Course Description

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; intersectionality; Black and transnational feminism; eugenics and its connections with reproduction and disability, the reproductive justice movement, and the gendered labour process, and gender, race, and reproduction. In the second term the paper includes lectures on sexualities, masculinities, trans and queer theory, new reproductive technologies, feminist activism, decolonial feminism, gender and the environment, gender and institutional violence. 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 key text are required reading which students are expected to prepare in advance.

Timetable of Lecture/Seminars

The course will be taught in 17 two-hour lectures-discussion in the Michaelmas and Lent terms, and the first week of Easter term, followed by a revision session. The lectures are designed to be interactive and require pre- preparation of assigned readings: an hour lecture is followed by questions, discussion and careful examination of assigned texts. There will be a strong emphasis on seminar-style discussion and participation from all students is expected throughout the year. Come to the lectures prepared to engage with the core readings as indicated in this paper guide.
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

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 three 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 constructive feedback at all points during the delivery of teaching to enable the best experience for all involved in the lectures, seminars and supervisions.

Online Teaching and Learning

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

Lecture Outline

Michaelmas Term 2021

Lecture 1. Introduction: What is the Sociology of Gender? (Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago, Oct 7th)
Lecture 2. Black Feminism (Asiya Islam, Oct 14th)
Lecture 3. Intersectionality: Politics and Practice (Asiya Islam, Oct 21st)
Lecture 4. Gender and Labour (Asiya Islam, Oct 28th)
Lecture 5. Eugenics, Reproduction, and Disability (Rachell Sanchez-Rivera, Nov 4th)
Lecture 6. Reproductive Justice Movement (Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago, Nov 11th)
Lecture 7. Transnational Feminism (Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago Nov 18th)
Lecture 8. Gender, Reproduction, and the Nation State (Katie Gaddini, Nov 25th)

Lent Term 2022

Lecture 9. Men and Masculinities (Robert Pralat, Jan 20th)
Lecture 10. Sex and Sexualities (Robert Pralat, Jan 27th)
Lecture 11. Queer and Trans (Marcin Smietana, Feb 3rd)
Lecture 12. Gender and Reproductive Technologies (Marcin Smietana, Feb 10th)
Lecture 13. Emotions, Affect and Reproductive Activism (Aideen O’Shaughnessy, Feb 17th)
Lecture 14. Gender and Place (Shannon Philip, Feb 24th)
Lecture 15. Decolonial Feminisms (Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago, Mar 3rd)
Lecture 16. Gender, Nature and the Environment (Katie Dow, Mar 10th)

Easter Term 2022

Lecture 17th. Gender, Vulnerability and Institutional Violence (Gavin Stevenson, April 28th)

Revision Session. May 5th, Thursday 10-12

General Background Reading

https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/30246/648332.pdf?sequence=1
Lecture 1. Introduction: What is the Sociology of Gender? (7/10)

Dr. Julieta Chaparro-Buitrago

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.

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 (14/10)

*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**


**Lecture 3. Intersectionality: Politics and Practice (21/10)**

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: Gender and Labour (28/10)**

*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**


Lecture 5: Eugenics, Disability and Reproduction (4/11)

Dr. Rachell Sanchez-Rivera

With eugenics being an integral part of the bases for modern genetics there are a few questions left unanswered when it comes to the study of eugenics. This lecture will show how disability studies provide a useful framework for understanding and critique eugenics. After the early 20th century, eugenics played an important role in the construction of ‘feeblemindedness’. In the attempts to secularize mental health hospitals conceptions of heredity, abnormality, deviance, amorality, and criminality were very much present through the figure of the (dis)abled body constructed as a threat for the future of the nation. This lecture will bring together a historical and contemporary approach to disability to explain the legacies of eugenics in relation to disability and the construction of the ‘disabled’ body in relation to gender, class and ‘race’.

Supervision Essay Questions

- Why is eugenics important when discussing the broader histories of reproduction?
- What is the link between eugenics and disability?

Core Readings


Background Reading


**Lecture 6: Reproductive Justice Movement (11/11)**

*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 muti-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, housing, and teen pregnancy.

**Supervision Essay Questions**

- How do queer of color critique and reproductive justice converge in Barcelos’ analysis of teen pregnancy?
- How do black motherhood and the movement for Black Lives Matter overlap?

**Core Readings**


**Background Reading**


**Lecture 7: Transnational Feminisms (18/11)**

*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 and transnational feminist activism.

**Supervision Essay Questions**

- How do race, caste, and religion shape transnational surrogacy in India?
- How do Srila Roy and Amrita Pande understand transnational feminist praxis and activism?

**Core Reading**

https://idiscover.lib.cam.ac.uk/permalink/f/t9gok8/44CAM_ALMA51677956730003606

**Background Reading**


**Lecture 8. Gender, Reproduction, and Nationalism (25/11)**

*Dr. Katie Gaddini*

How is abortion, sex education, and embryo adoption linked to powerful nationalist agendas? How are these issues linked to specific religious agendas? And how do the discourse and policies around these issues recombine and reproduce institutional and structural power, privilege and stratification? The resurgence of neo-patriarchal and anti-Black, Islamophobic nationalisms around the globe is a
distinctive and troubling feature of the current century. In this lecture we examine the resurgence of nationalism, and in particular religious nationalism, focussing on the United States as a case study. We will trace white Christian nationalism in the US from the 1960s, through to Trump's America First agenda, and uncover how white Christian nationalism has race, gender, and reproduction at its core. Introducing different theories of nationalism, and religious nationalism, we will show how they are linked to the formations of race, gender and reproductive politics on a global scale.

Supervision Essay Questions

- What is ‘repronationalism’ and how does it arise through specific policies?
- How are race and gender mobilized in right-wing nationalist agendas? Refer to specific cases in your answer.

Core Reading


Background Reading


**Lent Term 2022**

**Lecture 9: Men and Masculinities (20/1)**

*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**


**Background Reading**


**Lecture 10: Sex and Sexualities (27/1)**

*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?
- What is the relationship between sexuality and privilege?

**Core Reading**


**Background Reading**


**Lecture 11. Queer and Trans (3/2)**

*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’ (Mizielsinska & 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 approaches (Stryker 1994 and 2007; Hines 2017; Halberstam 2018) contribute to feminisms. In particular, following Ruth Pearce and colleagues’ (2020) recent work in the UK (which is our second core reading in the lecture), we consider how solidarities can be built between feminists and trans and nonbinary activists, in the context of the recent backlash against the rights of trans and nonbinary people.

**Supervision Essay Questions**

- How has Jasbir Puar’s (2017) analysis of homonationalism been important to liberation movements?
- In what ways is Ruth Pearce’s and colleagues’ (2020) trans-and-nonbinary inclusive conceptualization of sex and gender supported by previous trans and queer scholarship?

**Core Reading**


Background Reading


Lecture 12. Gender and Reproductive Technologies (10/2)

*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; Blell 2018; Riggs et al. 2021; van de Wiel 2020). 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

- What can the use of reproductive technologies tell us about the ways in which gender and biology matter for people’s reproductive projects?
- In what ways does Camisha Russell’s (2018) work on the ‘assisted reproduction of race’ through ‘neoliberal eugenics’ apply in contexts other than the US, e.g. in the UK?

Core Reading


Background Reading


Lecture 13: Emotions, Affect and Reproductive Activism (17/2)

Aideen O’Shaughnessy

New social movement theory conceptualises emotion as an integral element of social life and of political protest. In this lecture, we will take an alternative perspective on the ontology of reproductive politics, exploring how reproductive oppression and inequality operate on the level of the affect(ed) body, and through the production of a specific ‘emotional economy’ of reproduction. For example, we will examine how emotional scripts which situate abortion as a ‘difficult’ or ‘complicated’ subject contribute to stigma and require particular affective labour on the part of the aborting subject. This lecture will also examine the role of emotion in social movements resisting reproductive violence. Taking AIDS activism as a case study, we will discuss how particular ‘affective states’, like grief or anger, might motivate or mobilise movement members. We will consider the importance of emotion in fostering collective group identity or ‘libidinal ties’ in activist groups, paying particular attention to the role of protest objects, such as those used by anti-femicide campaigners in Mexico, for processes of ‘affective contagion’. Finally, we will explore how ‘affective repertoires’ or ‘framing processes’ can be used strategically by activist or advocacy groups for political or policy aims.
Supervision Essay Questions

- Expand on the role of affect and emotions in reproductive activism. Illustrate your answer with reference to specific case studies.
- Adopting an intersectional perspective, explain how ‘symbols’ and ‘objects’ may contribute to political protests for reproductive justice?

Core Reading


Background Reading


Lecture 14: Gender and Place (24/2)

Dr. Shannon Philip
In this lecture we will explore the complex and critical relationship between gender and space. Building on the scholarship of urban sociologists and feminist human geographers we will unpack the relationship between masculinities, femininities and various social spaces and places. Through contemporary examples the lecture will empirically demonstrate how spaces become gendered and the various impact the gendering of spaces has on bodies and sexualities within those spaces. In this way we will explore the co-production of both gender and space processually and materially to study how gender, class, race, sexuality and space operate together to produce gendered spaces as well as subjectivities.

**Supervision Essay Question**

- Discuss with examples how masculinities and femininities map onto public and private spaces.
- What is the relationship between sexualities, gender and spaces?

**Core Reading**

Massey, Doreen. (2013). *Space, Place and Gender*. Polity Press (Part 3, Chapters 8, 9 10 and 11)

**Background Reading**


**Lecture 15: Decolonial Feminisms (3/3)**

*Dr. Julieta Chaparro-Buttrago*
This lecture provides an overview of the development of decolonial feminisms, looking in particular at the work of María Lugones, Rita Segato, and Françoise Vèrges. These authors investigate how gender is implicated in producing this form of power that hierarchically organizes humanity based on a biologized concept of race and its imbrication with capitalism and modernity. We will begin with an exploration of the foundational debates in decolentional theory and the development of a feminist critique. Then, we will contrast these authors’ 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. Vèrges introduces a decolonial critique of what she calls “civilizational feminism” and racial-gendered capitalism.

**Supervision Essay Question**

- How do decolonial feminist scholars understand the relationship between race, gender, and capitalism?
- Why is a critique of “civilizational feminism” important in Françoise Vergès’ conceptualization of decolonial feminisms?

**Core Readings:**


**Background Reading**


* *Lugones, Maria. (2007). “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender system”* Hypatia, Vol 22(1), 186-209


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

- Do you agree with Donna Haraway’s call to ‘make kin, not babies’ in order to achieve ‘multispecies ecojustice’?
- Is it possible to have a feminist conceptualisation of the Anthropocene?

Core Reading


Background Reading


Ojeda, Diana, Jade S. Sasser & Elizabeth Lunstrum. (2019). ‘Malthus’s spectre and the anthropocene,’ Gender, Place & Culture, DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2018.1553858

Easter Term 2022

Lecture 17. 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.

Supervision 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](https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2018.1501006)


**Revision Session, May 5th, Thursday 10-12**