Doesn't Make You Feminine': Feminine Hygiene Advertising and 1970s Television." *Velvet Light Trap*, no. 50 (2002): 36-47.

Schroeder, Jonathan E., and Detlev Zwick. "Mirrors of Masculinity: Representation and Identity in Advertising Images." *Consumption, Markets & Culture* 7, no. 1 (2004): 21-52.

July 23: When Gender is Not Simple

Gough, Brendan, Nicky Weyman, Julie Alderson, Gary Butler, and Mandy Stoner. "'They Did Not Have a Word': The Parental Quest to Locate a 'True Sex' for Their Intersex Children." *Psychology & Health* 23, no. 4 (2008): 493-507.

Valentine, David. "'I Went to Bed with My Own Kind Once': The Erasure of Desire in the Name of Identity." *Language & Communication* 23, no. 2 (2003): 123-38.

Week 5

July 26: 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.