

Gender and Communication

Prepared by: Lilit Shakaryan

Lecturer, Department of Sociology

Yerevan State University, Yerevan, Republic of Armenia

E-mail: lilitshakaryan@gmail.com

Specialization: **Sociology**
Semester: **3 (MA Course)**
Credits: **3 ECTS**
Total: **32 hours**

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course sets, as its trajectory, an exploration of theoretical grounds and ways/methods of analyzing relationship between communication and gender in contemporary social life. This course examines the differences between sex and gender, the intersection of gender and culture, and theories of how we become gendered. It contends that much of what is assumed as natural/unnatural with regard to gender is socially constructed, communicated, and performed in our everyday lives. Gender is something we do, rather than what we are. This course reviews how gender (in all its multiplicities) is communicated in social institutions, identity, media and cyberspace.

The course consists of two main thematic parts. The purpose of the first part is to present theoretical understandings and methodological ways of analyzing the notion of “gender” from a social perspective. This part explores how we perform gender roles and examines the differences and similarities in how culturally constructed notions of gender develop and operate in society. The second part addresses the practical side of gender construction and reconstruction in the socio-cultural sphere, as well as in media and cyberspace, especially by illustrating practices from mass media messages, advertising, branding and other PR activities.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES (OBJECTIVES)

Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able:

- to understand and evaluate key concepts and theories about gender, sex, and communication
- to identify how differences and similarities between genders influence communication patterns and relationships
- take up critical engagement of the power of language to shape our worldviews, behaviors, and choices in everyday life, with regard to gender
- to develop knowledge of the complex relationship between gender and social institutions
- to engage in critical analyses of media messages and their implications on our gendered lives
- to explore how gender intersects with fashion and branding
- to insight into analysis of modern advertising and PR-texts within the framework of gendered communications
- to analyze and explain gendered communication processes in cyberspace

III. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

1. ***Participation and Attendance (10%):*** Learning takes place as a result of active participation. Consequently, attendance at each class is critical. In this course, participation should take two distinct forms:
 - a) **Crafting discussion questions:** each student will be responsible for crafting two questions designed to stimulate thinking and provoke discussion for one specific assigned reading.
 - b) **Journal entry:** each student will write 1-2 pages journal entry on specific topics related to gender and communication. These assignments should provide opportunities for reflection and application of course materials to their own life and experience.
 - c) **Semester-long engagement with course materials in class:** engagement can take the form of responses to questions, syntheses and analyses of course materials, focused interaction during group activities.
2. ***Critical Essay (20%):*** The critical essay intends to facilitate research activities of students, especially in the field of gender communication analysis, by using different methodological approaches and principles. Each student will prepare a 6-8 page essay

that critiques a text, performance, advertisement, or other phenomenon, with regard to how it treats, constructs, and communicates an aspect of gender. The essay should contain a critical claim/thesis and should clearly demonstrate an ability to think analytically about gender. This essay will be executed during the course of the semester as the course progress. The last 3 lessons before the exam will be dedicated to collaborative work on student presentations of their essays.

3. *Examinations:*

- a) *Tests (40%):* There are 2 midterm exams in this course. For the 1st midterm exam students need to get ready on the basis of materials from the first thematic part of the course. The material on the exam will be drawn from lectures, recitations, and the required textbook readings. Exam contains 2 questions with 2 points for each question. The 2nd exam is based on the second part of the course. Exam contains 2 questions with 2 points for each question.
- b) *Final Exam (30%):* The final exam must be taken on the lesson and time. The final exam is a comprehensive exam covering all the lectures, recitations, and required readings for the entire semester.

Grading and assessment:

Generally “excellent” work earns “18-20”-range grades, “good” work earns “13-17”-range grades, “average” work earns “8-12”-range grades, “unsatisfactory” work earns “0-7”-range grades. The final course grade will be calculated as follows:

ASSIGNMENT	EXAM /PRESENTATIONS/ PERIOD	% OF TOTAL	GRADES
Attendance		10	2
Midterms (2)	1 st exam- Mid October; 2 nd exam-End of December	40	8
Critical essay	November-December	20	4
Final exam	January	30	6
TOTAL		100	20

IV. TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

This course mainly relies on student participation. Therefore, regular attendance, student preparedness, and meaningful participation are expected of each student. It is problem-based, and inquiry oriented. While learning in this course will take place as a result of lectures, guest speakers, readings, and concentrated study by individual students within the course. A major teaching/learning strategy calls for small group discussions, individual and group presentations (spontaneous and planned), and class discussions. This will allow students to better work through difficult concepts and theories and to develop their skills in applying to theoretical constructs in solving real problems, issues, and situations.

V. STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

THEME	THEME NAME	LECTURING AND SEMINAR HOURS		
		Lecture	Seminar work	Total
<i>Part 1. Conceptual foundations to understanding and analyzing gender</i>				
Theme 1.	Gender theory: the concept and what lies behind it	2	-	2
Theme 2.	Alternative approaches to understanding gender/sex	2	-	2
Theme 3.	Gendered/sex language	2	-	2
Theme 4.	Gendered verbal and nonverbal communication	2	-	2
Theme 5.	Gendered social movements	2	2	4
Theme 6.	Gender and social institutions	2	-	2
<i>The 1st Midterm Exam</i>				
<i>Part 2. The discourse of gender in media and cyberspace</i>				
Theme 7.	Gender and media	2	2	4
Theme 8.	Gender and advertising: how gender shapes meaning	2	2	4
Theme 9.	Fashion image, global brands and gender communication	2	2	4

Theme 10.	Gender violence in the media	2	-	2
Theme 11.	Gender and computer communication: Sex and Identity in Cyberspace	2	2	4
<i>The 2nd Midterm Exam</i>				
TOTAL		22	10	32

VI. COURSE CONTENT AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Part 1. Conceptual foundations to understanding and analyzing gender

Theme 1. Gender theory: the concept and what lies behind it

Course introduction, expectations and interests, syllabus review, the assignments

Readings:

1. Chap. 1, DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2007). *Communicating gender diversity: A critical approach*
2. Chapter 1, Wood, J. T. (2013). *Gendered lives: Communication, gender, and culture* (10th ed.) Boston: Wadsworth

Theme 2. Alternative approaches to understanding gender/sex

1. The concept of gender/sex within the framework of biological and psychological approaches
2. Descriptive and critical cultural perceptions of gender/sex
3. Feminist standpoint theory and muted group theory (J. Wood)

Readings:

- Chap. 2, DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2007). *Communicating gender diversity: A critical approach*
- Chapter 2, Wood, J. T. (2013). *Gendered lives: Communication, gender, and culture* (10th ed.) Boston: Wadsworth.
- “*Feminist Standpoint Theory and muted group theory*”, by J. Wood, *Women and language*, vol 28, no. 2, pp. 61-64

Theme 3. Gendered/sex language

Readings:

- Chap. 4, DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2007). *Communicating gender diversity: A critical approach*

Theme 4. Gendered verbal and nonverbal communication

Readings:

- Chapter 5, 6 Wood, J. T. (2013). *Gendered lives: Communication, gender, and culture* (10th ed.) Boston: Wadsworth.

Theme 5. Gendered social movements

Discussion over anti-gender movement developed in modern Armenian social reality (SWOT analysis). Comparison of Armenian and Afghanistan cases.

Readings:

- Jennifer Jihye Chun, George Lipsitz, and Young Shin (2013). *Intersectionality as a Social Movement Strategy: Asian Immigrant Women Advocates*. *Signs*, Vol. 38, No. 4, Intersectionality: Theorizing Power, Empowering Theory, pp. 917-940
- Russo, A. (2006). *The Feminist Majority Foundation's campaign to stop gender apartheid: The intersections of feminism and imperialism in the United States*. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 8, 557-580.

Theme 6. Gender and social institutions

Readings:

- Chap. 6, DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2007). *Communicating gender diversity: A critical approach*

✓ Gendered family communication

Readings:

- Chap. 7, DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2007). *Communicating gender diversity: A critical approach*
- Chapter 7, Wood, J. T. (2013). *Gendered lives: Communication, gender, and culture* (10th ed.) Boston: Wadsworth
- Floyd, K., & Haynes, M. T. (2005). *Applications of the theory of natural selection to the study of family communication*. *Journal of Family Communication*, 5, 79-101
- Raffaelli, M., & Ontai, L. L. (2004). *Gender socialization in Latino/a families: Results from two retrospective studies*. *Sex Roles*, 50, 287-300

✓ Gendered education

Readings:

- Chap. 8, DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2007). *Communicating gender diversity: A critical approach*

- Chapter 8, Wood, J. T. (2013). *Gendered lives: Communication, gender, and culture* (10th ed.) Boston: Wadsworth
- Nancy S. Niemi, “*The Emperor has no clothes: Examining the impossible relationship Between gendered and academic Identities in middle school students*”. *Gender and Education*, Vol. 17, No. 5, December 2005, pp. 483–497

Part 2. The discourse of gender in media and cyberspace

Theme 7. Gender and media

1. Gendered themes in media
2. Body image and the media: portrayals of men and women

Readings:

- Chap. 11, “Media,” by DeFrancisco and Palczewski (2007). *Communicating gender diversity: A critical approach*
- Naomi Wolf. 2002. “Introduction and “The beauty myth” from *The Beauty Myth*.
- Jezebel. 2011. “*Self Editors Explain Covers Aren’t Supposed to Look Realistic*”

Films: *Killing Us Softly 4, Tough Guise*

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

Theme 8. Gender and advertising: how gender shapes meaning

1. Gender representation in advertising: gendered messages
2. Gender stereotypes in advertising: rethinking the idea of beauty
3. Images of women in advertising and journals

Readings:

- Chapter 7, *Controversies in Contemporary Advertising*, by Kim Bartel Sheehan (2013), Second Edition, SAGE Publications
- Chapter 11, *Gendered Media*, by Wood, J. T. (2013). *Gendered lives: Communication, gender, and culture* (10th ed.) Boston: Wadsworth.
- Erving Goffman (1979), *Gender Advertisements*, Harvard university press, Cambridge, Massachusetts
- Susan Bordo (2003). “*Material girl’: The effacements of postmodern culture*” from *Unbearable Weight*.

Journal Entry: 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.

Theme 9. Fashion image, global brands and gender communication

1. Fashion world and the construction of gender identity
2. Gendered clothing as a nonverbal resistance: symbolic boundaries and alternative dresses
3. Brand positioning and its influence on gender

Reading:

- Chapter 11, David A. Aaker, Alexander L. Biel (2009), *Brand equity and advertising: advertising's role in building strong brands*
- Chapter 6, 7, Diana Crane (2000). *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*. University Of Chicago Press
- Jane E. Workman, Seung-Hee Lee (2011), *Materialism, fashion consumers and gender: a cross-cultural study*. International Journal of Consumer Studie, Vol. 35, Issue 1
- Rachel Russell and Melissa Tyler (2005), *Branding and Bricolage: Gender, consumption and transition Childhood*. SAGE Publications. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, Vol 12 (2): 221–237.

Journal Entry: Bring advertisements from magazines to class, and discuss the images of women, men, and relationships in them.

Theme 10. Gender violence in the media

1. George Gerbner: Growing up with television: cultivation processes
2. David R. Roskos-Ewoldsen: Media priming: a synthesis
3. Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann: Spiral of silence

Readings:

- Chapter 3, 5, *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, edited by Jennings Bryant, Dolt Zillmann, 2002, Mahwah, New Jersey.
- Chapter 2, Ralph E. Hanson (2013). *Mass Communication: living in a media world*, 4th edition
- Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1993). *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion - Our Social Skin*, 2nd Edition, The University of Chicago Press

Theme 11. Gender and computer communication: sex and identity in cyberspace

1. Gender and identity in online communications: issues of the performance
2. Doing gender in cyberspace: gender and textuality in the cyberculture matrix

Readings:

- Chapter 6, 8, *Virtual culture: identity and communication in cyberspace*, ed. by Steven G. Jones, 1997, SAGE publications
- L Kendall (1998), *Meaning and Identity in "Cyberspace": The Performance of Gender, Class, and Race Online*, *Symbolic Interaction*, v. 21, n. 2, pp. 129-153. JAI Press, Inc.
- Lina Eklund (2011), *Doing gender in cyberspace: The performance of gender by female World of Warcraft players*. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, August, 17, pp. 323-342

VII. READINGS

books and articles

1. DeFrancisco and Palczewski, *Communicating gender diversity: A critical approach*, Sage publications, 2007
2. Wood, J. T., *Gendered lives: Communication, gender, and culture* (10th ed.) Boston: Wadsworth, 2013
3. J. Wood, "*Feminist Standpoint Theory and muted group theory*", *Women and language*, vol 28, no. 2, pp. 61-64
4. Jennifer Jihye Chun, George Lipsitz, and Young Shin, *Intersectionality as a Social Movement Strategy: Asian Immigrant Women Advocates*. *Signs*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2013. *Intersectionality: Theorizing Power, Empowering Theory*, pp. 917-940
5. Russo, A., *The Feminist Majority Foundation's campaign to stop gender apartheid: The intersections of feminism and imperialism in the United States*. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 8, 2006, pp. 557-580.
6. Floyd, K., & Haynes, M. T., *Applications of the theory of natural selection to the study of family communication*. *Journal of Family Communication*, 5, 2005, pp. 79-101
7. Raffaelli, M., & Ontai, L. L., *Gender socialization in Latino/a families: Results from two retrospective studies*. *Sex Roles*, 50, 2004, pp. 287-300
8. Nancy S. Niemi, "*The Emperor has no clothes: Examining the impossible relationship Between gendered and academic Identities in middle school students*". *Gender and Education*, Vol. 17, No. 5, December 2005, pp. 483-497
9. Naomi Wolf (2002). "*Introduction and "The beauty myth"*" from *The Beauty Myth*.

10. Jezebel (2011). **“Self Editors Explain Covers Aren’t Supposed to Look Realistic”**
11. Kim Bartel Sheehan, *Controversies in Contemporary Advertising*, Second Edition, 2013, SAGE Publications
12. Erving Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, 1979, Harvard university press, Cambridge, Massachusetts
13. Susan Bordo (2003). **“Material girl’: The effacements of postmodern culture”** from Unbearable Weight.
14. David A. Aaker, Alexander L. Biel, *Brand equity and advertising: advertising’s role in building strong brands, 2009*
15. Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*. University Of Chicago Press, 2000
16. Jane E. Workman, Seung-Hee Lee, *Materialism, fashion consumers and gender: a cross-cultural study*. International Journal of Consumer Studie, 2011
17. Rachel Russell and Melissa Tyler, *Branding and Bricolage: Gender, consumption and transition Childhood*. SAGE Publications. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, Vol 12 (2): 2005, pp. 221–237.
18. Jennings Bryant, Dolt Zillmann, *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, 2002, Mahwah, New Jersey.
19. Ralph E. Hanson, *Mass Communication: living in a media world*, 4th edition 2013
20. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion - Our Social Skin*, 2nd Edition, 1993, The University of Chicago Press
21. Steven G. Jones, *Virtual culture: identity and communication in cyberspace*, 1997, SAGE publications
22. L Kendall, *Meaning and Identity in "Cyberspace": The Performance of Gender, Class, and Race Online*. Symbolic Interaction, v. 21, n. 2, 1998, pp. 129-153. JAI Press, Inc.
23. Lina Eklund, *Doing gender in cyberspace: The performance of gender by female World of Warcraft players*. Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies, August, 17, 2011 pp. 323-342