Gender in our Communities and Cultures

This is an introductory course to critical gender studies. There are several key components to this class:

- Both theory and real experiences are central to this class. This class features a constant dialogue between theory and the real world. We will be using culture to understand theory and theory to understand culture.
- This class aims to embody the feminist notion that the personal is political. Hence, there is space to explore real and personal experiences as they relate to our discussions and readings.
- This class is exploratory and must be approached creatively and with an open mind. We will all aim to creatively create links between readings, between cultural artifacts, between readings and cultural artifacts, between this class and lived experiences, and between our and others’ experiences.

Our Roles

Me:
To provide you with course materials
To facilitate and moderate class discussions
To thoughtfully address your concerns and questions
To review and provide useful and timely feedback to your work
To support and work with you throughout the semester on your progress
To make sure you leave the classroom at the end of the semester new ways of thinking about our world

You:
To read for comprehension, not just completion
To participate in class; both actively engage others and actively listen
To approach me or your classmates with questions and concerns
To argue with ideas, not people
To be supportive of your peers

Assignments

Cultural Artifacts:
Every Wednesday, several of you will be asked to bring in a cultural artifact that you have found connects to either the readings assigned for the week or to something that we’ve previously read. By “cultural artifact,” I mean a form of media that you can show the class (for instance, as a song, a video clip, an art piece, a news article, an article of clothing, etc.). In about 5 minutes, you must present your artifact to the class, thoroughly justify and explain how it relates to what we’re studying in our class, and what it means to you or society at large. Your short presentation will then be open to questions. A very wide variety of artifacts will be accepted, as long as they are properly explained and justified in relation to the class. Feel free to ask if you’re not sure if or how your artifact will work for this assignment. As an example, I will present The Lost Bois’ “Reading Rainbow” as my cultural artifact on the first week of
class.

Responses:
Every other week, you will be required to write a short 300-word response to any previous cultural artifact presentation. In your response, relate the cultural artifact to class readings in way that we haven’t already done. If at all possible, relate the cultural artifact to your life and experiences. Does it mean anything to you? Do you see anything interesting in the artifact? On the first week of classes, we will determine who will be writing responses on which weeks.

Final Project:
For your final project, you will choose one of two options. [Anyone who wishes to present their final project with the class will have of opportunity to do so at our end-of-the-semester party. This is not mandatory but highly encouraged!]

Creation: Create your own cultural artifact (song, art piece, video, poem, article of clothing, etc.). You will then write a short 3 – 4 page paper explaining how the cultural artifact relates to what we’ve learned in this class. What does it say about the theories we’ve learned, our world and (y)our experiences? Basically, the paper will be a more formal and comprehensive version of the cultural artifact presentations you will be giving and seeing all semester.

Paper: Submit a 1-page informal proposal for a topic you’d like to explore that relates to the class. You and I will work with your proposal to create a prompt for a 4 – 6 page paper you will write.

Assessment
There will not be any formal grades, but all assignments will receive detailed feedback. We will together monitor and discuss your progress over the semester. As long as conscious effort and improvement are demonstrated over the course of the semester, you will be fine. If not, we will work together to make sure you demonstrate your efforts and improvements.

Reading List

Week 1: Importance of Theory & Reading
Maria Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman, “Have we got a theory for you!”
bell hooks, “Theory as Liberatory Practice”
The Lost Bois, “Reading Rainbow” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1zqzGuDgL]

Week 2: Social Systems
Allan Johnson, ”Patriarchy, the System; An It, Not a He, Them, or an Us”
Michael Kimmel, “Masculinity as Homophobia”
Week 3: Social Constructionism
Judith Lorber, “Night to His day: The Social Construction of Gender”
Suzanne Kessler, “The Medical Construction of Gender”
   Harvard Sailing Team:
   Boys Will Be Girls - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gspaoaecNAg

Week 4: Gendering Childhood
DuCille, “Black Barbie and the Deep Play of Difference”
Michael Kimmel, “What are Little Boys Made of?”
   A Girl Like Me, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWyI77Yh1Gg

Week 5: Performance, Policing and Play
Candace West & Don Zimmerman, “Doing Gender”
Richard Majors, “Cool Pose and Masculinity”
   Diamond Rings, “All Yr Songs”: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6IUKa25e80
   Guest Artist: Catherine Opie

Week 6: Intersectionality: Race
Norma Alarcon, “The Theoretical Subjects of This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminism”
   Staceyann Chin: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ofsVwH4O_k

Week 7: Intersectionality: Race
JeeYeun Lee, “Beyond Bean Counting” in Colonize This
   Guest Speaker: Vickie Nam
   The Lost Bois, “The Race” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SruDVI60aVk&feature=related

Week 8: Intersectionality: Class
Johnnie Tillmon, “Welfare as a Women’s Issue”
Gwendolyn Mink, “The Lady and the Tramp”
   Guest Scholar: Jennifer Streeter

Week 9: Intersectionality: Sex
Anne Fausto-Sterling, “The Five-Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough”
   Hanna Rosin, “A Boy’s Life,” The Atlantic, November 2008,

Week 10: Intersectionality: Sexuality
John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity”
   "Hir” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmfkdOAg-xk&feature=related

Week 11: Intersectionality: Sexuality
Leila Rupp, “Loving Women in the Modern World”
   Guest Scholar: Judith Halberstam
   Tribe 8, “Estrofemme”
MEN, Credit Card Babie$

Week 12: **Femininity and Power**
Sharpley-Whiting, “Beauty Culture and Diasporic Sex Tourism”
Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power”
Julie Ruin, “V.G.I.”

Week 13: **The Body and Survival**
Vivyan Adair, “Inscriptions of Poverty on the Female Body”
Silvana Naguib, “Understanding Sexual Harassment: A Primer for Dudes”
"Amber Alert" - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14r2hFC3J5M&NR=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14r2hFC3J5M&NR=1)
Julie Ruin, “I Wanna Know What <3 Is”

Week 14: **Safe Spaces and Communities**
Kath Weston, “Gay Families as the ‘Families We Choose”
MEN, “My Family” (Joan Armatrading cover)
Field Trip to SMYRC or other local youth community center

Week 15: **Voices**
Bikini Kill, “Riot Grrrl Philosophy”
Baumgardner & Richards, “Third Wave Manifesta”
Yellow Rage: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y22ty-VPpbA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y22ty-VPpbA)
Bikini Kill, “Rebel Girl” & “Starfish”
Kathleen Hanna, “Stepping up the Mic”