Overview

“Are you man enough for that?” “When does a boy become a man?” “Wow, he’s a man’s man!” “What a manly thing to do!” “Real men don’t eat quiche.” Men who disagree with a certain recent governor are “girlie-men.” “Men have to be hard and tough to succeed.” “Men don’t cry.” “What a hunk!” “It’s a guy thing.”

We know what males are biologically, and we know what females are biologically. In both cases, (although there are interstitial, ambiguous cases as well) their sex is overtly identified by their genitals. But to what extent, if at all, do their genitals determine their behavior? It is widely agreed today in social science that sex refers to our biological equipment and that gender refers to our sociological, anthropological, and psychological equipment, so to speak. We learn how to behave as boys and girls, women and men. To put it another way, genitals are biologically constructed, and gender is socially constructed. Although penises and testicles, vaginas and uteruses work the same ways in all societies, gender varies considerably from one place to another and from one era to another and even from one person to another.

Assuming all people initially had about the same feelings; about the same desires for security, meaning, affection, competence, strength, understanding, and acceptance; about the same needs for companionship, love, and nurturing; about the same wishes to live effectively in their environments, how might it have happened that masculinity and femininity became so strikingly different in their constructions?

One of the consequences of the differences we fairly easily identify is that men have tended throughout most of history to dominate women (as well as other men). Patriarchy is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary: “social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line; broadly: control by men of a disproportionately large share of power.” Patriarchy describes a structure wherein men
dominate women (and children) and men. Sexism describes **attitudes** and **behaviors** that follow from patriarchy.

While it is not difficult to understand that gender is socially constructed, that does not mean that there is a clear or single set of behaviors that define one as a man in this or any other society. “Masculinity” is a general and vague term. Upon close inspection, there are many “masculinities.” Athletes and scholars, businessmen and clergy, poets and workers, gay men and straight and bi and transgendered and pansexual, members of one ethnic or race or social class culture or another do not exhibit the same ways of being what any of them might call masculine. Nor do they all think of masculinity in the same way. Nor do women.

Largely as a consequence of many years of the women’s and the gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, and transgender movements, it is increasingly common for men as well as women to inquire into what it means to be a man and how one might reassess what one has taken for granted about what it is to be a man. This course is meant to be an entrée into some of the discourse on this topic and helping students of whatever gender and sexual orientation, to find their way to evolve ever more sophisticated ways of understanding gender and acting on those understandings.

**Format**

The course will meet Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-4:50. It will be organized in seminar fashion, with minimal lecturing by the instructor and maximal participation by all class members. The evening of the first day of class, we will watch a film together and discuss it in terms of the issues of the course and concepts and concerns we bring to the course.

As we read each week, two or three students will be asked to organize the discussion; start it off with a few questions, insights, or problems; and facilitate it. It will be crucial that everyone be up on the reading, so as to make discussions as lively and full as possible.

We intend to open each class with something typically or atypically masculine in the form of a brief TV ad or scene from a program or excerpt from a film or other presentation or a poem or print ad or some other item with which to have a brief discussion at the start of the class. We will from the start pair up so that each pair will be responsible for one or possibly two such presentations during the semester. It would be most efficient if that pair also took charge of organizing our attention to the reading for that class.

**Final Project**

In place of a final exam, each student will be required to conduct an inquiry/field research project that will involve one or more of these methods: interviews, field observations, and participant observation, on the topic, What is masculinity? These inquiries can be done individually or in groups. It is possible, if we can get permission, that some or even all of the final projects might come together into some sort of print or online publication that would be useful for people beyond our course as well as within it. At the least, we will
present our findings to each other, in the class, by the end of the semester. The written report on the research will be due 5/1 for seniors and 5/5 for everyone else.

Latte Postings

At the beginning of the class, students will be placed into small groups made up of 3 or 4 other students and themselves. These will be the discussion groups for the semester. Each week, there will be a discussion question posted on LATTE that students will answer in the form of a small essay, 250-500 words, on the designated Latte forum by 11:59 AM on Tuesdays. A half hour of each Tuesday class will be devoted to students meeting in their discussion groups to talk about their reactions to the week’s question. Students may choose one week not to post an answer on the forum, though they will still be expected to contribute in class.

Questions and Comments

I am going to use a new technology, once I have mastered it, which I shall call Questions and Comments. Here is how it should work, once it is in place: I shall ask that as late as midnight on Wednesday night, you send me one question or comment about the reading for that week. I will do my best to build our Thursday discussions partly around those questions and comments. I have not done this method before and am eager to try it. Some of you have perhaps experienced it in other classes and can help me find the way. Each week, you will be emailed a form to do this on; please fill it out with brief answers by Wednesdays at 11:59 PM.

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning. We will try to create mutuality within our classroom and discussion sections. Toward this end, students will be asked to listen fully to all parts of all discussions and not just wait for their turn to have their say. The instructor and the TAS will do their best to help facilitate this way of working. We will also ask you to do some of your work together in pairs as well as the groups of three or four.

Cooperative learning includes listening to everything going on in class. To that end, students will be asked to use laptops and smart phones ONLY for course related work. Doing Facebook or e-mail, etc. on computers in class will be considered a violation of the assumption that we are all studying together and an insult to those sharing that assumption as well as to the person taking attention away from the substance of the course.

Back up all work

Please word process all written work. BE SURE TO BACK UP ALL WORK AS YOU GO ALONG; losing work on the computer will not be accepted as an excuse for anything.
The course assumes serious interest in its topic and does not assume background in the subject, sociology, or social psychology. If the course frustrates you, bores you, and/or disappoints you in any way that detracts from your learning, you are considered obligated to take up such discontents with the professor, TAs, and/or other students as seems appropriate.

The premium is on understanding and working with the concepts and readings of the course and on thinking creatively with them. It is assumed that real learning involves risk and re-thinking assumptions and familiar paradigms (with no preordained or “right” outcome of this process) as well as learning new concepts and new information. We will pay attention to such matters as involvement, keeping up with the reading, attendance, and participation. We will honor hesitations, fears, bewilderment if and as it unfolds. The premium is on honesty of one’s reactions to all parts of the course and to fellow students, TA, and professor.

A—mastery of readings, concepts, and exercises; full participation, engagement, risk-taking, and growth; grappling with the course and coming to your own insights about its issues, its implications, its relation to yourself; latte postings that indicate the above; loyalty to your discussion group.

B—clear understanding of course materials and conscientious participation but little evidence of risk-taking and growth or grappling with the course toward one's own insights; latte postings that answer the posed question but do little to challenge or explore.

C—fuzzy, incomplete, lethargic relationship with course materials, minimal involvement of self in course, little risk-taking and growth, no insights of one’s own; latte postings indicative of the above.

D—same as C but moreso.

E—trying to wing it by leaning too much on others’ understanding, not writing journal entries fully germane to the readings and central concepts of the course, erratic participation, not completing all course requirements, etc; no latte postings, or ones that do not answer the proposed question.

Required Readings

Books


**Reading Schedule**

- Chapters and articles from non-required books will be available on LATTE.
- Chapters in *Men’s Lives* are from the 9th edition. Many but not all of the assigned articles are also be found in previous editions.
- Readings are to be completed before the date listed, and discussed on that date in the classroom.

**Introduction**

**Week 1, 1/15:** What is masculinity?
- Introductions, our own understandings of and definitions of masculinities, discussion of the final project.
- Evening: 7-9:00 viewing and brief discussion of feature film *Billy Elliot*, Pearlman Lounge. IF YOU CANNOT MAKE IT TO THIS VIEWING, WORRY NOT. THE FILM IS ON OUR LATTE PAGE. DO SEE IT, THOUGH, BY THE TIME OF OUR THURSDAY CLASS.

1/17: Continue discussion of film. Read also
- Preface and Introduction to whichever edition of Kimmel and Messner you are using
- Kimmel, *Guyland*, chs. 1-4

**Deconstructing gender, conceptualizing masculinities**

**Week 2, 1/22:** Gender
- Butler, *Gender Trouble*, Part One, (LATTE)

1/24:
- *Gender Knot*, Johnson. Part I.

**Week 3, 1/29:** Masculinities and Hegemonic Masculinity.
  - Article 1, Martha McHugh, “Caveman Masculinity: Finding at Ethnicity in Evolutionary Science”
  - Article 3, Yen Le Espiritu, “All Men Are Not Created Equal: Asian Men in US History”
- Kimmel and Messner on LATTE:
  - Article 2, Barry Deutsch, “The Male Privilege Checklist”
  - Article 4, Alfredo Miranda, “’Macho’: Contemporary Conceptions”

1/31: Connell, *Masculinities*. Part I (LATTE)

**Discuss final project/research paper assignment.**
Hegemonic masculinity, considerations

**Week 4, 2/5:** The social psychological angle
- Ducat, *The Wimp Factor*, Chs. 1, 3, 7

**2/7:**
- Belkin, *Give Me Men*, chs. TBA

**Week 5, 2/12:** Historical perspectives
- Connell, *Masculinities*, Ch. 8, “The History of Masculinity”
- Kellner, *Guys and Guns Amok*, ch. 3, “Constructing Male Identities and the Spectacle of Terror” (LATTE)

**2/14:**
- Kimmel, *History of Men*
  - Introduction
  - ch. 1, “Invisible Masculinity”
- Johnson, *Gender Knot*, Part II, Sustaining Illusions, Barriers to Change

**Research proposal is due this week.**

**VACATION 2/18-2/22**

**Work, Sport, and Race**

**Week 6, 2/26:** Work and men
- Kimmel, *History of Men*

**2/28:**
- Ducat, *Wimp Factor*, ch. 4
  - Discuss field projects.

**Week 7, 3/5:** Sports and violence
  - Article 46, Nick Pappas, Patrick C. McHenry, and Beth Skillen Catlett, “Athlete Aggression on the Rink and off the Ice: Athlete Violence and Aggression in Hockey and Interpersonal Relationships”
  - Article 47, Tim Beneke, “Men on Rape”
- On LATTE:
  - Article 43, James Gilligan, “Culture, Gender, and Violence: ‘We Are Not Women’”
3/7:
  o Kimmel, *History of Men*
    o Ch. 4, “Baseball and the Reconstruction of American Masculinity 1832-1920”

**Week 8, 3/12:** Racialized masculinities

Kimmel and Messner, *Men’s Lives*, Chs. 2, 44, and 49. 6th edition but not 7th or 8th. All four of these will be on LATTE
  o 44. Cantú, “A Place Called Home: A Queer Political Economy: Mexican Immigrant Men's Family Experiences”
  o 49. Fung, “Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn”

**Week 9, 3/19:** Hetero-normative sexuality

  o Kimmel, *Guyland*, Preface and chs. 1-5
    Evening: film, Pearlman Lounge

**3/21:**

  o Kimmel and Messner, *Men’s Lives*
    o Article 21, Steinem, “If Men Could Menstruate”
    o Article 28, Messner, “Becoming 100% Straight”
    o Article 39, Rochlin, “The Heterosexual Questionnaire”

**Vacation, 3/25-4/2**

**Week 10, 4/4:** Non-normative sexuality.
  o Pascoe, *Dude, You’re a Fag*, Pascoe, chs. 1-3
  o Pascoe, chs. 4-6 and Appendix.

**Relationships and the gender gap**
Week 11, 4/9: Men in relationships and in families
   o Guyland, chs. 5-12
   o Bedford and Turner, ch. 6, “Portraits of Paternity: Middle Aged and Elderly Fathers’ Involvement with Adult Children.
   Progress report on field project is due.

4/11:
   o Kimmel and Messner, Men’s Lives in book:
     o Article 33, Coltrane, “Fathering: Paradoxes, Contradictions, and Dilemmas”
     o Article 34, Deutsch, “Strategies Men Use to Resist”
   o On LATTE:
     o Article 35, Shelton and John, “Ethnicity, Race, and Difference: A Comparison of White, Black, and Hispanic Men’s Household Labor Time”
   o Bedford and Turner, ch. 7, “Closeness and Affection in Father-Son Relationships” (LATTE)

   Discuss final project progress reports.

Week 12, 4/16: Deconstructing the Gender Gap
   o Johnson, The Gender Knot, Parts II and III

4/18:
   o Kimmel, History of Men,
     o Ch. 5, “Men’s Responses to Feminism at the Turn of the Century”

Challenging masculinity and the future

Week 13, 4/23:
   o Kimmel and Messner, Men’s Lives in book:
     o Article 53, Jackson Katz, “More Than a Few Good Men”
   o On LATTE:
     o Article 48, Mark Anthony Neal, “New Black Man”
     o Article 49, Eric Anderson, “‘I Used to Think Women Were Weak’: Orthodox Masculinity, Gender Segregation, and Sport”

4/25:
   o Kimmel, History of Men
     o Ch 7, “Pro-Feminist Men’s Rhetoric of Support for Women’s Equality”

Week 14, 4/30 What we have learned from our research into defining masculinity

   If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see the instructor immediately.