

Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy Comprehensive Course Syllabus

Gender Studies

Course Description:

In this class we will analyze the causes and effects of sex differences in our society. We will begin with the essential debate – is biological difference or social modeling the principal factor in determining differences? – and then look more closely at the question through case studies and current events. We will examine several readings that complicate the premises and assumptions of this debate; these readings analyze intersexuality, the historical one-sex model, and transgender, among other topics. We also examine cultural nodes that illuminate the context of this debate, including politics, cinematic representations of the sexes, gender and finance, gender and politics, and questions of language use. The course catalyzes meaningful debate and calls on students to gather evidence and think through their beliefs.

Instructor:

Dr. Leah Kind

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x. 5491

Office: A117B

Office Hours: I am available most days when I am not teaching. Talk to me if you want to make an appointment.

Meeting Days, Time, and Room:

ABD, Mod 1, A113

Text(s) / Materials:

Novels: *The Power* by Naomi Alderman, *Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood
There will be a wide variety of readings, many of which are/will be accessible in electronic format, either through our course Moodle, or utilizing the web.

Essential Content/SSLs and Outcomes:

Gender Studies has been designed so that students gain skills and experience in many areas. The course emphasizes a few domains in particular, listed here by English standards:

- A.8 applying knowledge gained from literature as a means of understanding contemporary and historical economic, social, and political issues and perspectives. [SSL-III.B; IL-2.B.5b]
- B.2 examining logic, rhetoric, and grammar. [SSL-IV.A]
- C.1 using speaking and discussion skills to participate in and lead group discussions. [SSL-I.A, IV.B; IL-4.B.5b]
- C.2 delivering formal and informal oral presentations
- D.1 generating ideas and questions, and posing problems. [SSL-I.B]
- D.2 using techniques for analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of data from a variety of sources. [SSL-I.A-B; IL-4.A.4b, 5b, McREL-7.IV]
- D.3 creating a research presentation related to academic topics and presenting the findings in oral or multimedia formats, using contemporary technology. [SSL-III.A, IV.B, V.B, IL-3.B.5, 5.C.5a]
- E.5 respecting others' perspectives

Instructional Design and Approach:

As a discipline, Gender Studies is awash in authentic controversy and debate, and thus leads naturally to much good discussion. The course is designed to spark deliberation, because it investigates living debates (biological versus social causes of sex differences and identity politics, for example) that inform social policy, as well as conceptions of the sexes that inform everyday life. Discussions are often student-designed and led.

Student Expectations:

Some topics and readings in this class are quite challenging. They may involve sexual content or new and unusual ideas. In addition, the personal nature of gender may invite anecdotes and opinions from some students that are beyond your own experience. **In the class I expect that you will approach readings and discussions with maturity and respect.** Disagreement will probably prove to be the lifeblood of the course (indeed, the fundamental debate of the class is ongoing), but productive disagreement is courteous and tolerant. If this is a communication skill that you need additional practice in, all the better.

This course demands the courage to investigate what you do not know and what you think you already know. Please try to face this investigation with openness and intellectual honesty – these will serve you well through complicated terrain. Your beliefs may change, and you will come to know yourself better. Further—give yourself the space and opportunity to allow for some of your ideas to change.

****NO ONE** in this class is an expert. **NO ONE** has all the definitive answers or opinions. We are all embarking on an endeavor of learning and discovery together—please remember that.**

Reading/Reading Quizzes

Careful reading is essential for this class. Please set aside time to read with careful attention. Reading loads are not always equal. Plan accordingly. Your participation

grade may be negatively affected if it's clear that you have not read the material. I will also use unannounced reading quizzes to ensure careful and consistent reading.

Participation/Missed Work

Active, engaged, and (perhaps most importantly!) **productive** participation is expected and required. Questions are just as valid as comments, and often much more so; please share your confusions and whatever inchoate ideas that you haven't fully worked out yet! The class will be a collaborative idea space.

If you miss class and are unexcused when we have a reading quiz, you will receive a zero. If your absence was an excused one, you will receive a N/A for that quiz—i.e.—the quiz neither helps nor hurts you. If you know of an absence occurring when an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to turn it in prior, or you will receive a late penalty. (You didn't just discover you were going to California on a college visit this morning at 7:45)

Revision:

-You may revise **within one week** of the paper's return. I suggest you meet with me if you are unsure about the changes to make or would like to think through an adventurous rewrite. The final grade will be an average of the original grade and the revision.

-If you earn a C- or below on a paper, you MUST meet with me and revise that paper. Papers receiving an A- or higher are not eligible for revision.

-When handing in a revision, you must submit both the original and the revised version. If you no longer have the original paper (with my comments) your paper is not eligible for revision. **Late papers cannot be revised.**

Class activities cannot be redone, so plan carefully (and daringly). Homework and quizzes also cannot be revised.

Late papers:

For every class day late, the top grade possible will drop by one grade. Papers not submitted by a week past the due date will receive a zero (F).

Plagiarism:

IMSA is very strict on this topic, and I have followed official protocol when academic integrity problems have surfaced in the past. In short: if you have ANY questions here, make sure to ask me. Please do not risk failing an assignment because of misinformation about citation, paraphrase, etc.

Assessment Practices, Procedures, and Processes:

Assignments:

Essays will be due on a variety of topics over the semester. Each essay must have a clear point and supporting evidence; you should be concise and discriminating so that your paper is as powerful as possible. However, there is no word limit for each essay – you will have to decide for yourself how much writing and analysis you need to do to honor the assignment and your own ideas.

You will make two presentations in this class. The first will be an original class activity that you lead with a partner in order to introduce that week's readings/topic(s). You will choose what day to present and you will design the activity yourselves. The second presentation will be an individual one, where you have the opportunity to share elements of your personal podcast project.

Grading:

Essays	60%
Presentations (2)	15%
Participation	15%
Reading Quizzes:	10%

On grades for written work:

“A” work is eloquent, cogent, and sometimes profound; “B” work is committed but a bit prosaic, clunky, or off-the-mark; “C” work suffers from serious writing and/or comprehension errors.

It is the policy of the English Department not to round quarter or semester grades.

Suggested Sequence of Topics and Activities:

The basic debate: is biology or society responsible for sex differences?

Week 1/Week 2

Moodle; brief look at syllabus and schedule; names

List of terms—problematic linguistics

NPR—Universities Using Gender-Neutral Pronouns (moodle)

IMSA's approach

-Rhoads, *Taking Sex Differences Seriously*, 1-6, 14-44; Jennings, “My Brief Life as a Woman”

- Lorber, “Believing is Seeing”; Sapolsky, “Testosterone Rules”;

Baron-Cohen, “Sex Differences in Mind”; Bouton, “Peeling Away Theories on Gender and the Brain”

-Gender as performance: *Huck Finn*, ch. 10-11; Myra Jelsen, “Gender” (263-273)

Explaining a Norm essay

The Basic Debate, Applied

Week 3

Gender and Professional Life

“The More Gender Equality, the Fewer Women in Stem”—Atlantic article

“Why Gendered Medicine can be Good Medicine”—NY Times article

-“Daring to Discuss Women in Science” (NYT article with good embedded links);
Rehmyer, “Gender Equality Closes Math Gap”; Pinker v. Spelke debate
“Why Aren’t Mothers worth anything to Venture Capitalists?”—New Yorker
EXTRA: The Economist, “Shameful: Peer Review”
-discussion with guest speaker

Week 4/5

Handmaid’s Tale

“How the Handmaid Became a Protest Symbol”—BBC News

Week 6

IMSA and Gender

Week 7

Gender and the Media

Dan Reynolds “Believer” and LGBTQ acceptance

“The Doctor Didn’t Believe her, But the Media is Starting to”--NY Times article

“What the Media Learned from Chelsea Manning”—Advocate article

-Boudoir, “Pimps, Hoes, and Evolutionary Psychology”; TV tropes threads, “My Girl is Not a Slut”, “A Man is Not a Virgin”; Jordan-Young, *Brain Storm*, p. 109-113

EXTRA: Crawford and Popp, “Sexual Double Standards: A Review”

-Lady Gaga on the sex in pop double standard (video); “Does BET have a double standard for sexy black women?”; Quirk, “Secret Chapter for Men”; Angier, brief excerpt; peer review of essay 2 draft

EXTRA: Buss, “The Evolution of Human Mating”

Week 8

International Gender Issues/Gender and Politics

“Same-Sex Couples Entitled to Equal Visa Rights, Hong Kong Court Says”—NY Times

“‘Gay Conversion’ Therapy to be Banned”—BBC News

“Istanbul Pride Parade”—CNN

“Sworn to Virginity and living as men in Albania”; Gopalan, “Behind the Burqa”; Cope, “Tearing Away the Veil”

Violation of a Norm Essay

Complicating the Debate

Week 9

“Bi-furious: why does pop culture still treat bisexual people so poorly?” New Yorker article

-How many sexes? Anne Fausto-Sterling and Leonard Sax in *Male/Female Roles*, 38-59; intersex narratives; Iqbal, “The persecution of Caster Semenya – sports and intersex people’s rights”

Analysis of Norm Violation essay due

-Jordan-Young, “Sexual Orienteering” from *Brain Storm* (p. 144-174)

Week 10

-Transgender and Transsexuality: Riki Anne Wilchins, “17 Things You DON’T Say to a Transsexual”; Boylan, *She’s Not There*, p. 146-184

-“A Plan for Affordable Gender Confirmation Surgery Goes Awry” NPR News

EXTRA: Bloom, selection from *Normal*

-Kennedy, selections from *The First Man-Made Man*

Masculinity and Femininity

Week 11

“What is Toxic Masculinity?” Advocate article

“What does Healthy Masculinity Look like?” Salon article

“Why Men Don’t Like Funny Women”

“A Female Olympian who Models Men’s Clothing”—NY Times

“The Age That Women Have Babies: How a Gap Divides America”

“My Voice Got Deeper, Suddenly, People Listened”

“Army looking to add female infantry, armor soldiers to new posts”

-Selections from “Dude, You’re a Fag”

Possible: Hemingway, “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place”; “The Sea Change”; “Ten Indians”; “Indian Camp”

Week 12/13

The Power (novel)

Week 14

Alison Bechdel—*Fun Home* (graphic novel)

This is America

“Transgender Girl, 12, Is Violently Threatened After Facebook Post by Classmate’s”
Parent

“Sorry, Alexa is not a Feminist”

Rethinking Literary Analysis essay due

Week 15/Week 16

Podcast presentations

Schedule Subject to Change!

Readings may be added, subtracted, swapped as needed