

ANTH 137/FOLK 137 **GENDER AND PERFORMANCE** Spring 2005, MW 2:00-3:15, Alumni 203

Professor Patricia Sawin
409-D Alumni 962-1572 sawin@unc.edu
Office hours: T 1-3 and by appointment

Gender is arguably the most salient component of human identity, one of the first things we recognize or wish to determine about someone with whom we interact, the first question we ask about a newborn child. Yet gender identity is neither universal nor coterminous with biological sex. What it means to be a culturally appropriate man or woman varies radically in different parts of the world; race, age, and class influence one's gender assignment. Gender identities beyond the male/female dichotomy are readily acknowledged in some groups, denied or vilified in others. Furthermore, however narrow or broad the standing gender role definitions one encounters, every individual negotiates with societal norms to establish their particular identity, modifying or reinforcing the standing rules in the process. Gender identity is thus not merely an inherent quality that we express, but rather something we actually create in the course of social interaction. In order to interact and so to define ourselves, humans employ culture-specific communicative forms, ranging from tone of voice and turn of phrase to artistic texts, genres and the conventions that characterize them, and standards for performance. Specific forms of expression, genres, and venues are often limited to persons of only some of the genders recognized in that society, reflecting deeply-held though unarticulated beliefs about the intellectual, esthetic, and emotional capacities of persons of a particular sex-class. Our goals in this course will be: 1) to understand the theories that conceptualize gender as a sort of performance, 2) to explore ethnographic studies of how people enact their gender identities in a range of societies around the world, 3) to analyze these ethnographies, critiquing how the authors choose research methodologies and theories to illuminate their data, and 4) for each student to undertake your own ethnographic study of gender performance, working with a group or individual with whom you can interact over the course of the semester.

Readings will emphasize ethnographies of performance and self-presentation written primarily by anthropologists and folklorists. The studies cover cultures from all over the world and focus on cultural practices as varied as everyday conversation, traditional song, beauty pageants, and ritual dance. We will read several book-length ethnographies in order to understand the working out of gender roles in a particular cultural context in all its complexity and to get a fuller understanding of the tasks and achievements of a person who undertakes this kind of intellectual work. Supplementary articles will introduce us to major theoretical and methodological issues.

Course Requirements:

- | | |
|--|----------|
| • complete the readings assigned for discussion each day | ungraded |
| • one-page gender discomfort narrative | 5% |
| • one-page response to "Images That Matter" exhibit | 5% |

- reading critique and discussion questions
 - (on two of the articles or chapters read in class) 20%
- mid-term exam 20%
- proposal and preliminary annotated bibliography for research project ungraded
- research project (ethnographic analysis based on original field work) 40%
- final exam (primarily on student research reports) 10%

Assigned Readings: This course is designed to emphasize learning through discussion with your classmates. This requires dedication and discipline on your part. It is crucial that you read the assigned chapters or articles carefully before coming to class so that you are prepared to contribute to the discussion.

Gender Discomfort Narrative: For Wednesday, January 19, please write a one-page personal reflection and print out three copies to bring to class. Think back over the past year or so (longer ago is ok if something stands out in your memory) and describe a situation in which you were either uncomfortable with how others expected you to behave on the basis of your gender (or your assumed gender identity) or in which you believed that others were critical because of what seemed to them “gender inappropriate” behavior on your part. If you can’t think of a personal experience, write about a time someone else’s behavior surprised you or made you uncomfortable because it didn’t match what you expected from someone of that gender. As a last resort, describe a situation in a movie, TV show, or novel. We’ll read each others’ narratives and use them as a basis for discussion, so please write about something you’re willing to share.

Images That Matter, Us and Them: Last fall a group of students curated an exhibit at UNC’s Ackland Art Museum. This means that they chose works from the museum’s collection on a particular theme and wrote the explanatory captions. Their theme was “Images that Matter, Us and Them,” and as part of the exhibit they wrote statements explaining what they would like to say to the people pictured in the photographs, paintings and drawings. We will visit the exhibit and you, likewise, will pick one image in which gender is a salient issue and write a response—what would you say to the person in that image?

Reading Critique and Discussion Questions: The goal of the reading critiques is to analyze the data, theory, and research methodology employed in an article or chapter in order to understand how ethnographers choose an approach to research that will most effectively illuminate the people or social activity they study. Each critique should be approximately one to two pages long (typed, single-spaced). The format is described in a separate guide. You will submit critiques twice during the semester. Each student will be randomly assigned to two dates; you may write on any article or book chapter that we will be discussing that day. The last step of your critique will be to formulate a question that you will share in class to stimulate discussion of that piece.

Mid-term exam: The mid-term will provide an opportunity to reflect upon and compare the readings and major themes of the course in essay format.

Proposal and Annotated Bibliography: As steps toward your own research projects, each student will submit a proposal (on which I will provide feedback) and a brief annotated bibliography covering some of the works you plan to use in your paper. (You will receive more specific instructions on how to complete these steps.)

Research Project: As the culminating exercise of the semester, each of you will engage in an independent research project. Your goal will be to observe and document some cultural practice in which the performance of gender is prominent and to offer an analysis in terms of the theories we have discussed. Any of the articles and books we read may serve as models for your (understandably more limited) ethnographic project. You will have ample time to discuss your ideas with me and to develop a workable and promising approach. The final products should be an approximately 12-15-page paper and a 10-minute presentation that each of you will give during the last three weeks of the semester. (A more detailed description will be provided as you start working on your projects.)

Final Exam: The final exam will be a short exercise that provides you with an opportunity to reveal your knowledge of other students' work (on which they will report in the last weeks of the course) and to reflect on that work in light of the issues we have discussed.

Attendance: I assume that you, as advanced students, actively want to be here for every session, well-prepared to get the most out of the discussion. Please talk to me in advance if you know you must miss class for university sports, job interviews, etc. Expect to bring documentation of your excuse for absences not arranged in advance. For unexcused absences in excess of 3, you lose one percent off your final grade.

TEXTS:

The following books are available at Student Stores:

Aretxaga, Begoña. 1997. *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Subjectivity in Northern Ireland*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Cohen, Colleen Ballerino, Richard Wilk, and Beverly Stoeltje, eds. 1996. *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power*. New York and London: Routledge.

Gutmann, Matthew, ed. 2003. *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Lawless, Elaine J. 2001. *Women Escaping Violence: Empowerment through Narrative*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.

Sawin, Patricia. 2004. *Listening for a Life: A Dialogic Ethnography of Bessie Eldreth through her Songs and Stories*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

Articles:

The other readings (journal articles and book chapters) will be available on electronic reserve.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**Week 1**

Wed, Jan 12: Introduction to the course, syllabus, and requirements

Week 2: Grounding in our own gender experiences

Mon, Jan 17: *Martin Luther King Holiday*

Wed, Jan 19: Share and discuss “gender discomfort” narratives

Week 3: Performing Gender

Mon, Jan 24: Beauty Pageants: About Beauty or About Community?

Cohen, et al., *Beauty Queens*, Introduction and chapters 1 and 2

Wed, Jan 26: “Gender”: A Useful or a Troubled Concept?

Sawin, *Listening for a Life*, pp. 4-9

Butler, Judith. 1990. Preface. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, pp. vii-xii. New York: Routledge.

Scott, Joan Wallach. 1996. Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis. In *Feminism and History*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott, pp. 152-180. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. *Focus especially on her proposed approach pp. 165-end.*

[[Before Feb 2 visit the “Images That Matter, Us and Them” exhibit at the Ackland Art Museum and write your one-page response paper. *The museum is not open Mondays.*]]

Week 4: Gender and National/Group Identity

Mon, Jan 31: Cohen, et al., *Beauty Queens*, chapter 7

McClintock, Anne. 1991. “No Longer in a Future Heaven”: Women and Nationalism in South Africa. *Transition* 51: 104-123.

Wed, Feb 2:

Babcock, Barbara A. 1993. “At Home, No Womens are Storytellers”: Potteries, Stories, and Politics at Cochiti Pueblo. In *Feminist Messages: Coding in Women=s Folk Culture*, ed. Joan Newlon Radner, pp. 221-248. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

“Images That Matter, Us and Them”: Hand in and discuss reflection papers

Week 5: Gender and National/Group Identity: Case Study: Women in the IRA

Mon, Feb 7: Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence*, pp. ix-104

Wed, Feb 9: Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence*, pp. 105-175

Butler, Judith. 1993. Introduction. In *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex,”* pp. 1-23. New York: Routledge.

Week 6: Gender and Race/Class/Work

Mon, Feb 14:

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2004. Very Necessary: Redefining Black Gender Ideology. In *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*, pp. 181-212. New York: Routledge.

Cohen, et al., *Beauty Queens*, ch. 8

Wed, Feb 16:

Roseman, Sharon R. 2002. "Strong Women" and "Pretty Girls": Self-Provisioning, Gender, and Class Identity in Rural Galicia (Spain). *American Anthropologist* 104(1):22-37.

Sawin, *Listening for a Life*, pp. 22-27 and chapter 3

Week 7: Masculinities

Mon, Feb 21:

Cameron, Deborah. 1998. Performing Gender Identity: Young Men's Talk and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity. In *Language and Gender: A Reader*, ed. Jennifer Coates, pp. 270-284. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Herzfeld, Michael. 1985. The Poetics of Manhood. In *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village*, pp. 3-50. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Wed, Feb 23: Gutmann, *Changing Men*, Introduction and chapter by Fonseca

Proposal for Research Project Due

Week 8: Beyond the Binary

Mon, Feb 28:

Bloom, Leslie Rebecca. 1998. Nonunitary Subjectivity and Gender. In *Under the Sign of Hope: Feminist Methodology and Narrative Interpretation*, pp. 97-136. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Butler, Judith. 1990. Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Inversions. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, pp.128-141. New York: Routledge.

Wed, March 2:

Weston, Kath. 1993. Lesbian/Gay Studies in the House of Anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22: 339-367.

Cohen, et al., *Beauty Queens*, chapter 6

Week 9: Beyond the Binary (cont.)

Mon, March 7: Gutmann, *Changing Men*, chapters by Parker and Carrillo

Wed, March 9: **Mid-term exam**

Week 10: Spring Break

Mon, March 14: *Spring Break*

Wed, March 16: *Spring Break*

Week 11: Constructing the Self through Discourse

Mon, March 21:

Eckert, Penelope and Sally McConell-Ginet. 1995. Constructing meaning, constructing selves. Snapshots of Language, Gender, and Class from Belten High. In *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, ed. Kira Hall & Mary Bucholtz, pp. 469-507. New York: Routledge.

Coates, Jennifer. 1999. Changing Femininities: The Talk of Teenage Girls. In *Reinventing Identities: The Gendered Self in Discourse*, ed. Mary Bucholtz, A.C.

Liang, and Laurel A. Sutton, pp. 123-144. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wed, March 23: **Case Study: A North Carolina Woman**

Sawin, *Listening for a Life*, pp. ix-4, 9-20, chapter 4

Annotated Bibliography Due

Week 12: Constructing the Self through Discourse:

Case Study: A North Carolina Woman (cont.)

Mon, March 28:

Sawin, *Listening for a Life*, chapters 4 and 5

Wed, March 30:

Sawin, *Listening for a Life*, chapter 6

Week 13: Bodies: Pleasure in/and Accomplishment

Mon, April 4:

Young, Iris Marion. 1990. Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality. In *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*, pp. 141-159. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Cowan, Jane K. 1990. Introduction and chapter 6: Ambivalent Pleasures: Dance as a Problem for Women. In *Dance and the Body Politic in Northern Greece*, pp.3-27 and 188-205. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Wed, April 6: **Case Study: Violence and Self-Transformation**

Peteet, Julie. 1997. Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada: A Cultural Politics of Violence. In *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East*, pp. 103-125, ed. Mai Ghoussoub and Emma Sinclair-Webb. London: Saqi Books.

Lawless, *Women Escaping Violence*, pp. xv-72

Week 14: Case Study: Violence and Self-Transformation (cont.)

Mon, April 11:

Lawless, *Women Escaping Violence*, pp. 73-160

Wed, April 13: Student Project Presentations

Week 15:

Mon, April 18: Student Project Presentations, **Research Projects Due**

Wed, April 20: Student Project Presentations

Week 16:

Mon, April 25: Student Project Presentations

Wed, April 27: Student Project Presentations

Final Exam: Fri, May 6, 12 noon