Working Women in American Society

Dr. Amy Tracy Wells
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In this course we will examine a specific segment of Americans – working women. We will explore ideas/concepts such as:

1. what do we mean by paid and unpaid work;
2. what is meant by gender, equality and, conversely, inequality;
3. what are the historical and current trends (quantitative data) in work;
4. what is the contextual history of women’s work by industry and profession; how have women’s experiences varied by class and race; and
5. through worker experiences, what issues and reforms affect women’s work.

Assignments/grades will include participation in Discussion Forums, Brief Response Papers, an Autoethnographic paper, Exams and an Extra Credit Brief Response Paper.

Core Learning 21L and SCL Objectives addressed and to be assessed through short items on exams:

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

Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the perspectives, theories and concepts in the field of labor and employment relations. (Goal 1)
- Apply those concepts, and substantive institutional knowledge, to understanding contemporary developments related to work. (Goal 2)
- Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person’s experience of work. (Goal 6)

School of Management and Labor Relations:

- Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background context of a particular work situation. (Goal IV)
- Evaluate the context of workplace issues, public policies, and management decisions (Goal V)
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to apply knowledge necessary for effective work performance (Goal VI)

Instructor:

- Discuss differences between employment law and policy and workers’ lived experience.
Unit I. Introduction

Class 1: Introduction to Working Women in American Society
Become familiar with the web site that has the on-line course. This is called the “course shell.”

Assignment:
1. Learn about the instructor and introduce yourself to other students by writing an on-line introduction as well as read the introduction to this course.
2. Read, sign and upload a copy of “How to get an A Writing an Essay” to the Dropbox.

Unit II. Paid & unpaid work

Class 2: What is work?

Assignment:
Brief Response Paper: How do people and organizations define work? What are the ramifications of this definition?

Unit III. Gender equality & inequality

Class 3: Gender

Assignment:
Discussion Forum: Answer either one of the two following questions:
1. Identify and discuss 3-4 ways in which the concept of gender influences everyday life such as education, training, work, health care, wealth etc.
2. How do gender stereotypes affect your own thinking?

Class 4: Equality & inequality
2. Correll, S. (October 21, 2010). How Gender Stereotypes Influence Emerging Career Aspirations. (47.09)

Assignment:
Exam #1 (Covers Classes 1 through 4)
Unit IV. Now & Then

Class 5: Pay

Assignment: [No assignment this week]

Unit V. The history of women’s work (Paid & unpaid, by historical period, by occupation, by education and by union)

Class 6: Background

Assignment:
Discussion Forum: Answer either one of the two following questions:
1. What is the myth of womanhood and what has been the reality or the trends?
2. Many believe that the issues we’ve covered to-date are now historical while others believe many of the issues are ongoing. What do you believe and why?

Extra Credit Brief Response Paper: Answer either one of the two following questions:
1. From your own perspective and in your own words, what is the importance of learning the history of working women in the U.S.?
2. Why or why not are the issues covered to-date, issues for males as well as females?

Class 7: 1900-1970

Assignment:
1. Autoethnographic paper – draft due

Class 8: 1970 to present
2. Landsburg, S.E. (2005). The Price of Motherhood Ready to have a baby? You’ll earn 10 percent more if you wait a year. Slate. (1 pp.)
3. Sandberg, Sheryl (2010). *Why we have too few women leaders*. TEDWomen. (14:50 min.)

**Assignment:**

**Exam # 2:** (Covers Classes 5 through 8)

**Unit VI. Issues & reforms affecting women’s work**

**Class 9: Wages**

**Assignment:**
[No assignment this week]

**Class 10: Sex-segregation & Tokenism**

**Assignment:**

**Discussion Forum:** Answer either one of the following:
1. There are several types of institutional constraints as well as types of sex-segregation. Identify one of each and discuss both.
2. Is sex segregation diminishing, why or why not? Which type(s) are more intractable?

**Class 11: Sexual Harassment & Assault**

**Assignment:** Respond to either one of the two following questions

**Brief Response Paper:**
1. What are the implications if women do not feel safe using the internet or serving in the military? Identify and discuss 2-3 points (e.g., economic, social, career etc.) about either the internet or the military.
2. What is the status of sexual harassment in the workplace-has it improved, gotten worse or can we even know?

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¹ Available via Youtube, iTunes, Amazon & on DVD at the Rutgers Media Center
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Class 12: Gendered roles
2. Smith, S.L., Pieper, K. & Choueiti, M. (2017). Inclusion in the Director’s Chair?: Gender, Race, & Age of Film Directors Across 1,000 Films from 2007-2016. (Preliminary 4 pgs of graphics, pp. 1-3 & Solutions, pp. 18-21)

Assignment:
[No assignment this week]

Class 13: Race, Nationality & Work

Assignment:
Discussion Forum: This forum has two parts:
Complete and submit Worksheet Work, Life & Balance and then share specifics and/or observations in the DF.

Class 14: Collective Action

Assignment:
Autoethnographic paper due

Class 15: Final Assignments
Assignment:
Exam #3 (Covers Classes 9 through 14)
GRADING CRITERIA AND COMPONENTS

Grading Criteria:

A  90-100%
B+  85-90%
B   80-85%
C+  75-80%
C   70-75%
D   60-69%
F   59% and below

Grades are based on the following components:

#1 – Discussion Forum: Classes 3, 6, 10 & 12
   20% of the grade
#2 – Brief Reading Response: Classes 2 & 11 (Two-page paper)
   20% of the grade
#3 – Autoethnographic Paper: Classes 7 & 14 (Four-page paper)
   30% of the grade
#4 - Exams: Classes 4, 8 &15 (Exams are True/False, Multiple Choice, and Brief Answer Questions)
   30% of the grade
#5 – Extra Credit Brief Reading Response: Class 6
   Can be used to increase lowest test score by up to 15 points (=> 90 then 15 points,
                =>80 then 10 points & =>70 then 5 points)

Each Discussion Forum is worth 5% of one’s grade, which is based on content and timing.
That is, readings etc. as well as instructor and other student posts will provide the basis of
content and all postings/responses should be provided during the week within which the
topic/issues are examined.

Brief Response Papers are worth 10% of one’s grade, which is based on content,
persuasiveness and readability. Papers must be double-spaced throughout and 2 pages in
length, each numbered with standard one-inch margins and 12-pitch font. In addition,
papers must include a “References” section of sources cited.

The Autoethnographic Paper is worth 30% of one’s grade. For more specifics, see
“Autoethnographic Paper” below.

Each Exam is worth 10% of one’s grade and is composed of true/false, multiple choice and
brief answer questions. Content will cover the classes specified (i.e., tests are not
cumulative). Exams must be completed in 1.5 hours.

Autoethnographic Paper
Autoethnography is a form of narrative writing that views the author’s own experience as a
topic of investigation in its own right. (For more on Autoethnography, see
Autoethnography: An Overview.) Key to this experience and hence the paper is clarifying
how culture (e.g., the sexual division of labor, use of communication styles & tools,
attributes of leadership, equation between productivity and hours worked, etc.) shapes norms & events. This paper will explore

1. your projected, current and/or past working life – compensated and/or non-compensated – and/or

2. work/family balance, an issue that affects men and women, using data you collect and will include a thesis, select references and a bibliography. That is, while the paper will focus on you, it is important to frame or contrast your experience using class materials including readings, videos, audio and/or lectures. You will produce and provide a draft for review along the way. Papers must be double-spaced throughout and 4 pages in length, each numbered with standard one-inch margins and 12-pitch font. Late papers may downgraded.

**Examples of autoethnographic writing:**