

AXL4106F: Introduction to Gender and Transformation

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Introduction

This core course establishes a foundation for the critical examination of gender at postgraduate level. It explores various theoretical frameworks and activist endeavours which have shaped intellectual analyses of gender. While the primary focus is on work emerging from African contexts, the course will also explore ideas emanating from the 'West/North'. It therefore encourages students to critically reflect on how gendered analyses are shaped by various socio-historical, political and other factors.

The course is divided into two main focus areas:

- (i) Theorising Gender – in this section we critically examine gender as a social construct and explore some seminal ideas around the construction of femininities and masculinities. A key focus in this section will be on the construction of identities.
- (ii) South/North Feminisms – in this section we explore a few of the key intellectual and activist endeavours which have shaped feminisms in the Southern and Northern hemispheres. We consider what is meant by 'feminisms' in a variety of contexts and investigate the diverse social factors which have shaped these movements. We also explore various feminist theories and consider how these have shaped the production of knowledge.

Course Objectives

The primary objective of this course is to engage students in critical reading and discussion on gender studies in African contexts. It therefore examines some key analyses of gender, sexuality, race and class with the aim of providing a theoretical lens through which students can examine social phenomena. In this way, the course also aims to inform the conceptualisation of the Honours research projects by showing how theoretical frameworks can shape empirical analyses of gender.

Assessment

Course participation: 10%

Course Assignment: 20%

Group presentations: 25% (2 x 12.5%)

Examination: 45%

Course Participation

Weekly seminars are compulsory and students are required to prepare the assigned readings and to actively participate in class discussions. The readings and discussions are aimed at enhancing students' theoretical knowledge. Students are therefore expected to critically reflect on how theories act as explanatory frameworks for the ways in which people make gendered sense of the world. Students will be graded according to the level of contribution to class discussions.

*** It is suggested that students consult scholarly journals such as *Gender and Society*; *Men and Masculinities*; *Feminism and Psychology*; *Women's Studies International Forum*, which publish cutting-edge empirical work in Gender and Women's studies.

Group presentations

Each student is required to participate in TWO group presentations focusing on particular aspects of the course. Grades will be awarded on the depth of presentations, clarity of arguments and presentation styles. The level of participation of group members will also contribute to the group mark. The topics for these presentations will be provided at the start of the course.

Examination

An examination constituting 45 % of the course mark will be written at the end of the semester.

SEMINAR OUTLINE

12 February: Introduction to the course

Section One: Theorising gender: femininities, masculinities and sexualities

19 February: The production of gender

In this seminar we will explore some of the foundational debates in the theorisation of gender. We analyse theoretical ideas about how gender is produced, reproduced and 'undone' within various contexts.

26 February: Constructions of Femininity

In this seminar we explore some of the ways in which beauty and sexualities are constructed. We consider how various technologies and institutions shape, reshape, reproduce and challenge the construction of femininities.

5 March: Constructions of 'violent femininities'

In this seminar we examine the construction of femininities by exploring some work focused on 'violent girls/women'. Since violence and femininity have traditionally been considered to be antithetical, we consider the subjectivities posited by 'violent girls/women'.

12 March: Constructions of Masculinity

In this seminar we explore some salient theoretical ideas on the construction of masculinities. We discuss how these ideas are useful for understanding masculinities in various socio-historical and geographical contexts.

19 March: Southern African Masculinities

In this seminar we place particular emphasis on an analysis of Southern African masculinities and examine some pertinent empirical work in this area.

2 April: Group presentations

In this seminar, students will be expected to give group presentations of 20 minutes each. Groups will present their arguments, offer rebuttals and engage in debates around the particular issues at hand.

SECTION TWO: South/North Feminisms

9/16 April: Northern feminisms

In the next two seminars we view Western feminisms through various lenses and consider the forms, content and activism of these movements.

23/30 April: Southern feminisms

In the final two seminars we explore African feminisms by analysing what is meant by the term. We explore the feminist goals, achievements and challenges of these movements.

7 May: Group Presentations

In this seminar, students will be expected to give group presentations of 20 minutes. Groups will present their arguments, offer rebuttals and engage in debates around the particular issues at hand.

14 May: Course summary, feedback, evaluation

