

Comm 395 – Gender and Communication

Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism

Tuesday & Thursday 12:30-4:40pm
ANN 209



Samantha Close

Office hours by appointment. Email sclose@usc.edu to arrange a time.

Course Description

This course investigates the way gender is constructed, maintained, and challenged within contemporary media and communication. It embraces an intersectional pedagogical method, whereby the entanglements of gender with race, class, sexuality, ability, and national culture are continuously analyzed throughout the semester. COMM 395 is an upper-level theory course where students will build on the groundwork knowledge and skills that they have already built through introductory courses in the major.

The course is organized into three main blocks. In the first block, Seeing Gender, students will learn foundational theories of gender and communication and use them to challenge their instinctive ideas about gender. We will practice applying these theories to analyze media representations of gender and media industry structure around those representations. In the second block, Making Gender, we will turn to focus on how people create their own gendered representations to maintain and challenge social norms. Students will practice expressing their critiques of gender through both writing and producing media. In the third block, Living Gender, each week will focus in on a particular area of contemporary society. We will explore in detail how gender is both created and challenged in these social arenas.

In the contemporary globalizing world, it is increasingly essential for students to be aware of cultures outside their own borders. Different nations have highly divergent cultures of gender, and so learning what is “normal” outside of the United States will

help students to be more critically aware of the socially constructed nature of gender. This course uses a comparative method whereby students are made more aware of the impact of national culture on gender and communication via studying how gender is communicated in Japan. Japanese culture is very different from American culture, particularly regarding gender, and it is increasingly influential in the international sphere. Students are not expected to have any prior knowledge about Japan or Japanese culture, but we will make use of knowledge and experiences that students bring with them.

Student Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, students will

- 1) Have a nuanced understanding of communication theories of gender
- 2) Understand the impact of gender on a variety of social arenas
- 3) Understand the way that gender, race, sexuality, class, national culture, and social structure interact
- 4) Be able to critically analyze constructions of gender in media
- 5) Be able to communicate their critiques and constructions of gender through a variety of media

Course Requirements

Summer session courses are intensive, particularly in the upper divisions. There are extensive reading, writing, and media production activities required outside of class time as well as an expectation for active in-class engagement.

Students are allocated one class absence without penalty to their grade. Beyond this, any unexcused absences will result in serious grade reductions, including a zero for the day's participation and readings assessment.

Assignments and Rubric

Participation (15%)

This course applies an interdisciplinary approach that engages a variety of learning styles. In class, students will collaboratively view and analyze a variety of media as well as participate in seminar discussions and group activities. Presence in class is required—but not sufficient—for success. This includes mental presence. Students are encouraged to make use of whatever technologies best support their learning, and some activities will require the use of laptops or smart phones. It is not subtle when these technologies become a distraction rather than an aid, and students' participation grades will be reduced accordingly.

Reading Assessments (15%)

Because this is an intensive summer upper-division course, there is a significant amount of required reading outside of class. Regular, thoughtful reading of course materials prepares students to participate in discussion, understand lectures, and succeed in the in-class activities. To recognize and credit the amount of effort this involves as well as to

assess reading comprehension, each week we will have a brief reading assessment before discussing the readings. These assessments will be open-book and open-note, with questions based on this [taxonomy of learning objectives](#). More details will be discussed in the initial class meeting.

Music Video Analysis Paper and Presentation (25%)

Students will choose a music video and write a short paper analyzing that video's representation of gender. Students will present these analyses to their peers in class on June 2. More details will be given when this project is assigned on May 24.

Blog Posts (15%)

Students will create dedicated wordpress blogs for this course. Creating these blogs provides valuable practice in media production that is applicable to a variety of situations later on. Students will complete and post on their blog a series of assignments where they reflect on course materials and activities as well as create their own commentary media. Students are not expected or required to have any experience with wordpress or media production before the course begins.

Final Project (30%)

The final assessment for this course is an extended, media-rich paper. Students will choose a specific topic, one covered in the course which they will explore more in-depth or one of personal interest not covered in the course. They will curate a collection of 4-5 pieces of media accompanied by writing that draws out connections and contrast between the media as well as analyzes the communication of gender in their case by applying course readings and theories. Further details will be given when this project is assigned on June 14.

Extra Credit (possible 1-3 points on final grade)

There is an extra credit option for this course. Students will write a 2000-2500 word essay comparing and contrasting the construction of gender in the Darren Aronofsky films *Black Swan* and *The Wrestler*. More details about this assignment will be given on May 26, and students who wish to be eligible for extra credit must complete and hand in this assignment by June 14. This is a generous extra credit assignment that requires substantial thought and effort, as such no credit will be given for inadequate or cursory papers.

Readings

Readings for this course are distributed through the Blackboard site. There will be additional readings given out in class as they pertain to in-class activities. In addition, there will be a variety of media screenings in class that students will be responsible for in assessments, so regular attendance and participation as well as diligent reading is crucial for success. Readings are subject to change, with advanced notice of at least one class meeting, according to the instructor's discretion.

Academic Integrity:

Annenberg School for Communication is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will receive a failing grade in the course and may be dismissed as a major.

In addition to the formal academic integrity policy, our pedagogical policy is based on mutual respect; all students are encouraged to use the classroom as a space in which to speak and to voice their opinions. Our expectation is that you will respect not only the professors/instructors but also your fellow classmates when they are participating in discussion.

Disability:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.- 5:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Website and contact information for DSP:

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu

Stress Management:

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

Sexual Assault Resource Center:

The Center for Women & Men and the Sexual Assault Resource Center are one and the same. Student Counseling Services is a separate place that also offers confidential counseling and support groups on a variety of other topics. To schedule an appointment with Student Counseling Services, call (213) 740-7711 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays or visit the Engemann Student Health Center on the University Park Campus.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis:

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

ESL Students:

Please inform me as soon as possible if you require special accommodations based on your understanding of the English language.

Course Schedule

Section I: Seeing Gender

1 - May 19 (Thurs)

Thinking Gender

- Judith Lorber “Believing Is Seeing: Biology as Ideology”
- Judith Butler selections from *Gender Trouble*: “Gender: The Circular Ruins of Contemporary Debate” (p.10-17) & “From interiority to gender performatives” (p.183-193)
- Cathy Davidson “Typical Japanese Women” (p.50-68)

2 - May 24 (Tues)

Analyzing Representations of Gender in Media - Femininity

- Laura Mulvey “Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema”
- Aisha Durham “Check On It: Beyonce, Southern Booty and Black Femininities in Music Video”
- Sophia McDougall “I Hate Strong Female Characters”
(<http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2013/08/i-hate-strong-female-characters>)
- Frenchy Lunning “Under the Ruffles: Shōjo and the Morphology of Power”

May 26 (Thurs)

Analyzing Representations of Gender in Media – Masculinity

- Connell and Messerschmidt “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept”
- Herman Gray “Black Masculinity and Visual Culture”
- Matthew Salesses “A Conversation on Asian American Men and Masculinity”
(<http://alist-magazine.com/home/a-conversation-on-asian-american-men-and-masculinity/>)
- Fabienne Darling-Wolf “SMAP, Sex, and Masculinity: Constructing the Perfect Female Fantasy in Japanese Popular Music”

3 - May 31 (Tues)

Gendered Genres - Pornography, Erotica, and the Romance

- Janice Radway “Readers and Their Romances”
- Laura Kipnis “(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading Hustler”
- Steve Garlick “Taking Control of Sex? Hegemonic Masculinity, Technology, and Internet Pornography”
- Linda Williams “Fetishism and Hard Core: Marx, Freud, and the ‘Money Shot’”

Field trip to The Ripped Bodice romance bookstore in Culver City.

Section II: Making Gender

June 2 (Thurs)

Producing Gender – In Our Media, On Our Bodies, In Our Spaces

- Katrin Tiidenberg, Edgar Gómez Cruz “Selfies, Image and the Re-making of the Body”
- Katherine Sender “Queens for a Day: *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and the Neoliberal Project”
- Jennifer Robertson “Staging Androgyny”
- Alexis Lothian “Bending Gender: Feminist and (Trans)Gender Discourses in the Changing Bodies of Slash Fan Fiction”
- Fanfic author TSylvestris “The Natural Order (work-in-progress fan fiction)”

4 - June 7 (Tues)

Guest Instructor – Kari Storla

Tweeting, Sharing, and Commenting on Gender

- Jennifer Lawrence *Vanity Fair* interview
- Michael Salter “Justice and revenge in online counter-publics: Emerging responses to sexual violence in the age of social media”
- Anna Piela “I am Just Doing my Bit to Promote Modesty: Niqabis’ self-portraits on photo-sharing websites”

June 9 (Thurs)

Guest Instructor – Tisha Dejmanee

Post-feminism and Entrepreneurship in the Blogosphere

- Sarah Banet-Weiser “Branding the Post-Feminist Self: The Labor of Femininity”
- Tisha Dejmanee “‘Food Porn’ as Postfeminist Play: Digital Femininity and the Female Body on Food Blogs”
- Emily Matchar “A Woman’s (And a Man’s) Place is in the Home After All”

Section III: Living Gender

5 - June 14 (Tues)

Technology

- Anne Balsamo “The Virtual Body in Cyberspace”
- Mary Kearney “Pink Technology: Mediamaking Gear for Girls”
- Christian Rudder “Introduction” & “The Beauty Myth in Apotheosis”
- Meika Loe “Fixing Broken Masculinity: Viagra as a Technology for the Production of Gender and Sexuality”
- Kathleen Zane “Reflections on a Yellow Eye: Asian i(\eye/)cons and Cosmetic Surgery”

June 16 (Thurs)

Working

- Yajaira Padilla “Domesticating Rosario: Conflicting Representations of the Latina Maid in U.S. Media”
- Kathi Weeks selections from “The Problem with Work,” “Working Demands: From Wages for Housework to Basic Income”
- Peter Matanle, Leo McCann, Darren Ashmore “Men Under Pressure: Representations of the ‘Salaryman’ and his Organization in Japanese Manga”
- Carol Tyler “The Job Thing” (selections)

6 - June 21 (Tues)

Consuming

- Ellen Seiter “Buying Happiness, Buying Success: Toy Advertising to Parents”
- Danae Clark “Commodity Lesbianism”
- Alison Clarke “The Ascent of the Tupperware Party”
- Michael A. Messner and Jeffrey Montez de Oca “The Male Consumer as Loser: Beer and Liquor Ads in Mega Sports Media Events”

June 23 (Thurs)

Changing

- Kimberle Williams Crenshaw “Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew”
- Kathleen Rowe “Roseanne: Unruly Woman as Domestic Goddess”
- Naito Chizuko “Reorganizations of Gender & Nationalism: Gender Bashing & Lolicized Japanese Society”
- Rosa Reitsamer and Elke Zobl “Alternative Media Production, Feminism, & Citizenship Practices”

June 28 (Tues)

Final Projects Due