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.”

To what extent, if at all, do genitals determine behavior? It is widely agreed today in social science that sex refers to our biological equipment and that gender refers to our sociological, anthropological, historical, 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, their meanings and those of gender itself vary considerably from one place to another and from one era to another and even from one person to another, and even sometimes within the same person.

Assuming all people initially have 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 and heterosexism describe attitudes and behaviors that follow from patriarchy in the conduct of individuals, groups, institutions, and societies.

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 transgender and pansexual people, members of one ethnic or race or social class culture or another do not exhibit the same ways of being what anyone might call masculine. Nor do they all think of masculinity in the same way. Nor do all 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 masculine 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 is intended to help students of whatever gender and sexual orientations and identifications to find their way to evolve ever more sophisticated ways of understanding gender and themselves and acting on those understandings.

Additional consideration: Because of the weight and potential consequences of the recent presidential election in the US, we will inquire into the role issues of masculinities played in the election and consequences likely to follow in the new administration in Washington.

Format

The course will meet Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-4:50. There will be minimal lecturing by the instructor and maximal participation by all class members, TAs, and visitors. The evening of the third 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 it. It will be crucial that everyone see the film and be up on the reading so as to make discussions as lively and full as possible.

During about half the class one day a week, mostly on Thursdays, we will break up into several discussion sections to explore course issues further than we can in the larger class setting. A TA will lead each of these groups.

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 other presentation or a poem or print ad or some other item with which to have a brief discussion. 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.

Background for the course

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, please take up such discontents with the professor and/or TAs as seems appropriate.
We emphasize 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 as it unfolds. The premium is on honesty of one’s reactions—emotional as well as intellectual—to all parts of the course and to fellow students, TAs, and professor.

Latte Postings

In addition to syllabus assignments, the instructor will post on our course LATTE page from time to time a sketch of the upcoming class and news and other items germane to our course. Most of these will be fairly brief, and students are asked to keep up with them, particularly those that might be marked with “to discuss in class” or something like that.

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning. It is important that we create and feel a safe space in our classroom. There will be a diversity of views among us that we are to hear, honor, and explore together. It is essential to listen closely to others and not spend time formulating what you want to say next or dising the speaker’s remarks in an imagined conversation with him or her. 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. 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 in discussion sections.

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 solitaire or google searches 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.

Response papers

As there will be no final paper on the course materials, response papers will be the means for professor and TA to know your responses to and relationships with the readings, films, and class discussions. They will be done in pairs, rather than singly. We will discuss this method well before the first response paper is due.

We want in this course to have a conversation among all of us—students, TAs, and professor. One way to do this is through written responses to readings and other course materials. Toward that end, we ask you to work together in groups of two or three (not to be rigid about this, occasionally four work together well) in writing short response papers every few weeks. Here is what we have in mind:
1. It is well to learn to write succinctly. Practice getting to the point quickly and saying what you mean. The papers should be held to 3-4 pages, although if you really get caught up in something and wish to do so, negotiate for more. Suggested foci: 1) What is new to you in this reading? What do you make of it? What problems do you have with it? 2) What continuities do you see with previous weeks’ readings? 3) What contradictions do you see in the reading, and/or how does it contradict prior reading? What do you make of this? 4) What insights do you gain from this reading and its location in the course? What other connections do you make with materials outside the course?

2. If you find the reading difficult, summarizing it to get a hold of it can be useful, but do not make the paper a book report. The point of this kind of response paper is to ask if your interpretation of what the author said makes sense to the reader. Do not restate what the author said in her or his terms. Quotations may be used sparingly to illustrate a point or ask a question, and we urge you to work directly from the texts, but do not just repeat the author without using your own words.

3. All reading is interpretation. We never focus on it all, and we never comprehend it all. What matters is that the reader grapple with the text to understand it as fully as possible, to make sense of it, and to offer critical interpretations of it.

4. Please focus on your own questions about the reading, your critical reactions to it, hesitations, reservations, etc. And most important: your own insights about it. Strive to make connections within the reading that the author may not have made. Strive to connect the reading with other reading, with central ideas and issues as they develop in the course, with your own understanding of the world, your reactions to what you see in society and your own life.

5. The premium in these papers is on showing the reader that you are grappling with the course materials, have opened yourself up to the possibility that there is something in them for you, and can think creatively with what we are studying. The premium also is on integrating what may seem like disparate materials, and struggling to make sense of them in your reality as a citizen and as a thinking, feeling, viable actor in society.

6. In the response papers, you may work with class discussions, films, professor’s and TAs’ views, world events, whatever, but always in the context of the readings. I.e., no riffing from the top of your head on interesting things that may be relevant to the course. That is, of course, easy to do in sociology classes but is not helpful. We are looking for real struggle with reading and other course materials.

Journals

Students are asked to keep a journal of one to two pages per week of personal reactions to masculinities issues in readings, films, other class materials, ads, popular culture, whatever. Strive for seeing and feeling insights and connections you had not noticed or made before. You will be asked to turn these in with response papers.
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. We will present our findings to each other, in the class, near the end of the semester. The written report on the research will be due 4/28 for seniors and 5/1 for everyone else.

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.

Grading standards

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; involvement in class and in 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; slight involvement in class and discussion group.

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.

D—same as C but more so.

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.

Required Readings: Books, Chapters, and Articles

Readings are to be completed before the date listed, and discussed on that date in the classroom. Most chapters and articles are on LATTE.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi, Between the World and Me
Cornwall, Andrea, Frank G. Karioris, and Nancy Lindisfarne, Masculinities under Neoliberalism
Ducat, Steven, The Wimp Factor
Halberstam, Judith, Female Masculinity
Kimmel, Michael, Guyland
Kimmel, Michael, The History of Men: Essays in the History of American and British Masculinities (assigned articles are on LATTE)
Kimmel, Michael and Michael Messner, *Men’s Lives* (on LATTE)
Pascoe, C.J, *Dude, You’re a Fag*

**Introduction**

**Week 1, 1/17** What is masculinity?
- Introductions, our own understandings of and definitions of masculinities, discussion of the final project.

**1/19** Kimmel, *Guyland*, Preface and chs. 1-4

Conceptualizing masculinities, deconstructing gender

**Week 2, 1/24** *Guyland*, chs. 5-7

**1/26** Continue discussion of film. Read also Butler, *Gender Trouble*, Part One, (LATTE)

Evening: 7-9:00 viewing and brief discussion of feature film *Billy Elliot*

**Week 3, 1/31** *Guyland*, chs. 8-12

**2/2** Kimmel and Messner, *Men’s Lives*, articles on LATTE
- Martha McCaughey, “Caveman Masculinity: Finding an Ethnicity in Evolutionary Science”
- Barry Deutsch, “The Male Privilege Checklist”
- Yen Le Espiritu, “All Men Are Not Created Equal: Asian Men in US History”
- Alfredo Miranda, “Macho”: Contemporary Conceptions

Discuss final project/research paper assignment.

**DUE 2/7. FIRST RESPONSE PAPER. Weeks 1-3. WHAT ISSUES ARE RAISED IN THE COURSE SO FAR? WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED SO FAR? WHAT PROBLEMS DO YOU HAVE WITH THE COURSE MATERIALS (BOOKS, ARTICLES, CLASSES, FILMS, ETC.) SO FAR?**

The social psychological angle

**Week 4, 2/7** Ducat, *Wimp Factor*, Preface, Introduction, chs. 1-2

**2/9** Ducat, chs. 3-4

**Week 5, 2/14** Ducat, chs. 5-6

**2/16** Ducat, ch. 7
Research proposal is due this week.

- VACATION 2/20-2/24

Work, Sport, and Race

Week 6, 2/28 Males bodies, male bodies and race
Kimmel, History of Men
Coates, Between the World and Me, pp. 1-88
2/2 Coates, pp. 88-152

Discuss field projects.

Week 7, 3/7 Kimmel and Messner, Men’s Lives
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”
James Gilligan, “Culture, Gender, and Violence: ‘We Are Not Women’”
Tim Beneke, “Men on Rape”

Kimmel, History of Men
Ch. 4, “Baseball and the Reconstruction of American Masculinity 1832-1920”


Cynthia Hasbrook and Othello Harris, in Jim McKay, et al, Masculinities, Gender Relations, and Sport. “Wrestling with Gender: Physicality and Masculinities among Inner-city First and Second Graders”

3/16 Kimmel and Messner, Men’s Lives
Cantú, “A Place Called Home: A Queer Political Economy: Mexican Immigrant Men's Family Experiences”
Fung, “Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn”

Hetero-normative sexuality and female masculinity

Week 9, 3/21  Kimmel and Messner, *Men’s Lives* (all on LATTE)
Steinem, “If Men Could Menstruate”
Rochlin, “The Heterosexual Questionnaire”
Messner, “Becoming 100% Straight”

3/23  Pascoe, *Dude, You’re a Fag*, chs. 1-3

Week 10, 3/28  Pascoe, chs. 4-6 and Appendix

3/30  Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, preface and chs. 1-3

Week 11, 4/4  Halberstam, chs. 4-6

4/6  Halberstam, chs. 7-8

**Progress report on field project is due.**

- Vacation, 4/10-4/18

**DUE 4/21. THIRD RESPONSE PAPER. WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED SO FAR ABOUT SEXUALITIES? WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE YOU WITH ANY OF THIS?**

Masculinities Globally Today

Week 12, 4/21  Cornwall, *Masculinities under Neoliberalism, chs.1-4,*

**Discuss final project progress reports.**

Week 13, 4/25, 4/28  : Cornwall, chs. 7, 9, 12

Week 14, 5/2  Cornwall, chs. 13,14

In addition:

1) 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.

2) Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).