Working Women in American Society
Fall 2011

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Labor Education Center 136

Office hours: Weds 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Dates to remember

Week 3: autoethnographic data draft due at start of class
Week 4: first quiz
Week 7: second quiz
Week 8: thesis statement/lit review worksheet due at start of class
Week 9: home/work balance worksheet due in class
Week 10: third quiz
Week 11: final paper due at start of class
Week 14: fourth quiz

Course description

In this course we will examine work as an important site of gendered meaning and authority. We will also look at how the institution of work itself has been powerfully shaped by ideas about gender difference. We will examine histories of women’s work—both paid and unpaid—with a careful eye to the differences produced by class, ethnicity/race, nationality, and sexuality. We will examine the extent of workplace gender inequality, and explore various theories of its cause, including segregation, tokenism, sexual harassment, the gendering of jobs and organizations, and work/family balance. Finally, we will explore alternatives and sites of resistance to the barriers to women’s equitable participation in the workplace.

Learning goals

Students will evaluate their own position within the world of work, using theoretical and historical tools from the class to better illuminate understanding. A primary aim of this course is to provide students with analytical tools to make better sense of the working world and their interaction with it. Students will be able to:

a. Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person's experiences of and perspectives on the world
d. Analyze issues of social justice across local and global contexts
i. Explain and be able to assess the relationship among assumptions, methods, evidence, arguments, and theory in social and historical analysis
m. Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organizations
n. Apply concepts about human and social behavior to particular questions or situations
Major assumptions of the course

- We are social beings who both shape and are shaped by the social worlds in which we live. We do not have complete autonomy and self-determination, but neither are we merely the products of institutions and structures.
- There is nothing natural or inevitable about the institution of work or the arrangements of power in workplace organizations. They were made by people and they can be changed by people. Therefore, it is worth our while to consider how such work and workplaces are constructed and maintained in order to imagine how they might be different.

Description of requirements

Weekly reading response. You will summarize and discuss the course readings each week of class. The weekly response should be 1-2 pages long, with at least one paragraph identifying the main argument(s) and/or point(s) of each reading you cover, and at least one paragraph connecting these ideas to what you have observed about your own working life or that of others. At least half of your reading responses must compare and contrast the weekly readings; no more than half can focus on one reading only. These reading responses must be uploaded to Sakai and you must bring copy to class each week. The uploaded version should be a .pdf or .doc(x) or .txt file called [yourlastname][month][day]. Thus, my first reading response would be meyers0913.docx (my last name, Meyers, 09 for September, and 13 for the day of class). Reading responses must be uploaded through the Assignments tab of our class Sakai page 24 hours before the start of class, and cannot be uploaded after class begins. I will provide guiding questions for each week’s readings, but these should not stop you from exploring other aspects of the texts that interest, excite, or upset you. The lowest grade will be dropped.

Participation. Everyone is expected to participate in class, which obviously requires being present in class. I believe that students can learn best by actively engaging with material from course rather than simply memorizing names and concepts. This includes asking as many questions as are needed to understand the material, and working through the implications of new ideas. However, there are a variety of ways to do this.

Participation includes asking questions or making comments in class, facilitating small group work, writing thoughtful questions and comments to me (email or paper notes), posing or responding to questions on the Sakai course discussion board, and participating in group activities. If you’re wondering about something, it’s likely there are other students who don’t fully understand either. There are no stupid questions! Discussion is a way to experiment with ideas. Participation can also sometimes mean not talking to allow quieter classmates to speak. It means engaging with ideas that are different from your own in a respectful manner, even if you have serious disagreements. Criticism is encouraged, but personal attack will not be tolerated.

Quizzes. There will be four in-class, non-cumulative quizzes (dates on first page). Each will consist of two terms that must be defined and illustrated with examples. Quizzes will be based on readings, lectures, and in-class viewings and exercises. Essay questions will be distributed in advance.
**Media analysis.** In week 2, students will choose a recent (within past year) media item that raises an issue faced by working women today (news article, blog entry, advertisement, etc.). Students will individually write a 1-2 page memo explaining a) what the item is about, b) what is important about the media item, and c) how it connects to course concepts or the day’s reading. This will be attached to the media item (printout or weblink). Note that media items must be dated, and the date can be no earlier than September 2010.

**Autoethnographic paper.** Over the semester you will develop an analysis of factors affecting your future (and/or perhaps past) working life. This will explore your own experience through course texts and concepts. The final paper will be in a standard social science format, and you will produce segments of it along the way: a draft of the autoethnographic data (your projected career path), a thesis statement, and a literature review.

Writing mechanics will be part of assessment and grading. You may come to my office hours to discuss this, but be aware of other resources, particularly the Rutgers Learning Centers. (http://lrc.rutgers.edu/) These were established to assist students with writing projects. This is a great resource for students who wish to improve their writing—an excellent goal for all of us. Contact them early for help with your assignment.

**Final grade breakdown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>40 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading responses</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final autoethnographic paper</td>
<td>20 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media analysis</td>
<td>5 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make sure to complete all assignments; missing assignments count as 0 percent, not F.</td>
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**Instructor meetings**

All students are strongly encouraged to meet with me to discuss questions or concerns, or simply to continue discussions that piqued your interest in class. If you have a conflict with office hours, we may be able to find another meeting time.

**Course format and policies**

Students are expected to complete all required readings before class, and come to class prepared to discuss what they do and do not understand about them.

I will do what is in my power to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities, but you must let me know what is needed (preferably after class or during office hours). Contact the Office of Disability Services for Students at 151 College Ave, Suite 123, 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. (732) 932-2848 or http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/

Don’t plagiarize. Be sure you know the difference between citing a text, quoting a text, and stealing from a text (whether published, on the internet, or from another student). For more information, see the official policy at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml or use the online tutorial at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/cir_tutorial.shtml. You can also get help at the Rutgers Learning Centers.
Diverse ideas and beliefs will come up during the course, and you may find yourself disagreeing with fellow students or me. That’s normal and expected, and the discussion of our difference analyses makes for a lively classroom and more sharply honed opinions for everyone. However while passionate intellectual debate is welcome, personal attacks or insults are not. Please refrain from making faces while someone speaks, using an angry or sarcastic tone in addressing their ideas, or snickering.

Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. The only excuses for missing a deadline or an exam are a legitimate illness or family emergency. There are no exceptions to this policy in the interest of fairness to the whole class. Be sure to contact me well in advance of a due date or exam if you foresee difficulties meeting a deadline.

I will discuss your questions about assignments, including papers, during office hours. Bring a paper copy for me to read and review. Do not send papers as attachments by email. You are strongly urged to discuss your final paper at least one week in advance of the due date.

Papers must be uploaded into Sakai (Assignments tab) before the start of class on the day they are due. Late papers will be docked by half a grade for each day it is late beginning from the start of class the day it is due. That is, a B paper would become a C+ paper after one day. Do not miss class to finish a paper! Nothing will be accepted a week past its due date.

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 and collected 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 the me what I might have missed.

Up to half of any missed credit on the first two quiz questions can be partially made up within one week by a) reviewing the correct answers on Sakai, b) writing a critique pinpointing how the answer given on the quiz failed to fully add to the question, and c) writing a new answer entirely in your own words. The key is the critique of the original answer. No extra credit will be given without this critique.

Laptops and cellphones can be a great resource for bringing course readings and other pertinent information into the classroom, but can also be a huge temptation to text, email, use social media, or otherwise focus on non-course matters. Know yourself and turn off the electronic devices if they are too tempting. Use of electronic devices for non-course matters is distracting to other students as well as you, and is therefore not permitted. Such use of electronic devices will have a strong negative effect on your participation grade.

**Course Texts**

All course readings are available for download on the class Sakai page at the Resources tab.
Course reading list

Part I History and contexts

Week 1: Introductions
• The syllabus

Week 2: Histories of women’s work in the United States

Week 3: Theorizing gender

Autoethnography draft due in class

Week 4: Theorizing work

First quiz

Part II Gender Inequality and Work: How, What, Why

Week 5: Occupational segregation and other forms of workplace gender inequality

Week 6: Minority status and sexual harassment
Week 7: Gendered jobs, gendered organizations, and gendered occupations

Second quiz

Week 8: Valuing motherhood

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