Course Description

This course examines the ways that gender, class, and race are conceptualized, constituted, and interpreted. Beginning with gender, it will explore contrasting intersectional theoretical approaches as well as methodological questions and empirical studies. How do social structures and individual agency intertwine to produce gendered, raced, and classed individuals? How are structures reproduced through institutions and action over time and generation? How is change accomplished?

The class will examine power and inequality embedded and reinforced in social structures, everyday practices, and internalized identities. It does not seek to be exhaustive. Rather, it introduces students to a range of perspectives that provide analytic tools for asking questions about the social world, interrogating assumptions of theoretical paradigms, assessing empirical research, and constructing an intersectional study.

This exploration involves asking epistemological questions. How do we know what we know? As sociologists, in our efforts to surface and analyze patterns of sometimes invisible or elusive social phenomena, at every turn we are going to ask questions about method and sources. If we want to understand inequality from multiple perspectives, including that of the dispossessed, disempowered, and oppressed, how do we gain access to them? Where do we find narratives and experience from these groups? How do we assess and interpret them? How do we adapt our angle of vision given our respective social location? Choose our analytic tools? Assess intersecting structures of inequality?

This seminar explores these theoretical and methodological issues through deep engagement with the HistoryMakers Digital Archive, a collection of over 1,600 oral histories with African Americans now available at Brandeis. Students will use oral histories as a concrete way of grappling with intersectional conundrums. They will analyze how oral histories are collected, transcribed, edited, analyzed, and interpreted. To explore the production of oral histories, the seminar will host experts who conduct, collect, and use oral histories in their scholarship. Students will confront questions about the strengths and weaknesses of this form of evidence: How should sociologists and historians use narratives profoundly shaped by individual memory and/or collective trauma? How do the technologies of oral history shape the captured moment, the subject, what is said, and what remains unspoken? What does the visual dimension of this video collection alter and/or enhance? In comparison to audio-only recordings?

Learning goals:

1. Develop an informed perspective of key theories and debates in the field of gender, class, race-ethnicity, and intersectionality.
2. Analyze the theoretical and empirical significance of the main arguments and evidence in this
literature.
3. Collaborate with other students to distill and present central arguments—covering strengths and weaknesses—of the week’s readings.
4. Construct probing discussion questions that knit together the readings and their theoretical and methodological conundrums.
5. Develop mastery of the navigation and use of the HistoryMakers Digital Archive
6. Write a succinct, clear, and compelling analysis of an oral history subject.

Unit Hours:

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, listening to interviews with the HistoryMakers digital archive; preparing questions for discussion, writing papers, and the like).

Course Requirements

Students are expected to be full-fledged participants in the seminar. This means coming to class having carefully read and digested the readings. The course grade includes attendance and participation (10%). In addition, students are expected to do two collaborative presentations on weekly readings, which will account for 20% of the grade. Each presentation should include a brief synopsis of the arguments of the readings, an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology, and connect philosophical and substantive issues to other readings of the course. Presenters should prepare questions for class discussion and distribute them at least 24 hours before class.

We will plan a field trip to the Schlesinger Library, outside of class time, to examine their oral history collections.

Students will be expected to write two papers. The first (30%), a 6-8 page paper, will be an analysis of one or more oral histories from the HistoryMakers archive. (See instruction sheet on “Exploration and Analysis of a Case in the HistoryMakers Digital Archive” for details.)

The final paper (40%), 10-12 pages, due at the end of the semester, will take one of two approaches. The first option allows students to go deeper with their HistoryMakers paper and analyze a theme or group of people who have interviews in the collection.

The second option is to write an intersectional research proposal on a topic of the student’s choosing, related to course content. It should identify an issue; pose a research question; frame an approach to the concepts and topics in light of the student’s perspective on gender, class, and race; and propose a means to study it.

Intellectual responsibility. Academic integrity is the ground of trust that sustains a scholarly community. Please honor the words and thoughts of others and credit them faithfully. Whether you are submitting written work or speaking in class, take care to acknowledge your sources not only for the words you cite but for the ideas you advance. Sources include not only print but web materials, ideas you learned in other classes, and ideas gleaned from other students.
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 me immediately.

**Required Books**

Acker, Joan. *Class Questions: Feminist Answers* (Alta Mira, 2005)
Collins, Patricia Hill and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Polity, 2016)

In addition articles (marked with an asterisk (*) below will be available on the LATTE course page: [http://latte.brandeis.edu](http://latte.brandeis.edu). Recommended and supplemental reading can be found on a course google doc—everyone in the class is invited to contribute.

**Course Outline**

**Week 1: January 18 – Introduction to the Course—Is Gender a Salient Category?**

3:00—Orientation to HistoryMakers Digital Archive—Laura Messner, Instructional Design Specialist


**Week 2: January 25 – Intersectionality—Method or Theory?**

2:00—Guest speaker: Joyce Antler, Professor Emerita, Brandeis University

*Antler, Joyce, “‘We’re Ready to Turn the World Upside Down’: Radical Feminism and Jewish Women,” in *A Jewish Feminist Mystique? Jewish Women in Postwar America*, edited by Hasia Diner, Shira Kohn, and Rachel Kranson (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), pp. 211-234
Collins, Patricia Hill and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality*

DUE: Meet individually with Laura Messner this week

**Week 3: February 1—Narrative, Memoir, and Oral History—Interrogating “Experience”**

Rebecca Walker public lecture: Tue. January 31, 7:30 pm Shapiro Campus Center Theater

3:30—Guest Speaker: Grey Osterud, Independent Scholar & Developmental Book Editor

*Osterud, Grey, “It’s Very Little I Know about the Facts of Life to This Day’: Speaking about the Silence Surrounding Sex,”* *Frontiers* 35:1 (2014):43-72

**Week 4: February 8—Constructing Gender**

*Butler, Judith, “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire”* *Gender Trouble* (Routledge 1990), Ch.1

DUE: Brief synopsis of selected HistoryMakers subject

**Week 5: February 15—Care and the Gendered and Racialized Division of Labor**

2:00—Guest speaker: Mignon Duffy, University of Massachusetts, Lowell
Duffy, Mignon, *Making Care Count*


**Week 6: February 22—NO CLASS, Winter Break**

**Week 7: March 1—Theorizing Race**

*Andersen, Margaret, “Roots of Racial Inequality: Framing the Discussion” in *Race in Society: The Enduring American Dilemma* (Rowman and Littlefield, forthcoming 2017)*


**Week 8: March 8—Class Location**

**International Women’s Day**

*Guest speaker: Maxine Baca Zinn, Professor Emerita, Michigan State University*

Acker, Joan. *Class Questions: Feminist Answers*

*Baca Zinn, Maxine, “How Latinas have contributed to Intersectionality” (forthcoming)*


**DUE: First paper**

**Week 9: March 15—Psycho-Dynamic Identity versus Passing and Performing**

*Chodorow, Nancy, “Family Structure and Feminine Personality” in *Women in Culture and Society*, edited by Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University*
Week 10: March 22 – Masculinities

Guest Speaker: Margaret Andersen, University of Delaware


Week 11: March 29– Trans Challenges to Meanings of Gender

3:30--Guest speaker: Henry Rubin, Quincy College

Rubin, Henry, *Self-Made Men*


DUE: Preliminary prospectus for final paper

Week 12: April 5—Teen Sexuality and Motherhood

Erdmans, Mary Patrice and Timothy Black, *On Becoming a Teen Mom: Life Before Pregnancy*


Week 13: April 12 – SPRING BREAK

Week 14: April 19—Enforcing Inequality through Violence--Historical

*Anderson, Gary Clayton, “The Native Peoples of the American West: Genocide or Ethnic

Without Sanctuary, a visual archive of lynching: http://withoutsanctuary.org/

**Student presentations on final project**

**Week 15: April 26— Enforcing Inequality through Violence—Contemporary**

*Guest speaker: Ted German, Emerge*


**Student presentations on final project**

**Week 16: May 3— Commodified Sexuality—Revisiting Intersections in an Era of Global Capital**

Hoang, Kimberly Kay, *Dealing in Desire: Asian Ascendancy, Western Decline, and the Hidden Currencies of Global Sex Work*

**Student presentations on final project**

*Final Papers/Research Proposals due May 12 by NOON*