

Cross-Cultural Study of Women

Class: 11:45 - 12:50 O'Conr 201, Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Instructor: Dr. M.E.Hegland, O'Conr 318, 554-4646

Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, 1:00 - 1:30 Or by appointment

Until the last two or three decades, the great majority of anthropologists were male. Influenced by the assumptions of their own cultures, they concentrated on the activities of males and male viewpoints in their approach to research. Women's contributions to society and culture and female perspectives were assumed to be unimportant and were neglected. Influenced by the social organization of their own societies and of the societies in which they studied, male anthropologists tended to interact with other males in the field. These male informants conveyed to the researchers a picture of their society and culture centered around male activities and their own male perspectives.

In recent years more women have been entering the field of anthropology. Although initially they were usually trained by male anthropologists and influenced by traditional ideas about what is important to study and who are the important actors in societies, because of their sex, they often interacted far more with other women in the field than had male anthropologists. Female anthropologists therefore, sometimes almost in spite of themselves, come up against anthropological information and perspectives which differ quite radically from those of earlier, male-centered research. The results have been exciting and dynamic developments in the area of the anthropology of women and gender and also drastic modifications in our ideas about what societies and cultures are really like and how they really work.

In this course, we will examine some of the tremendous amount of material produced related to the anthropology of women and gender. What are anthropologists learning about the lives of women in various cultures? How does knowledge about women's activities and women's views modify our understanding of cultures and societies? How has feminism, a perspective which takes into account women's inputs, views, and interpretations, changed the field of anthropology--what we study, how we study, and why we study--or how should it change our field? How can the focus on gender construction contribute to new understandings about what it means to be male? How do people utilize gender constructions and gender symbolisms in pursuit of status and power and in politics?

In thinking about these questions, we will look at the lives of women and men in other cultures and sub-cultures and how they are connected with power structures, as well as at our own lives and how we interact with power structures. Hopefully, looking at women in other cultures will give us new insights about ourselves, our own gender constructions, and the situation of women and men in our own culture and society.

The spirit of the class will be one of cooperative inquiry, examination, and analysis. We will deal with both of the two main steps in anthropological inquiry: 1. description or the gathering and organizing of information and 2. analysis or the interpreting and explaining of data to shed light on how and why things happen the way they do. The class will be a discussion class as much as possible with the aim of exploring ideas and interconnections. Everyone is required to read, study and think about the readings and to discuss the readings. It is expected that students will work in an active way inside the classroom as well as outside.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Attendance is required. The class is a discussion class, and you certainly can not discuss if you aren't present. Students who have no absences will have better opportunity to earn a good class participation grade. Students are allowed two unexcused absences only. With each additional unexcused absence after two, your grade will be lowered by **a third of a grade**. If you are more than five minutes late or leave class early, it is counted as an absence. An absence can be excused only for serious and documented reason and only if I am notified before hand. Each student is responsible for signing the attendance sheet.

Participation is required. Students should actively engage in gathering material and thinking about women and gender in American society and elsewhere. You must be prepared at all times to discuss class materials. I will call

on students if necessary. Contribution to class discussion is an important part of the grade. Students are expected to discuss concepts and ideas and do more than just add information to the conversation. They are expected to probe the material and come to new insights. **Students are to share responsibility for the learning process and will be evaluated accordingly.**

Preparation is required. Students are expected to study assignments carefully and to review and think about notes from readings, class lectures, discussions and films. Periodically, you will write an in-class essay based on the readings and films. Your answer must demonstrate that you have read and thought about the materials.

In order to pass the course, all requirements must be completed. Plagiarism or cheating brings an automatic F for the course and perhaps more. See student handbook and handout on writing essays for the definition of plagiarism.

Promptness in fulfilling assignments is required. Essays or assignments may be completed late only if (1) I am notified beforehand and (2) the reason is serious and documented. Paper grades will go down by a third for each day or fraction of a day handed in late. Your essays must be handed in at the beginning of class on the day due.

Aims of the Course:

It is expected that the course will assist you to attain:

1. Anthropological Knowledge Related to the Cross-Cultural Study of Women

We will work with some of the materials about the situation of women in various cultures, their contributions to society, and the parameters on their lives and activities. We will study some of the anthropological concepts and paradigms developed to analyze and explain gender roles and interaction and their stability and/or change. What are the lives of women like in some different cultures and sub-societies? What are the expectations for the roles and behavior of women and men in different cultures? What are the advantages and disadvantages of various societies for women? By what means are women kept in their places? How do women react to the boundaries placed on their behavior and activities and why? How do women attempt to cope with their situations, resist, or find ways to get around restrictions and develop some power? Do women try to bring about changes in society? Why or why not? Are such efforts successful and why or why not?

2. Knowledge about the Process of Anthropological Inquiry as Applied to the Field of the Cross-Cultural Study of Women

We will study a number of examples of how anthropologists have collected and organized data about women and gender. Using readings, films, class lectures, and your own observations as data, you will have a number of opportunities to collect, organize, analyze, and present anthropological findings in written and oral assignments.

3. Ability to Understand How People Construct and Utilize Gender and Gender Symbolism to Gain Status and Power and in Politics in the U.S and Other Societies.

With the knowledge and abilities attained through the first two aims, you will be able to view with greater perceptiveness, avoiding common inaccurate myths and assumptions, the conditions and reasons leading to the parameters on women's and men's lives. You will be able to recognize how gender is constructed and utilized. You will be able to more clearly see how your own life, opportunities, and choices are influenced by social forces and will be able to better make decisions and plans to obtain what you want out of life and have the most fulfilling life possible.

Cross-Cultural Study of Women is a Program for the Study of Women and Gender course. See Dr. Barbara Molony, Director of the Program and History Professor if you are interested in pursuing a major or minor in this area. The course fulfills the Women's Studies requirement.

If you are interested in a major or minor in Anthropology, please see Dr. George Westermark, Anthropology Section Head.

Required Readings: (Available in the bookstore)

Crow Dog, Mary with Richard Erdoes, Lakota Woman, New York: Harper Perennial, 1991.

Friedl, Erika, Women of Deh Koh, Lives in an Iranian Village, New York: Penguin Books, 1991.

Walker, Alice, The Color Purple, New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1985.

Kikumura, Akemi, Through Harsh Winters: The Life of a Japanese Immigrant Women, Novato, California: Chandler & Sharp Publishers, Inc., 1981.

Sanday, Peggy Reeves, Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privilege on Campus, New York University Press, New York and London, 1990.

Reading Schedule:

(Take careful and comprehensive notes on all readings, films and speakers. Take notes on contributions and discussion of other students as well as of professor.)

Mon. Sept. 22 Introduction – The Anthropological Approach, Introduction to Anthropological Research.

I. Women, Gender, and Ethnic Identity: What are women’s roles in political resistance and ethnic identity maintenance? How do women relate to their men under demeaning conditions? Do men and women work differently in politics or balancing political and family responsibilities? How do people wield gender symbols in politics?

Wed. Sept. 24 Lakota Woman 3 - 72

Fri. Sept. 26 Lakota Woman 73 - 143

Mon. Sept. 29 Lakota Woman 144 - 214

Wed. Oct. 1 Lakota Woman 215 - 263

Fri. Oct. 3 Review and Prepare for Presentation/Discussion

Mon. Oct. 6 **Essays Due. STUDENT PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ACTIVITY**

Wed. Oct. 8 Student Planning Day: Classes Suspended.

II. Middle Eastern, Muslim Women: Gender Struggle and the Politics of Veiling and Gender Symbolism.

Fri. Oct. 10 Women of Deh Koh 1 - 46 (You may skip 5, 8, 10, and 12 if you wish.)

Mon. Oct. 13 Women of Deh Koh 47 - 87

Wed. Oct. 15 Women of Deh Koh 110 - 141, 230 - 237

Fri. Oct. 17 Women of Deh Koh 160 - 182, 200 - 217

Mon. Oct. 20 Review and Prepare for Essays and Presentation/Discussion

Wed. Oct. 22 **Essays Due. STUDENT PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ACTIVITY**

III. Women and power: How do women tolerate and resist? How do they influence others and change their own lives and the lives of others? What are their resources and strategies? How do they represent themselves and their challenges?

Fri. Oct. 24 The Color Purple 1-99

Mon. Oct 27 The Color Purple 100-198

Wed. Oct 39 The Color Purple 199-296

Fri. Oct. 21 Review and Prepare for Essays and Presentation/Discussion

Mon. Nov. 3 **Essays Due. STUDENT PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ACTIVITY**

IV. A Japanese-American immigrant: What are the strengths of women? How do they use culture to make meaningful lives for themselves? How do women deal with social, cultural, and personal change?

Wed. Nov. 5 Through Harsh Winters ix-50

Fri. Nov. 7 Through Harsh Winters 51-108

Mon. Nov. 10 Through Harsh Winters 109-149

Wed. Nov. 12 Review and Prepare for Essays and Presentation/Discussion

Fri. Nov. 14 **Essays Due. STUDENT PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ACTIVITY**

V. The cultural foundations of American gender roles and interaction, gender constructions, meanings of “masculinity” and “femininity,” and sexual symbolisms and practices.

Mon. Nov. 17 Fraternity Gang Rape xi - xvii, 3 - 65
 Wed. Nov. 19 Fraternity Gang Rape 66 - 139
 Fri. Nov. 21 Fraternity Gang Rape 140 - 221
 Mon. Nov. 24 – Fri. Nov. 28 Thanksgiving Holiday
 Mon. Dec. 1 Fraternity Gang Rape 122 - 293
 Wed. Dec. 3 Review and Prepare for Essays and Presentation/Discussion
 Friday Dec. 5 **Essays Due. STUDENT PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ACTIVITY**
 Congratulations!

Grading Policy for Anthropology 90, Cross-Cultural Study of Women

Grades will be determined by calculating the numerical values given to various contributions according to the following scale:

93: A, 89-92: A-, 86-88: B+, 83-85: B, 80-82: B-, 77-79: C+, 74-76: C,
 70-73: C-, 66-69: D+, 62-65: D, 58-61: D-, 57 and below....F

As noted in your syllabus, students are allowed only two unexcused absences. For an excused absence, you must inform me ahead of time and bring documentation the first day back at class. With each unexcused absence after two, your grade goes down by a third of a grade. If you are more than five minutes late or leave class early, it counts as an absence.

Grades will be computed numerically and will be derived from the following requirements:

1. Class preparation and participation.....15%
 You should come to class with a thorough knowledge of the material in the day's assignment, careful notes on the main ideas and themes in the material, your ideas and analysis of the material, and two or three good discussion questions. In other words, you must come to class prepared for informed and thoughtful discussion or writing on the reading material. As much as possible, try to engage with the materials and the issues, contributing to class discussion in a creative, insightful, and knowledgeable manner. Quality as well as quantity of oral contributions to discussion are significant for grading.
2. Four In-Class Essays, each worth 15% for a total of.....60%
 A thoughtful, analytical essay with an original, central thesis or argument based on each book must be handed in at the beginning of class on the day of the student presentation. Students must hand in **two** typed copies of each paper, one for me to grade and return and the other for my files. Papers must be at least two pages long and should be no longer than three pages. Students on the Presentation/Discussion Activity team do NOT have to hand in a paper. Paper grades will be lowered by a third of a grade for each day or fraction of a day handed in late. See sheets on essays.
3. Presentation and leading discussion.....20%
 Class members will be divided into five groups and each group will be responsible for a creative, dynamic, and provocative presentation. Each group will develop a creative way to engage other class members with the materials and issues, allowing them to apply and extend their knowledge and insights. Each group will be prepared to answer questions, and lead discussion of the text and the issues it introduces. Each group will have to meet outside of class in order to plan, organize, and research the presentation and discussion. Start early with your preparations. See sheet on presentations and discussion leadership.
4. Credit from In-Class Essays.....5%.
 Periodically, announced and unannounced essays on the readings and other class materials will be given. Such essays will serve to give you (a) a reality check make sure you have understood the material, (b) opportunity to integrate course material in a thoughtful and insightful manner, (c) opportunity to think about and extend your insights about the material, and (d) practice in writing and analysis to help for the longer essays. Each in-class essay on which you receive one check or higher will earn one point toward these five points.