Course Organiser and Supervision Coordinator

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Lecturers

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Timetable of Lecture/Seminars

Lectures for each week will be uploaded to the Soc 10 Moodle site by 5pm the Friday previous to the scheduled sessions, which are Thursday 10-12 beginning October 8th. Students can watch the lectures at any point before the second hour of the timetabled lecture slot, including in the first hour of that session from 10 to 11. The second hour will be a live, interactive online session for which Zoom links are provided on the lecture timetable (You will find them on the Moodle page). These sessions will offer the opportunity to discuss the lecture and the core reading, to use breakout rooms for small group conversations and the whiteboard and polls for other group exercises. Emphasis will be placed in these sessions on close analysis of the core reading for each lecture, which should be read carefully before each session by all those who are planning to attend. Notes on these sessions will be provided for those who can’t attend them, but they will not be recorded in order not to inhibit discussion.

Aims and Objectives of the Paper

- To introduce key concepts and debates in the sociology of gender
- To develop familiarity with the intersectional analysis of race, class, gender and sexuality
- To engage with theoretical work and projects from global perspectives
- To build skills in using theory and evidence for sociological arguments
- To develop oral and written skills through supervision presentations, essay writing and group discussions in lectures or supervisions

Course Content

This paper engages with a mixture of approaches that address the question: What is gender and why does it matter? Key to this engagement is the use of intersectional analyses through which gender is investigated in relation to other political, social and cultural identities and locations. Lectures for this paper begin by outlining the feminist analysis of sex and gender; the intersection of gender, class and
race; Black and transnational feminism; feminist epistemology and method, the reproductive justice movement, gender and institutional violence and the gendered labour process. In the second term the paper includes lectures on sexualities, masculinities, trans and queer theory, new reproductive technologies, gendered nationalisms, cyborg feminism, decolonial feminism, and gender and the environment. Throughout, a strong emphasis is placed on the relationship between identities, institutions and inequalities, and also on the integration of conceptual, theoretical and empirical analysis in contemporary feminist thought. The paper is offered in a lecture/seminar format and a key text (or texts) are required reading which students are expected to prepare in advance.

Supervisions

Throughout the year, students are expected to attend at least six supervisions, for which they need to write a minimum of four short essays addressing the supervision essay questions listed in this paper guide. Supervisions will take place in small groups, with supervisors assigned to specific lectures rather than particular students. Supervisions will be arranged at the beginning of each term and a sign-up sheet for students will be made available from Monday October 5th. Supervisions will take place on Wednesdays the week following the lecture and students are expected to submit their essays on Tuesday by 9 am. There will be three time slots: 2-3 pm, 3-4 pm, and 4-5 pm, capped to four students per session.

Student Feedback

Student feedback will be collected via online anonymous questionnaires distributed at the end of the Michaelmas and Lent terms. However, the Paper convenor and the entire course team welcome feedback at all points during the delivery of teaching. Especially this year when teaching arrangements have been expanded to enable online participation, we will be especially reliant on constructive feedback to enable the best experience for all involved in the lectures, seminars and supervisions.

Online Teaching and Learning

This will be a different year for all of us due to the restrictions on movement and face-to-face interactions. There will be challenges and we’ll have to work together to surmount them. Nonetheless, there are also opportunities here, both in terms of learning and interaction, and in terms of research. This is a highly unusual period for society and for the university. We hope we can try to maximise the unique opportunities we have to learn in new dimensions together whilst avoiding as many of the pitfalls of this very new and unfamiliar way of working together. We will do our utmost as a course team to help you and we depend on you to communicate with us about your suggestions to improve the learning experience.

Lecture Outline

Michaelmas Term 2020

Lecture 1. Introduction: What is the Sociology of Gender? (Sarah Franklin, 8/10)
Lecture 2. Black Feminism (Asiya Islam, 15/10)
Lecture 3. Intersectionality: Politics and Practice (Asiya Islam, 22/10)
Lecture 4. Reproductive Justice Movement (Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago, 29/10)
Lecture 5. Transnational Feminism (Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago, 5/11)
Lecture 6. Feminist Epistemology and Method (Gavin Stevenson, 12/11)
Lecture 7. Gender, Vulnerability and Institutional Violence (Gavin Stevenson, 19/11)
Lecture 8. Gender and Labour (Asiya Islam, 26/11)

**Lent Term 2021**

Lecture 9. Men and Masculinities (Robert Pralat, 21/1)
Lecture 10. Sex and Sexualities (Robert Pralat, 28/1)
Lecture 11. Queer and Trans (Marcin Smietana, 4/2)
Lecture 12. Gender and Reproductive Technologies (Marcin Smietana, 11/2)
Lecture 13. ReproNationalism (Sarah Franklin, 18/2)
Lecture 14. Cyborg Feminism (Sarah Franklin, 25/2)
Lecture 15. Decolonial Feminisms (Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago, 4/3)
Lecture 16. Gender, Nature and the Environment (Katie Dow, 11/3)

**Easter Term 2021**

Course Review and Revision Session (Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago & Sarah Franklin, 6/5)

**General Background Reading**


Franklin, Sarah (ed) 1996 *The Sociology of Gender*. Edward Elgar (esp intro, available on Moodle)


**Note:** in all cases we have tried to ensure these resources are available online through the Cambridge library system, or otherwise. Please let us know if you have difficulty accessing material and we can also use the course Moodle site to share resources and make sure any missing items are ordered promptly by the library. You will find extensive information about online resources both in the main University Library and in the Social and Political Sciences library.

**Lecture Details**

**Michaelmas Term 2020**

**Lecture 1. Introduction: What is the Sociology of Gender? (8/10)**

*Professor Sarah Franklin*

This lecture introduces the sociology of gender from within and outside of the discipline, and from the 1970s until the present, with reference to the rise of two key concepts within gender theory: ‘intersectionality’ and ‘trans’. On the one hand, a struggle for feminist theory has been to challenge existing sociological concepts, such as ‘political economy’, ‘historical materialism’ and ‘the family’, in order to take account of the forms of power, inequality and experience they often exclude. At the same time feminists have attempted to develop new theories based on the intersections between gender, race and class oppressions, developing alternative concepts such as ‘capitalist-patriarchy’, ‘cyborg feminism’ or ‘sexual politics’ – to name but a few. Amidst the current political climate of uncertainty about both established norms of social progress and effective means of political participation, new combinations of older and more recent concepts from gender theory and feminist scholarship are the subject of experimentation both within sociology and well beyond the academy. Since the goal of the series of lectures designed for this paper is to increase your ability to understand, compare, critically assess, and use the various concepts, case studies, readings and arguments that inform contemporary sociological theories of gender, we begin with two key concepts that will recur across the paper as a whole, whilst also looking back at their origins. The work of Angela Davis is one of the Paper themes this year and so we will be reading her work carefully throughout, beginning with a classic essay on the birth of the ‘housewife’.

**Supervision Essay Questions**
How has the distinction between sex and gender changed since the 1970s?

How is housework gendered?

Core Reading

Chapter 13 of *Women, Race and Class* by Angela Davis (1981), available here: https://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/davis-angela/housework.htm

Background Reading:


Lecture 2. Black Feminism (15/10)

Dr Asiya Islam

Tracing the long history of Black feminism, this lecture will explore Black feminism not as merely a reaction to or diversion from mainstream/White feminism, but as a significant social struggle and movement that has generated critical feminist thought. We will reflect on Black feminism’s challenge to the notion of universal womanhood, with focus on recognising the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality. Black feminism provides the analytical and ideological framework for understanding exploitation and oppression through the interlocking mechanisms of White supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, and capitalism. In doing so, it highlights the inseparability of lived experiences from theory, and indeed alerts us to the pitfalls of theory forcibly detached from lived experiences. In the final part of the lecture, we will bring our attention to a contemporary debate about solidarities across various marginalised racial groups. Focusing on the shared histories of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism, we will explore the potentials and tensions inherent in the category ‘women of colour’.

 Supervision essay questions:
How does Black feminism challenge the idea of universal womanhood?
Discuss two key conceptual or theoretical contributions of Black feminist thought.

Core reading:

Background reading:
https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition_Readings.pdf

Lecture 3. Intersectionality: Politics and Practice (22/10)

Dr Asiya Islam

Intersectionality has become a ubiquitous buzzword, even lending to ontological categories (one can be an ‘intersectional feminist’), to the extent of confusion and ambiguity. In this lecture, we take a step back to comprehensively interrogate the concept of ‘intersectionality’, with reference to its history, contemporary significance, and critique. Although the term ‘intersectionality’ is relatively recent, the politics and practice of intersectionality has a much longer history, rooted in Black feminist thought that challenges the notion of universal womanhood. As a methodological and analytical practice, intersectionality argues against monolithic constructions of lived experiences, emphasising the multiplicity of people’s identities. Rather than adopting an additive approach, it highlights the power relations that inform the complex interactions between gender, race, class, disability, sexuality, and so on. An essential concept in gender studies, intersectionality features across various topics for this paper.

Supervision essay questions
Discuss the main criticisms of the concept of ‘intersectionality’.
• What is the contemporary relevance of intersectionality? Discuss with examples.

Core reading


Background reading:


Lecture 4: Reproductive justice (29/10)

Dr. Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago

Reproductive justice (RJ) emerged in the United States in the 1990s to expand the discussions on reproductive freedom beyond pro-choice and privacy frameworks used by reproductive rights activists. This framework is the result of the exchanges and cross-pollination between activists, scholars, and social justice movements. RJ provides us with a multi-dimensional and expansive definition of reproduction attentive to the conditions that make possible the right to have and not to have children and parenting in dignified conditions, including economic rights and access to health care. In this lecture, we will explore the historical conditions that gave way to the emergence of RJ, its basic tenets, and some concrete examples that illustrate how scholars use RJ to discuss issues such as disparities in maternal health and access to housing.

Supervision Essay Question

• How does the reproductive justice framework help us understand the current Black Lives Matter movement?
According to Dana-Ain Davis, how do the aftermath of slavery framework shape Black women’s experiences with pregnancy and post-natal care?

Core readings:


Background reading:


**Lecture 5: Transnational Feminisms (5/11)**

*Dr. Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago*

Etymologically the prefix trans emphasizes the idea of transit, of movement, of crossing beyond. Within a transnational feminist framework, the transit of ideas, bodies, and objects become the focus of attention and the connections and material conditions that make movement possible (or not). The
transnational, however, is not simply a glorification of globalization. Instead, it looks critically at the geographies of difference, imperialism, colonialism, nationalism, militarization, neoliberal capitalism, and racial formations that shape and get transformed in these multiple transits. Transnational feminisms also bring to sharp relief the limitations of the nation-state as taken for granted. In this lecture, we will explore the genealogies of transnational feminisms, the main theoretical discussions, and will look at a concrete example of transnational surrogacy.

Supervision Essay Questions:

- What are the analytical advantages of using the transnational framework to study gender and reproduction?
- Why is the category of the nation a contested one for transnational feminists?

Core readings:


Background readings:


Lecture 6. Feminist Epistemology and Method (12/11)

Gavin Stevenson

What does it mean to do feminist research or research as a feminist? And what might it mean in practice to argue that “the personal is political?” This lecture explores some of the epistemological and methodological debates which have enlivened feminist discourse and how this then relates to the process of research production. This lecture will have a strong focus on the varied understanding of “lived” or “personal experience” and the history and legacies of consciousness in feminist research methods. This lecture will also introduce some key conceptual contributions in feminist epistemology and research methods, from “situated knowledges,” “standpoint theory” and “positionality.”

Supervision Essay Questions:

● What implications might “the personal is political” have for the process of knowledge production, or who produces knowledge?
● Should feminist researchers reject the notion of objectivity? Why or why not?

Core Reading:

Hanisch, Carol. “The Personal is Political” (https://webhome.cs.uvic.ca/~mserra/AttachedFiles/PersonalPolitical.pdf)

Background Reading:


Lecture 7. Gender, Vulnerability and Institutional Violence (19/11)

Gavin Stevenson

When we say an institution is “violent,” what do we mean? Are particular social subjects more or less vulnerable to these processes of institutional violence and how do we think about this (potentially uneven) stratification of vulnerability, feeling and violence? This lecture will encourage thinking about varied institutional practices and the relationships and impacts particular practices have on the bodies that make up and reside within particular institutions. This lecture will also seek to explore and problematise institutional discourses around “diversity” and “inclusion” to think critically about the social, historical and cultural production of comfort or “fitting in” within an institution.

Essay Questions

● Is everyone complicit in the reproduction of institutional violence?
● What relationship do institutions have to experiences of violence?

Core Reading:


Background Reading:


Jackson, Carolyn & Sundaram, Vanita (2018). 'I have a sense that it's probably quite bad ... but because I don't see it, I don't know': Staff Perspectives on 'lad culture' in Higher Education', Gender and Education. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2018.1501006
Lecture 8. Gender and Labour (26/11)

Dr Asiya Islam

The division of labour between women and men, whereby women are associated with domestic, private, and unpaid work while men are associated with public, income-generating work, is commonly known as ‘gender division of labour’. This distinction, premised on the social roles assigned to women and men, is both complicated and reinforced through emerging forms and changing dynamics of global division of labour. In this lecture, we will discuss whether the binary concepts of ‘productive’ and ‘reproductive’ labour, which emerged through feminist critique of Marxist theory, are still useful to explain contemporary gender divisions of labour. We will further engage with emotional, affective, and intimate labour in relation to the ‘feminisation’ of the service economy in various parts of the world. Finally, we will consider the value of labour in and outside of the capitalist logic through the example of the ‘Wages for Housework’ movement and contemporary debates about (low-) paid and unpaid care work.

Supervision Essay Questions

● Discuss the value of the concept of ‘reproductive labour’ in highlighting contemporary gender divisions of labour.
● How can labour be valued if not through wages?

Core reading


Background reading:


Lent Term 2021

Lecture 9: Men and Masculinities (21/1)

Dr. Robert Pralat

This lecture will examine the development of masculinity studies and what this area of research has added to our understandings of gender. We will explore R. W. Connell’s influential concept ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and how it has been applied, critiqued and updated over the past thirty years. We will also discuss the relationship between masculinity and homophobia. By focusing on recent case studies, we will look at key empirical and theoretical questions that have concerned sociologists working in this field.

Supervision Essay Questions

- Is it useful to think of masculinity as ‘hegemonic’?
- How do masculinity scholars explain homophobia?

Core Reading

Connell, Raewyn. (2005 [1995]). Masculinities. Polity. (Chapter 3. The social organization of masculinity)


Background Reading


Lecture 10: Sex and Sexualities (28/1)

Dr. Robert Pralat

The focus of this lecture will be on the relationship between gender and sexuality, and how it has been conceptualised from early lesbian and gay studies to most recent scholarship. We will examine the feminist debates of the 1980s and the ongoing tension between opposing violence and exploitation and defending pleasure and diversity. We will also engage with the concept ‘compulsory heterosexuality’, originally theorised by the poet and essayist Adrienne Rich, which has played an important role in contemporary sociological research.

Supervision Essay Questions

● Is heterosexuality still ‘compulsory’ in the 21st century?
● Why have feminists disagreed about sexuality?

Core Reading


Background Reading


Lecture 11. Queer and Trans (4/2)

Dr Marcin Smietana

In this lecture, we discuss what queer and trans theories and practices contribute to our understanding of gender, sexuality, and other intimately related categories such as race and citizenship. Through an overview of queer and trans studies, presented in three brief parts, we aim to see whether queer politics could be understood as politics of ultimately inclusive, intersectional and transnational solidarities for social justice. In part one, we introduce the work that first centered the meanings of ‘queer’ rather than ‘LGBT’ (Butler 1991; de Lauretis 1991; Warner 1993). In part two, we look at some of the key contemporary debates on the meanings and politics of ‘queer.’ We turn to queer critique of neoliberal formations such as ‘homonormativity’ (Duggan 2002), ‘gay imperialism’ (Ahmed 2011) and ‘homonationalism’ (Puar 2007, 2017), as well as the latter’s contestations ‘beyond the Western gaze’ (Mizielinska & Stasinska 2017). In particular, we take a closer look at Jasbir Puar’s (2017) analysis of homonationalisms. We then also outline the related discussions on decolonizing sexualities from perspectives such as ‘settler sexualities’ (TallBear 2018), ‘Queer’ Asia (Luther & Ung Loh 2019), ‘queer of colour’ and ‘mixed orientations’ (Ahmed 2006). In part three, we introduce contemporary trans theorizing, and we consider what queer and trans approaches may have in common. We discuss what trans theories (Stryker 2007, Halberstam 2018) contribute to feminisms, and how solidarities can be built between radical feminists and trans activists (Hines 2017).

Supervision Essay Questions

- In what ways does homonationalism operate today? Discuss with reference to examples, whether from the US, the UK, and/or other contexts.
- In what ways can queer and trans politics be allied?

Core Reading


Background Reading


Lecture 12. Gender and Reproductive Technologies (11/2)

Dr Marcin Smietana

Revisiting Shulamith Firestone’s (1970) radical feminist argument for the liberatory potential of reproductive technologies, in this lecture we explore how intersectional gender hierarchies are reproduced and challenged through technologies such as IVF, gamete donation, surrogacy, genetic selection and others. First, we discuss the ‘ontological choreography’ (Thompson 2005) through which different aspects of reproduction are orchestrated and kinship is disambiguated in order to create babies and parents considered normal and natural. In this process, we ask if key determinants of ‘Euro-American kinship,’ such as biology, continue to be relevant at all and how, as well as how the use of reproductive technologies may be reshaping terms such as mother and father. Second, we take a closer look at gender as a technology through which identities and life projects are reproduced (Franklin 1997, 2018; Blell 2018). We also investigate how expectations of women’s altruism in reproductive labour are reproduced by egg agencies and sperm banks (Almeling 2007) and how such expectations are treated by patients (Hudson 2020) and donors (Nordqvist 2019). Finally, we look at how race as a reproductive technology intersects with gender and shapes reproduction both within the fertility clinic (Nordqvist 2012; Roberts 2009; Russell 2018) and beyond it (Twine 2010), and we briefly point to the ways forward suggested by reproductive justice scholars and activists. Throughout our analysis, we also wonder how the findings from fertility clinics are linked to broader contexts in which they are immersed (Faircloth & Gurtin 2018, Nordqvist 2019, Twine 2010).
Supervision Essay Questions

- (How) are meanings of such terms as mother and father shifting in the age of reproductive technologies?
- (How) have modern stratifications been challenged by reproductive technologies? Discuss with reference to selected examples such as biology, gender, race, sexuality, ability, class or other.

Core Reading


Background Reading


Nordqvist, Petra. (2012). ‘I don’t want us to stand out more than we already do’: Lesbian couples negotiating family connections in donor conception. Sexualities 15(5-6), 644-661.


Lecture 13: Gender, Reproduction and the Nation State (18/2)

Professor Sarah Franklin

How are gun control, abortion, border walls and prayer in schools linked to powerful nationalist agendas? And how do these logics cohere, recombine and reproduce institutional and structural power, privilege and stratification? The resurgence in neo-patriarchal and anti-Black, Islamophobic nationalisms around the globe is a distinctive and troubling feature of the current century. These cultural formations have race, gender and reproduction at their core, as feminist and critical race analysts have shown for decades. In this lecture we examine the resurgence of a particular form of raced and gendered nationalism in the United States over the past four decades. Introducing different theories of nationalism, and showing how they are linked to specific intersection formations of race, reproduction and gender will be our analytic focus.

Supervision Essay Question

● What does Umut Erel mean by ‘homely’ nationalism and is the concept relevant to the Brexit debate? Or debates in other countries about defending the home?

Core Reading:


Background Reading:


Lecture 14, Cyborg Feminism (25/2)

Professor Sarah Franklin

In 1985 Donna Haraway published one of the defining manifestos of twentieth century feminism, combining an analysis of gender, sexuality, capitalism and the environment with a new model of ‘ironic’ cyborg politics. This essay, which contributed a significant turn within feminism away from unified categories of identity, and towards mixed, ambiguous, contradictory, and ‘trans’ identities, continues to repay careful study three and a half decades later, amidst many of the manifestations of scientific and technological transformation diagnosed by Haraway. In this lecture we look at Haraway’s essay in detail but also situate it in the context of her work more generally, and the legacy she has left within feminism today.

Supervision Questions

- Why is irony important to cyborg feminism?
- How would you describe Haraway’s citational practice, and how is it distinctive?

Core Reading:

A Manifesto for Cyborgs: science, technology and socialist feminism
https://archive.org/details/simianscyborgswo0000hara

Background reading:


Lecture 15: Decolonial Feminisms (4/3)

Dr. Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago

We will explore the strand of decolonial feminisms developed by feminists Maria Lugones and Rita Segato. They take the work of Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano and his notion of the coloniality of power. These authors investigate how gender is implicated in producing this form of power that hierarchically organizes humanity based on a biologized concept of race. In this lecture, we will contrast both author’s theorization of decolonial feminisms. Although Lugones and Segato differ in their understanding of the existence of gender before colonization, both authors agree that it imposed a binary gender system that served the purposes of reproducing the labor force. For Lugones, the modern/colonial gender system is crucial for understanding differential gender arrangements along racial lines and suggests that the modern/colonial gender system has a light and a dark side. In Segato’s analysis, the ‘dark side’ manifests in the recent history of violence against women, black, and indigenous bodies as part of a long arch of colonial modernity.
Supervision Essay Question:

- How do decolonial feminist scholars understand the relationship between race, gender, and violence?
- How is gender constituted and constitutive of the coloniality of power? Use at least one example to illustrate your argument.

Core readings:


Background readings:

Asher, Kiran, (2013). Latin American Decolonial Though or Making the Subaltern Speak. *Geography Compass* 7/12, 832-823


*Dr Katie Dow*

As previous lectures have shown, gender differences are often conceptualised in terms of binary differences, including an association with the binary of ‘nature’ and ‘culture’. In this lecture we will take this idea and extend it in relation to current concerns about humans’ relationships to the natural world and particularly concerns about human effects on the environment. In the lecture and discussion, we will consider what humans’ relationships with the natural world can tell us about our own ideas of gender, as well as looking critically at how gender informs environmentalist campaigning. We will also discuss the concept of the Anthropocene and feminist and decolonial critiques of it, as well as whether calls to consider human population numbers have a place in tackling environmental crises.
Supervision Essay Questions

● Is the Anthropocene really the ‘White Manthropocene’?
● Do you agree with Donna Haraway’s call to ‘make kin, not babies’ when addressing environmental concerns including climate change? Why (not)?

Core Reading


Background Reading


