Women and Work in American Society – LSER 37:575:309:03
Fall 2014

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This is an advanced undergraduate course that focuses on women (and gender) at work. We will examine three broad topics: theories of gender and work, embodied labor and issues around work and family, and women’s work as stratified across levels of the economy.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
This course is designed to:

1) Give students an overview of women’s labor force participation, the wage gap, and theories of gender at work.

2) Make students more aware of the influence of gender and (to some degree) race, class, and sexuality in structuring opportunities to work and the rewards of work.

3) Develop your abilities to be critical consumers of popular and academic information about work, and allow you to apply these abilities in written assignments.

4) Develop students’ abilities to carry out and present research on issues relevant to work.

REQUIRED READINGS
Articles and chapters listed below and available on Sakai.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Readings:
Reading assignments are listed below. I may change or substitute readings on this list, but I will always give you notice at least two weeks in advance, update the syllabus accordingly, and make the readings available on Sakai. None of these readings are optional – I expect you to complete them on time and be prepared to discuss them in class.

I teach all of my classes in the form of an ongoing dialogue with my students, rather than in a traditional lecture format. For this reason, discussion of the readings and lecture materials in class is both encouraged and expected. In my view, strenuous debate and discussion facilitate the learning process - some of the most important insights are often gleaned in the heat of an argument (though all such discussions will be civil). If you do not agree with a point that is being made (either in a reading or in a class discussion) speak up (respectfully) and we'll address your issue. The class will be more interesting for all of us if you talk to each other, rather than allow yourselves to become passive recipients of the material. Your spontaneous participation is welcome; your participation through presentations is required. See below.
Graded components:
There are several of these.

Projects – there are three, and each will have an individual and a group component. They are:

1) Collection of data about an occupation
2) A workplace observation
3) A worker interview

For each one of these projects, you will collect data on your own and produce a short paper detailing your observations. You will then work with members of your group – I will assign these groups randomly for each project – to produce a group paper that aggregates your findings. You will post these findings to the class as a group. I will post details for each of these assignments on Sakai. We will have a one hour group work session in the class before each one of these presentations.

Reading questions: There are ten sets of readings listed below. I will post questions for each of these sets on Sakai. You will answer online and your answers are due by 9:00 AM on the day we discuss the readings. I will grade these assignments largely for completeness, though I will deduct points for assignments that fail to fully engage with the questions asked.

Final examination – a set of questions that will test your ability to apply the material we have been studying in class. The examination will be take-home, you may use all of your readings and notes, and you will have one week to complete it.

Participation in the course: Classroom sessions rely heavily on what students contribute to one another from their understanding of the assigned reading as well as from their distinctive experiences and learning. Although I will spend a substantial part of each class providing a framework, this is an interactive course. The lectures and class assignments stem from the assumption that you have basic familiarity with the readings. Therefore, I expect each student to attend and be prepared to actively participate in every classroom session. I will formally grade attendance six times – during each project work session and at each group presentation. See below on the use of technology – I will deduct participation points for failure to observe this policy.

Final grade:
Your final grade for this course will be calculated as follows:
Work autobiography – 10 points possible
Projects – 90 points possible (15 points possible for group component, 15 points for individual component for each project)
Responses to reading questions – 60 points possible
Final exam – 100 points possible
Participation – 40 points possible
300 points possible in course.
POLICIES

Accommodation of disabilities
I will do what is in my power to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities, but you must let me know what you need (preferably after class or during office hours). Contact the Office of Disability Services for Students at Lucy Stone Hall, Livingston Campus, Mon – Thurs, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Fri 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for examples of services and accommodations available on campus. (848) 445-6800 or http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/

Technology
Laptops and tablets can be a great resource for bringing course readings and other pertinent information into the classroom, but they also present a huge temptation to text, email, use social media, or otherwise focus on non-course matters. Use of electronic devices for non-course matters is not permitted. It is distracting to other students as well as to you, and I find it extremely disrespectful. Recent studies also show that you will learn and retain far more if you write out notes rather than use a laptop: http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/. Use of electronic devices for non-course matters will have a strong negative effect on your participation grade (which is 25 points out of a possible 250, or one letter grade). Turn off your cellphone when you enter the classroom. If you have an emergency and need to receive a call or text, let me know at the beginning of class.

Posting of lecture slides
I do not do this routinely. I will post charts, graphs, and statistics from each lecture (where relevant), but I will not post my other slides. It’s up to you to take notes. If you must miss a class, get the notes from a classmate.

Scholastic Dishonesty
For the purposes of this course, scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the submission of assignments that are plagiarized or written in collusion with another or the falsification of any records connected with this course or any examination. Plagiarism includes quoting or closely paraphrasing a printed source without giving appropriate credit (i.e. Gould, 1981:123). It is acceptable to talk with classmates about homework assignments, projects and papers, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE FINAL. Handing in substantially the same assignment constitutes plagiarism, however. I will give a grade of 0 to any written assignment that appears to be substantially similar to that of another class member or that uses others’ material without proper citation; further consequences may follow at my discretion. If you have any doubts at all about what constitutes plagiarism check with me before you turn in any assignment.

For more information, see resources at the Rutgers Office of Academic Integrity: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers. Rutgers also subscribes to turnitin.com; I reserve the right to use this system to check assignments.

Grade appeals
If you believe you have received a lower grade than you should, you may contest it within two weeks by following these steps. 1) Allow a 24-hour “cooling off” period so that you will be calm when you ask for reconsideration of your work. 2) Write out the reason you think the grade should be changed. Describe how your work fulfills the assignment. We’re all human and make
mistakes but, “I just think I deserve better” doesn’t tell me what I might have missed, and it will not make for a successful appeal. I will not give extra credit in this course.

Assignment Policies:
I will grade late assignments down one letter grade for each class day that they are late. Presentations must be made on the assigned dates, and it is not possible to make up a presentation.

I do not generally return final exams. If you want yours back let me know during the last week of the course.

Office hours:
My office hours are Tuesday, 1:00 – 2:30 PM (though this may change from time to time; I will let you know). This is a time when you can drop in to talk about whatever you want - questions you have about the material, how you’re doing in the course, things that you find particularly striking (or irritating) about the course or the readings. Please do not hesitate to use this time. If you are having trouble, it is better for both of us if I know this early in the semester. I (like most instructors) have little patience for last minute pleas for mercy. I am also available at other times by appointment. Because of my responsibilities with the Center for Women and Work, I am rarely available on a drop-in basis. Please also understand that I try to maintain at least a little work/life balance myself. I am very unlikely to return your emails or calls outside of regular university work hours.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Unit 1: Background and theorizing gender and work

8 September – Introduction to the course, background on labor force participation
  Work autobiography assignment distributed

15 September – The wage gap


  Work autobiographies due and papers discussed in class
  Reading questions 1 due
Group assignments made for remainder of semester
Video clip - Ladybucks

22 September – Theorizing gender at work – doing and undoing gender


Reading questions 2 due

29 September – Gendered organizations


Occupational data homework assignment discussed and distributed

Video: Taking the Heat

6 October – Gendered organizations 2

Group work session for occupational data project
Reading questions 3 due

13 October – The Demography of Gender at Work


Presentations of occupational data projects
Reading questions 4 due

Unit 2. Embodied labor and work/family

20 October – Service work and emotional labor/observing work

Ehrenreich, Nickel and Dimed (excerpts assigned by group)

Reading questions 5 due

Video: Wage Slaves

27 October – Sexuality at work/observing work


Workplace observation project distributed and discussed

Reading questions 6 due

3 November – Balancing work and family


Reading questions 7 due
Group work session for workplace observation project

10 November – Balancing work and family 2

Presentation of workplace observation projects

Unit 3. The economic ladder: Labor, Management, and Business

17 November - Women in management/the professions


Reading questions 8 due

24 November – Women and entrepreneurship/business

Case studies from volume on women in business

Reading questions 9 due

1 December – Women and labor/working class occupations


Reading questions 10 due
Group work session for interview project
Video: Live Nude Girls Unite!

8 December – Group presentations of worker interviews
Final exam distributed, due Monday, December 15th at 12:00 PM