

Western University

Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies

GSWS 2264G

The Working World: Gender, Sex, & The Future of Work

Course Description

Drawing on diverse literature from political economy, economics, and feminist media studies, this course investigates the relationships among gender, sex, and labour within capitalist societies, particularly in the digital age. We will begin by examining the political economy of gender and girlhood, exploring the economy through a feminist lens, and navigating the foundations of social reproduction theory to understand gender's place within a capitalist system. In the course's second unit, we will explore the intersectional layers of gender, race, sexuality, and class, covering topics such as "Black Political Economy," "Gender Capital," how masculinity operates under neoliberalism, "Trans Work," and "Queer Workerism." Finally, we will turn to the future of gender, sex, and labour in the digital age, examining topics such as sex work and sexualized labour within digital cultures; the intersections of gender, consumerism, and authenticity; gender, labour, and social media; and we will conclude the course by reviewing feminist critiques of the new ideologies of work.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to help students:

- Investigate current sociological perspectives on gender and work.
- Understand the political economy of gender, sex, girlhood, and digital labour.
- Explore ongoing debates related to Marxian, feminist, and stratification economics, as well as intersectionality theory and social reproduction theory.
- Become familiar with the structure and gendered nuances of a capitalist economy, the social movements which have been transforming it, and the solidarity efforts and practices which are emerging in response to it around the world.
- Engage with theorizations of digital cultures and labour practices, and how gender/sex are informing the future of work in digital and non-digital spaces.

In addition, the course will facilitate development of students':

- Analytical thinking skills.
- Oral and written communication skills.
- Independent research skills.

Evaluation

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| • Solidarity Presentation (15-20 Mins) | 15% |
| • Critical Response Paper x2 (500 Words) | 10% (5% each) |
| • Final Research Essay (2000 Words) | 25% |
| • Participation | 15% |
| • Final Exam | 35% |

Solidarity Presentation (15-20 Min)

Solidarity in the working world is incredibly important. In pairs, you will deliver a 20-min presentation exploring one of the weekly readings and that includes some level of class discussion. And while you must examine and analyze your source material for the class, the style and nature of your presentation will be up to you and your partner (i.e., an interactive lecture, a multimedia presentation, etc).

Make sure your presentation contextualizes your subject for the class (e.g., a person's historical background, the school of scholarship they are participating in), properly cites any relevant research, and forwards a specific thesis.

Critical Response Papers x2 (500 Words)

This assignment asks you to respond to one of our secondary readings. Your responses should not be a summary of the reading; rather, you should respond to a reading's ideas and argument(s), thinking through their implications and how they connect to the larger themes of the course. You may also use these responses as an opportunity to develop your own ideas for the final research essay.

For example, consider taking an aspect or two of one specific reading and connecting it to some of the broader themes or discussions within the course. Is there something (e.g., an idea or an argument) within a reading that connects well with a reading we've previously discussed? What are the key similarities or differences worth noting? Use these responses to "think out loud" about a specific article and to discuss what stood out to you about its ideas and why. Be sure to think through the implications of your ideas so the responses are not purely observational, offering, instead, the beginnings of a larger analysis.

Participation

I expect that all students will complete assigned course readings/viewings and will be prepared to discuss those readings on the appropriate day. Class discussion will comprise a large part of our course, and while I recognize that not all students are comfortable speaking in class, I do expect that all students will be engaged and actively listening. Weekly prompts will be posted in the discussion forums on OWL, allowing for additional opportunities to think through and discuss the weekly readings with your peers. Please get in touch with me at any point if you feel the nature of this course is making your participation difficult.

Final Argumentative Research Essay (2000 Words)

You will develop a 2000-word argumentative essay where you examine a specific aspect of the relationship between gender/sex and work. The essay must contain a clear and arguable thesis and incorporates at least three scholarly sources.

Final Exam

The final exam will test the knowledge that you've acquired throughout the entire semester. In this exam, you will be asked to develop essay-length responses to two questions that address broad issues related to gender/sex and the future of work.

Required Course Texts

Angela Davis, *Women, Race, & Class*

Brooke Erin Duffy's *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love: Gender, Social Media, and Aspirational Work* (Available Online)
Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression, edited by Tithi Bhattacharya (Available Online)