Lecturers
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Paper Description
The lectures for this Paper address 12 key areas of contemporary feminist scholarship related to gender, race, class, inequality and social change. Each lecture designates a broad topic area that is then explored using specific examples to illustrate key concepts and arguments concerning the significance of gender as a social, political and cultural form. This approach enables us, over the course of the Paper, to employ key theoretical frameworks, such as ‘intersectionality’, from a wide range of different perspectives, and across several different topics. At the same time, it also introduces a series of discrete but overlapping areas of contemporary feminist scholarship, and illustrates how gender has been theorised in relation to power, justice, nation, capital, empire, embodiment, affect, health, social movements, reproduction and the global economy. Each lecture includes up to three required readings that must be prepared in advance as they are closely tied in to the lecture. A short list of additional readings is also provided, and more can be added on request and/or in supervisions.

Timetable of Lecture/Seminars
The Paper is offered as 12 two-hour lecture-discussion sessions in the Michaelmas (6) and Lent (6) terms, followed by a two hour revision session (1) at the start of Easter term.

Aims and Objectives of the Paper
• To introduce key topics, 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 and decolonial perspectives
• To build skills in using theory and evidence to develop sociological arguments
• To develop oral and written skills through supervision presentations, essay writing and group discussions in lectures or supervisions

Supervisions
Students are normally expected to attend at least six supervisions, and to prepare four short essays of no more than 2000 words addressing the supervision essay questions listed in this Paper guide. If the supervision strike is not resolved these sessions will be replaced by two two hour revision sessions in weeks 7 and 8. Otherwise, supervisions will take place in small groups, with supervisors assigned to specific lectures rather than particular students. These will be arranged at the beginning of each term, or as soon as possible thereafter. Supervisions will take place on Tuesdays and Wednesdays the week following the lecture and students are expected to submit their essays by 5pm on the Monday prior to the session. There will generally be three time slots: 2-3 pm, 3:13-4:15 pm, and 4:30-5:30 pm, capped at three students per session. In the exceptional event alternative or additional times are necessary this will be arranged by the supervision coordinator.
**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 teaching team welcome constructive feedback at all points during the delivery of teaching to enable the best experience for all involved in the lectures, seminars and supervisions.

**Assessment**
This Paper will be assessed by an online, open-book exam at the end of the year, in which students must answer three questions from an undivided paper. Each answer has a 1500 word limit (4500 words in total).

**Lecture Outline**
**Michaelmas Term 2023, Hopkinson Lecture Theatre: Map of the University of Cambridge**
Lecture 1. Introduction: What is the Sociology of Gender? (Professor Sarah Franklin, October 5)
Lecture 2. International Feminism: The UN Decade for Women (Professor Sarah Franklin, October 12)
Lecture 3. Trans*National Black Feminisms (Dr Sophie Niang, October 19)
Lecture 4. Abolition Feminism (Prof Sarah Franklin, October 26)
Lecture 5. Race, Reproduction and Nation (Prof Sarah Franklin, November 2)
Lecture 6. New Reproductive Technologies (Prof Sarah Franklin, November 9)

**Lent Term 2023, Seminar Room Old Cavendish East Wing: Map of the University of Cambridge**
Lecture 7. Eugenics, Reproduction, and Disability (Dr Rachell Sanchez Rivera, January 18)
Lecture 8. Embodiment and Affect (Dr Aideen O'Shaughnessy, January 25)
Lecture 9. Queer Theory and New Kinships (Professor Sarah Franklin, Feb 1)
Lecture 10. Men and Masculinities (Dr Robert Pralat, Feb 8)
Lecture 11: The Reproductive Justice Movement (Dr Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago, Feb 15)
Lecture 12. TransFeminism (Professor Sarah Franklin, Feb 29)

**Easter Term 2023, Seminar Room Old Cavendish East Wing: Map of the University of Cambridge**
Revision Session May 2nd, Thursday 10-12

**General Background Reading**
Butler, Judith (2011) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* Routledge
Collins, Patricia Hill & Bilge, Sirma (2016) *Intersectionality* Polity
Davis, Angela (2011) *Women, Race and Class* Doubleday
hooks, bell (2014) * Ain’t I a Woman* Routledge
Oakley, Ann (1972, 2016) *Sex, Gender and Society* (new edition) Routledge

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 (https://www.vle.cam.ac.uk/login/index.php) 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 the Seeley Library. Every week more and more open access and e-resources are added to the library collections, so make sure to start your own personal online bookshelf here: https://www.libraries.cam.ac.uk/eresources/ebooks-ejournals

Lecture Details

Michaelmas Term 2023

Lecture 1. Introduction: What is the Sociology of Gender? (Professor Sarah Franklin, 5 October 2023)

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 three key concepts within gender theory: ‘the sexual division of labour’, ‘capitalist patriarchy’ and ‘intersectionality’. On the one hand, a challenge for feminist theory has been to redefine existing sociological frameworks, 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 ‘the sex/gender system’, ‘cyborg feminism’, ‘the dialectic of sex’ 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 some of the key concepts that will recur across the paper as a whole, whilst also looking back at their origins.

Supervision Essay Questions:

1) What does the term ‘capitalist patriarchy’ describe and is it still relevant?
2) How is housework gendered?

Core Reading:


Background Reading:


Lecture 2. The UN Decade and Global Feminism (Professor Sarah Franklin, 12 October 2023)

This lecture examines the emergence of a global feminist movement in the 1970s in the context of the UN Decade for Women, and focuses on how the concept of gender evolved and changed as a result of international feminist dialogue and conflict over the category ‘women’. We look both at the practical achievements of the UN Decade, and the lessons learned about ‘the politics of difference’ and what has later come to be known as ‘intersectionality’. We also consider how the sexual division of labour intersects with the international division of labour, and how these structural changes led to what became known as the ‘new world order’.

Supervision Essay Questions:

1) How are the sexual division of labour and the international division of labour linked in the context of globalization?

2) Why was ‘think globally, act locally’ the motto for the UN Decade?

Core Reading:


Background Reading:


Tinker, Irene and Jaquette, Jane (1987) ‘UN Decade for Women: it’s impact and legacy’ World Development 15:3:419-427


Lecture 3: Trans*National Black Feminisms (Sophie Niang, 19 October 2023)

Using the prefix ‘trans-‘ as a guideline, both in its root meaning (across, beyond, through) and in the way Christina Sharpe uses it and its various extensions (‘translation, transatlantic, transgression, transgender’, In The Wake, 2016: 30), this lecture will focus on black feminisms as always intrinsically transnational, multiple and interconnected. In the first part of the lecture, we will explore the centrality of transgressive, alternative epistemologies to black feminisms everywhere. We will reflect on the historic bias towards US black feminist thought in the academy which has sometimes obscured the long black feminist histories in other locations such as the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa or the Caribbean. In a second part, we will turn to the case study of contemporary Afrofeminist movements in France, using them as a starting point to interrogate this transnational and interconnected aspect of black feminisms. We’ll discuss how thinking about contemporary black feminist movements only makes sense when thinking about them expansively, as reaching across space and time. In doing so, we’ll also think about the centrality of alternative forms of knowledge and cultural production (such as music, poetry, fiction or theatre) to black feminist thought traditions.
Supervision Essay Questions:

1) Why should we look at black feminisms through a transnational lens?

2) “Collectively shared, Black women’s oppositional thought has long existed.” Discuss with relation to at least two case studies (with one outside of the US).

Core Reading:


Background Reading:


Other Material

Trans*national Black Feminisms seminar series: https://jdc52.notion.site/jdc52/Trans-national-Black-Feminisms-Series-32215ff5514542dcb7e3b28c7e8dcca2

Lecture 4. Abolition Feminism: Angela Davis

Abolition feminism brings together a broad set of questions about racialised capitalism, the carceral state, legacies of slavery and imperialism as well as Black and intersectional feminist perspectives on social change. A focus of this lecture, as well as lecture 12, with which we end the lectures this year, is the intersection between queer, Black and abolitionist perspectives on social transformation – how it does and does not come about, how it is and is not named, and how the documentation and analysis of social inequality is linked to the struggle for freedom and social justice. Angela Davis is a key figure in this intersectional field and her work is the subject of this lecture, which looks both back to the early work of Davis in the context of the struggle for civil rights in the 1960s and forward to the increasing influence of Abolition Feminism in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement. The readings look in particular at how Davis links theory to practice, including the importance of her early training in the work of the Frankfurt School, the influence of Herbert Marcuse and her long association with the author and editor Toni Morrison.

Supervision Essay Questions:

1) Why does Angela Davis argue that social justice cannot be achieved without the abolition of prisons?

2) How is the ten point code of the Black Panther party relevant to abolition, and is it still relevant today?

Core Reading:


Davis, Angela Y. Angela Davis: an autobiography. Haymarket Books, 2022, esp. Introduction

Davis, Angela Y. Are prisons obsolete?. Seven stories press, 2011.


Background Reading:


See also:

Mirza, Heidi Safia, ed. (1997) Black British Feminism: A Reader
Lester, Quinn. "Whose democracy in which state?: Abolition democracy from Angela Davis to WEB Du Bois." Social Science Quarterly 102, no. 7 (2021): 3081-3086.

See Angela Davis in conversation with Jackie Kay here to Cambridge in 2018: https://www.sociology.cam.ac.uk/news/davisandkay

For an archive of resources on Davis and Kay see: https://decolonisesociology.com/category/angela-davis-jackie-kay/

Lecture 5: Race, Reproduction and Nation (Professor Sarah Franklin, 2 November 2023)

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? What does it mean to refer to ‘grammars’ of race, gender and nationalism? The resurgence of neo-patriarchal, anti-Black, anti-migrant, anti-gender, and Islamophobic nationalisms around the globe is a distinctive and troubling feature of the first quarter of the 21st century. These cultural formations have a politics of gender, ‘anti-genderism’, racial superiority and ‘family planning’ at their core. 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, looking at the concept of gender as a ‘grammar’ linking nationalisms, religious righteousness and whiteness.

Supervision Essay Questions:

1) How are the home and domesticity important to nationalist discourses and what functions do they serve?
2) How are ‘grammars’ or race, reproduction and sexuality linked in the promotion of populist nationalisms?

Core Reading:


Additional Reading:


Lecture 6: Gender and Reproductive Technologies (Professor Sarah Franklin, 9 November 2023)

In this lecture we look at the examples of IVF, gamete donation and egg freezing to examine how the nuclear family and biological reproduction have been transformed into resources with which to challenge, refashion and reinvent both reproduction and gender. We start by revisiting Shulamith Firestone’s (1970) radical feminist argument for the liberatory potential of reproductive technologies, before taking a closer look at gender as a technology through which identities and life projects are reproduced in IVF and egg freezing (Franklin 2022, van de Wiel 2020). We discuss Charis Thompson’s concept of ‘ontological choreography’ (2005) in the context of egg donation, through which different aspects of reproduction are orchestrated so as to create babies and parents that are considered normal and natural. In this process, we ask if the key determinants of Euro-American kinship, such as biology, continue to be relevant and if so how. We also examine how (gendered) expectations of women’s altruism in reproductive labour are reproduced by egg agencies and sperm banks (Almeling 2007), and how such expectations are expressed by patients (Hudson 2020). Throughout our analysis we reflect on how race (Nordqvist 2012), the nation (Clarke 2018) and individual identities (Franklin 2013) intersect with gender and shape reproduction, within and beyond the fertility clinic.

Supervision Essay Questions:

1) (How) have reproductive technologies challenged normative understandings of reproduction and gender?

2) What can the study of reproductive technologies tell us about the relevance of biology to designating motherhood and fatherhood? Discuss with reference to examples.

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.
Martin, Emily (1991) ‘The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male Female Roles’ Signs 16(3)

Lecture 7: The Reproductive Justice Movement: feminism and the politics of reproduction
(Ad Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago, 17 November 2023)

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, access to health care, and a safe environment free of violence. In this lecture, we will explore the historical conditions that gave way to the emergence of RJ, and its basic tenets. For this session, we will read Max Liboiron and Metzali Yoalli Rodriguez Aguilera to reflect on the possibilities of bringing together environmental and reproductive justice.

Supervision Essay Questions

As Max Liboiron (2021) writes “Reproductive justice is inseparable from environmental justice, antiracism, and anticolonialism” In your essay, explore the connections between them.

How can grieving geographies be a reproductive justice issue? Discuss using two examples.

Core Readings


Background Reading


Lecture 8 Queer Theory (Professor Sarah Franklin, 23 November 2023)

Since the publication of Judith Butler’s Gender Trouble in 1990, the links between theorising gender and the concept of ‘queering’ identities have increased in prominence in both scholarly and popular culture. The undoing of gender binarism, moreover, has been accompanied by substantial social changes in attitudes toward gay people, same-sex marriage and LGBTQIA+ parenting. These changes in turn have led to an emerging scholarship on ‘queer kinship’, and this lecture uses some of the literature on ‘queering families’ and ‘queer reproduction’ to further explore the links between the sociology of gender, feminism and queer theory. This lecture also returns to the concept of gender as a ‘technology’ introduced by Butler (1990), as well as Teresa de Lauretis (1988), to consider how both gender and queer can be used as analytic perspectives not only on identity and politics but on what many feminist theorists have referred to as ‘the politics of biology’. This lecture will also touch on several interrelated themes, including the critique of ‘heterosexualism’ in the context of empire, queer reproduction and reproductive justice, and the expansion of the concepts of ‘queer’ and ‘queering’ beyond identity to encompass a wide variety of other social, cultural and political formations – from environmentalism to economics.
1) Is kinship always already heterosexual for the reasons Judith Butler claims?

2) How does Maria Lugones argue ‘coloniality’ institutionalises specific family forms?

Core Reading:


Background Reading:

Bradway, Tyler and Freeman, Elizabeth, eds. (2022) Queer Kinship: race, sex, belonging, form Duke University Press
Butler, Judith 2004 Undoing Gender Routledge (available as a Cambridge ebook)
Silver, Lauren J. (2020) ‘Queering Reproductive Justice: Memories, Mistakes, and Motivations to Transform Kinship’ Feminist Anthropology 1@217-230. DOI: 10.1002/fea2.12019
Weston, Kath 2005 Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship Columbia University Press

Lecture 9: Eugenics, Disability and Reproduction (Dr Rachell Sanchez-Rivera, 18 January 2024)
This lecture explores how the concept of eugenics has evolved since the early twentieth century and considers its relevance to the contemporary study of race, gender, sexuality and reproduction, using a focus on disability studies. Through consideration of specific cases, we will explore how the rapidly expanding field of disability studies can provide a useful framework for understanding and critiquing eugenic ideas, practices and ideologies. Early 20th century eugenics played an important role in the construction of ‘feeblemindedness’ and the pathologization of everything that ‘fell outside of the norm’. In the attempts to secularize mental health hospitals, conceptions of heredity, abnormality, deviance, amorality, and criminality were consolidated through the figure of the (dis)abled body, and positioned as a threat for the future of the nation. This lecture brings together historical and contemporary approaches to disability to critically assess the ongoing legacies of eugenics, and the continuing pathologization of ‘dis-ability’ in relation to norms of race, class and gender – now also including the figuration of trans and non-binary people as a threat to the social order.

Supervision Essay Questions:

1) Why is eugenics important when discussing the broader histories of gender, race and class?

2) Why are the histories of eugenics and disabilities important to understand the mistreatment and pathologization of trans and non-binary bodies today?

Core Reading:


Background Reading:


Lecture 10 Embodiment, Affect: Transnational Reproductive Activisms (Dr Aideen O’Shaughnessy, 25 January 2024)

Feminist social movement scholars conceptualise the body and emotions as integral to the processes of social change and of political protest. In this lecture, we will take an alternative perspective on reproductive politics, exploring how reproductive oppression and inequality operate on the level of the affect(ed) body. Analysing transnational movements for abortion rights, we will discuss how the gendered body has become both object and vehicle of contemporary reproductive rights struggles. This lecture will also examine the role of emotion in social movements against reproductive violence. Taking both the AIDS activist movement in the U.S., as well as contemporary anti-femicide protests in Mexico as case studies, we will discuss how particular emotions like grief or anger, motivate or mobilise movement members. Furthermore, reflecting on the ‘sociality’ of emotions, we will explore how particular ‘affective repertoires’ or ‘framing processes’ can be used strategically by reproductive rights activists for political or policy aims. Finally, adopting an intersectional perspective, we will discuss the politics of emotional labour in broader reproductive activisms, and think critically about the activist body as a site of vulnerability and resistance, at the same time.

Supervision Essay Questions:

1. Expand on the role of emotions and affect in social movements for reproductive rights. You must refer to at least one of the following themes: emotional labour, emotional framing processes, or mobilising affects.

2. In her research on women’s activism in Argentina, Barbara Sutton argues that the gendered body is both ‘vehicle and agent of resistance’ (2007, 129). Referring to at least one case study, describe how bodies are important to political protest.

Core Reading:


Ahmed, Sara (2017) 'Smile!' feministkilljoys @https://feministkilljoys.com/2017/02/02/smile/

Background Reading:


Lecture 11: Men and Masculinities (Dr Robert Pralat, 1 February 2024)

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:

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

Core Reading:

Connell, Raewyn (2005 [1995]) Masculinities, 2nd Edition, University of California (Chapter 3. ‘The social organization of masculinity’)


Background Reading:


Lecture 12 Trans*Feminism (Professor Sarah Franklin, 8 February 2024)

In this lecture, we explore contemporary trans theorizing and consider what trans approaches contribute to feminisms and gender theory. Using trans and trans* as a lens, we look back over the paper as a whole, drawing through some key themes and considering how not only gender but many other social categories can be reinterpreted from a trans perspective. Using the work of key theorists such as Susan Stryker and trans activist writers such as Reina Gossett, Dean Spade and C. Riley Snorton we explore the connections between trans politics and the ongoing legacies of gender, race and colonialism.

Core Readings:


Supervision Questions:
1) Why does Angela Davis argue transfeminism is essential to abolition politics?
2) How is the form of Susan Stryker’s essay important to its content?

Background Reading:

Faye, Shon (2021) The Transgender Issue: An Argument for Justice, Penguin (see also numerous reviews of this recent book online).