SOC124a: Gender & Human Rights

Spring 2013
Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday 1:00-1:50pm
Brown Social Science Center 316

Instructor: Casey Ritchie Clevenger
E-mail: cclev@brandeis.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-4:30pm and by appointment
Office: Pearlman 208

Course Description

Inequalities between men and women remain one of the deepest and most persistent social and economic divides in the world today. Despite women’s economic, political, and social achievements over the past century, women across the globe are still more likely to experience poverty, engage in unpaid or underpaid labor, and experience violence within the home or as a result of armed conflict. The extent to which women are able to gain autonomy and equality in their own societies is dependent on a variety of factors, including the state of an economy, the government in power, the need for women’s labor, their access to education, and their race, ethnicity, and nationality among others.

In this course, we will explore the basis for and consequences of gendered inequalities in a global context. Drawing from diverse theoretical and empirical perspectives, we will struggle with key questions such as: Why do gender inequalities remain so resistant to change? How do we understand the ways in which gender is constituted through social processes that take place at both the individual interactional level and the macro-organizational level? What challenges and opportunities does framing women’s rights within an international human rights framework pose?

Taking the social construction of gender across culture as our point of departure, we will first enter into important theoretical debates regarding how to understand and define human rights and gender before considering how gender structures the major social organizations of our society, including education, work, the economy, religion, and the state. Throughout the course, we will also consider a variety of strategies for social change, from social movements to social policy, and examine the emergence of universal human rights discourses as one framework for understanding and addressing gender inequality.
Learning Goals

By the end of the semester you will be able to:

- Describe how human rights discourses have developed over time and identify important factors that influenced these developments
- Compare and contrast important sociological theories regarding what gender is and how it is constituted at the individual and organizational level
- Speak in an informed way about global gender inequalities in education, work, the economy, religion, and politics
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of analyzing gender issues from a universal human rights framework
- Use writing and discussion to work through and interpret complex ideas from readings and other texts

Course Requirements & Evaluation

1. Attendance & Participation (10%)
   This course is discussion-oriented. Coming to every class meeting on time and prepared to contribute is essential not only to the class as a whole, but to your individual progress as a critical thinker and participant in academic discourse. Students who are significantly or recurrently late will be marked absent. If you miss a class for any reason, please notify me in advance, providing the reason for your absence.

2. Critical Response Papers (30% combined)
   Over the course of the semester, you are responsible for submitting seven short response papers (2 double-spaced pages) in which you critically respond to a particular day’s readings. The highest six grades that you earn on these responses will be used to determine your grade for this component of the course. Your paper should concisely summarize the key themes presented in the week’s readings (1 page) and then either raise questions about these themes or provide an analysis, elaboration, or critique in your own words (1 page). You should engage directly with the readings and not simply reiterate information from lecture. You may also refer to other readings, personal examples, current events and newspaper articles, or other sources to reinforce your point(s). However, your response must demonstrate that you have completed the assigned reading and reflected critically on the material presented. If multiple readings or chapters are assigned, you must address each of the assigned pieces. Response papers are due at the beginning of class and can be submitted during any class session unless otherwise indicated in the syllabus. Late responses will not be accepted. Papers should not exceed 2-double-spaced pages and they will be evaluated on a scale of 1-5. Only outstanding papers will receive a 5.
**You also have the option of attending one of the Brandeis Sociology Colloquia talks this semester (2/28 and 4/14) and writing a 2-page reflection paper in place of one of your response papers.

3. In-Class Midterm (20%) – Week 7
There will be one in-class examination during Week 7 of the semester. Details will be provided as the Midterm approaches.

4. Facilitating Class Discussion (15%) – Once During the Semester
You will be responsible for co-leading class discussion at least once during the semester. This assignment has three components. First, you will be asked to prepare a set of five discussion questions in advance, which will be distributed to the class 24 hours in advance of our meeting. Your discussion questions must focus on that day’s assigned readings, but you can also draw connections to previous course materials. Second, you will be responsible for facilitating 30 minutes of class time using your discussion questions. Creativity will be rewarded! You can draw on outside research, organize a class activity, or incorporate multimedia. Third, you will be asked to write a 2-page reflection paper on your experience facilitating the class. This paper is due in class one week from the day you facilitated discussion.

5. Group Project (25%) – Due Week 14
This semester you will work with other students to complete a group project on a topic of interest to you. You and your group will present your work at our in-class conference on gender and human rights, which will be held on the last day of class, May 1st. We will discuss the project in greater detail on March 6th when students will rank project references. If you are not in class on that day, you will be assigned to a group.

6. Final grades will be based on class attendance and participation (10%), critical response papers (30%), midterm (20%), class facilitation (15%), and the group project (25%).

### Classroom Policies & Expectations

**Attendance**
As outlined in the course requirements, this seminar is discussion-oriented and attendance is critical. Students who are significantly or recurrently late will be marked absent. If you miss a class for any reason, please notify me in advance, providing the reason for your absence.

**Participation**
You must come to class prepared to participate fully in class discussions and activities. To be prepared for class, you should feel comfortable with the assigned reading and be able to discuss its merits and shortcomings. Please have a firm grasp of what and where the author’s main argument is, know the basic outline of the text’s argument, and make your own assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of its claims, evidence, and analysis. **You are not allowed to use laptops, cell phones, or iPods in class.**

**Readings**
We will use two required books in addition to the readings posted on LATTE:

**Academic Integrity**
All the work you hand in for this course must be your own. When you use outside sources or ideas, it is critical that you cite them properly. The University’s policy on academic integrity is distributed annually in the *Rights and Responsibilities Handbook* ([http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/sdc/rr/](http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/sdc/rr/)). Instances of apparent or alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Development and Conduct for possible referral to the Student Judicial system, and may carry severe consequences including failure on the assignment in question, failure in the course, and/or suspension from the University. *Please do not hesitate to ask me any questions about plagiarism, citations, or use of sources.*

**University Policy on Academic Accommodations**
If you are a student who has academic accommodations because of a documented disability, please contact me and give me a copy of your letter of accommodation in the first two weeks of the semester. If you have questions about documenting a disability, please contact Beth Rodgers-Kay in the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Office (x63470, brodgers@brandeis.edu). Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

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**Course Schedule**

### Section I. Human Rights as a Framework for Understanding Gender Inequality

**Week 1: Introduction to Human Rights**

**Monday 1/14** Introductions & Overview

**Wednesday 1/16**
  <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp>

**Thursday 1/17**

**Week 2: What Are Human Rights?**

**Monday 1/21** No Class – Happy Martin Luther King Day!
Wednesday 1/23 **Assign Student Facilitators**
- The Declaration of Independence. 1776. [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html]
- Women’s Rights Convention, Seneca Falls. 1848. “Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions.”

Thursday 1/24

Section II. Defining & Theorizing Gender in a National & Global Context
We will begin this section of the course by entering into important theoretical debates regarding how gender is constructed and maintained in everyday life. This introduction to how social scientists approach, theorize, and explain gender will provide the theoretical foundations for us to think more broadly and more globally about gender throughout the rest of the course.

**Week 3: Gender as a Social & Global Divide**

Monday 1/28

Wednesday 1/30
Thursday 1/31 **Student Facilitators #1**


**Week 4: Theorizing Gender**

Monday 2/4


Wednesday 2/6


Thursday 2/7 **Student Facilitators #2**


Section III. Gender, Work & the Economy

In this section, we will more specifically examine how gender is embedded in social institutions and material arrangements with special attention to the economy and workforce. How do these institutions become organized by gender? What roles can social activism and social policy play in addressing gender disparities and inequalities?

**Week 5: Gendered Workplaces**

Monday 2/11


Wednesday 2/13 **Guest Lecture by Clare Hammonds**

- NO Response Paper

Thursday 2/14


**Read ONE of the following:**


**Suggested Reading**


**Monday 2/18 to Friday 2/22 MIDTERM RECESS!**

**Week 6: Women’s Transnational Domestic Labor & Global Factories**

**Monday 2/25**


**Wednesday 2/27**


**Thursday 2/28 Student Facilitators #3**


**Brandeis Sociology Colloquia Series Thursday 3:30-5:00pm**
Japonica Brown-Saracino, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Boston University
“Pride of Place: Queer Female Identities and Communities in Four Small U.S. Cities”

Suggested Reading:

*Week 7: Feminist Economics*

Monday 3/4 **In-Class Midterm**

Wednesday 3/6 **Discuss Group Projects**

Thursday 3/7 **Student Facilitators #4**

*Section IV. Gendered Bodies: Culture, Religion, Politics & Violence*

In this section, we will address violence against women and study how internal and cross-border conflicts affect women’s security, safety, and political representation within their own societies. We will also consider women’s struggles for representation and participation in religious institutions and electoral politics. Finally, we will critique the role of international organizations in improving social and economic conditions for women globally.

*Week 8: Violence Against Women*

Monday 3/11: **Guest Lecture by Dr. Rebecca Loya, Brown University**
- Reading TBA
- NO Response Papers

Wednesday 3/13 **Screen Senorita Extraviada: Missing Young Woman**
- Reading Holiday

Thursday 3/14
**Brandeis Sociology Colloquia Series Thursday 3:30-5:00pm**

Doug Harper, Research Fellow, Social Science Research Center, DePaul University  
“Seeing Society: The Long and Winding Road”

**Week 9: Gender, Culture & Religion**

**Monday 3/18**


**Wednesday 3/20**


**Thursday 3/21 Student Facilitators #5**


**Suggested Reading:**


**Monday 3/25 to Tuesday 4/2 Passover and Spring Recess!**

**Week 10: Gender, Nationalism & the State in Global Politics**

**Wednesday 4/3 Brandeis Monday**


**Thursday 4/4 Student Facilitators #6**

Suggested Reading:

*Week 11: Genocide & Gender Based Violence in the Great Lakes Region*

Monday 4/8 **Guest Lecture by Nicole Fox: “Gender & Genocide in Rwanda”**
• Reading Holiday
• NO Response Papers

Wednesday 4/10

Thursday 4/11 **Guest Lecture by Emmanuel Bueya, S.J.**

Suggested Reading:

*Week 12: Political Representation & the Case of Northern Ireland*

Monday 4/15

Wednesday 4/17

Thursday 4/18 **Student Facilitators #6**

Suggested Reading:

Week 13: Intergovernmental Organizations: The UN, EU & AU

Monday 4/22

Wednesday 4/24

Thursday 4/25 Student Facilitators #7

Week 14: Global Feminisms...Looking Forward

Monday 4/29

Thursday 5/1 **In-Class Conference**