University of Vermont

Honors College

HCOL 086A

Gender and the Space of Knowing

Professor Lisa Schnell

Spring 2018

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| Class meetings: M/W/F 9:40-10:30 | Professor Lisa Schnell |
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| Plenary lectures: Wednesdays 5:05-6:35, Billings Lecture Hall | Office hours: Sign-ups weekly on Blackboard |
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In the Fall semester of the FY Honors College seminar, you examined three philosophical positions— rationalism, empiricism, and a kind of humanistic thinking that I would refer to as narrativism—that gave you three different perspectives on how and what we know. In the reading and discussions that accompanied and followed your exploration of those philosophical texts, you might have examined the ways in which subjectivity and identity—people and the stories with which they define themselves--can play a role in the construction of knowledge. Or you may not have thought about it much at all. In this class we will think about that every day; specifically, we will think about how the sexual ways in which we perceive our bodies and the bodies of others affects both knowledge-making and knowledge-seeking.

The course is titled “Gender and the Space of Knowing,” which might lead you to believe that it’s a geography class, geographers being the folks who study physical space after all. But although we will indeed spend quite a bit of time investigating gender and physical space, and even read things written by geographers, as a literature professor I find myself thinking all the time about the *spaces of possibility* opened up by imaginative acts, and that’s mainly what we’ll be exploring in this course. We’ll also investigate the space of language, the space of our body, the spaces between people, the historical and cultural space that separates us (or not) from texts like the Bible and *Paradise Lost,* as well as the actual physical and virtual spaces of our lives.

This course is meant to build on the work you did last semester, and one of the many ways it does that is by keeping the focus on your writing. This semester we will be working on a variety of writing assignments, both informal (in the form of a Homework Journal) and formal. There will also be significant group work in the class, as well as much more attention to research and presentation skills, skills you’ll need for the increasingly independent research you’ll be doing as an Honors College student in the semesters ahead.

Required Texts

John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Hackett)

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (Houghton Mifflin)

Janet Mock, *Redefining Realness* (Atria Books)

Readings that will be available on Blackboard.

Assignments and Grades

Unit Assignments – 20%

Gendered Space Assignments (GSA) – 20% (details TBA)

Poster/presentation – 10% (culmination of the GSA; shared group grade for the final product)

Final exam/paper – 20%

Homework - 15%

Participation - 15%

Includes participation in the group project, attendance in class, participation in class, and contributions to our Gender in the News Blog.

Course Objectives

You should finish this course having

* gained a deep understanding of the ways in which gender constitutes a set of cultural assumptions that we experience as “knowledge” in our lived experience, along with a working knowledge of general concepts that describe the intersections of gender with race, ethnicity, and class
* considered the way in which gender operates in the space of language, and in particular, literary language
* investigated the ways in which the design and use of our built and/or virtual environments are determined in part by assumptions about gender roles and relations
* continued to develop your writing skills, and in particular, learned to consider your *rhetorical position* in your written assignments (Who’s your audience? How do you write with purpose for that specific audience?)
* been introduced to forms of experiential learning that allow you to integrate and synthesize off-the-page learning with more conventional text-based learning
* gained exposure to college-level research methods of various types
* practiced collaborative learning in group work
* gained skills in public speaking
* helped to create an enriching intellectual community
* cultivated a set of academic “habits” crucial to success as a student and career professional, including *active reading*, *writing as a learning process*, *engaged class participation*, *responsible participation as an active and contributing member of a work group*

Classroom Rules and Expectations

* No screens in class unless I expressly ask you to bring one. This includes phones. If I catch you texting in class, there will be hell to pay. Believe me.
* Attendance is mandatory: you must come to every class and every scheduled plenary.  Any unexcused absence will affect your participation grade.  Habitual tardiness will also affect your participation grade.  Class starts at 9:40 on the dot; everyone should be in their seats with their books open at 9:39.
* Listen carefully and respectfully to others; contribute to class discussion regularly (but be careful not to dominate the air space); learn everyone's name and use those names in class.
* Always come prepared for class—that means not only that you’ve done your reading, but that you’ve also had plenty of sleep the night before and ideally woken up in time to *change out of your pajamas* and get some breakfast (even if you need to bring that breakfast to class).

These, of course, are ground rules. Ground rules contribute to what I like to refer to as a “class culture.” And at base, class culture is about participation, *everyone’s* participation. Which is why participation is also crucial to your grade: 15% of your final grade will be made up of Class Participation—the difference between an A- and a C, for instance. The Nash piece does an excellent job of describing productive participation.

**Note**: I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus if the course calls for them. Please know that the changes will always be made in a timely fashion and announced immediately on Blackboard.

And a note about Blackboard: Three years ago, my students dubbed me the Queen of Blackboard, a title I have tried to live up to ever since. Every assignment will be posted to Blackboard; almost every assignment will be handed in on Blackboard. All course announcements will be made on Blackboard and rarely in class. **Please make a habit of checking the Blackboard site for this course frequently.**

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|  |  | Topic | Reading | Plenary | Formal Assignments  (Note that these are separate from the course’s homework, which will be assigned regularly on Blackboard) |
| 1 | Jan  15 | **MLK Day**  **No Class** | **No class** |  |  |
|  | Jan 17 | **Setting the terms of the conversation** | Robert Nash, “Fostering Moral Conversations” (on Bb under Required Reading)  Intro to *Gendered Worlds* (on Bb under Required Reading) | **Plenary Jan.17:**  Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst, “Religion, Rebels, and Jihad: Or, How Muslims were Racialized in India”  5:05 - Billings Lecture Hall  Attendance mandatory |  |
|  | Jan 19 | **No class** | Interview with Sally Haslanger (on Bb under Required Reading)  Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?” (on Bb under Required Reading)  **A homework assignment based on these readings will be due by midnight Friday. Details on Bb under Homework Assignments.** |  |  |
| 2 | **Jan 22** |  | Meghan Cope, “Feminist Epistemology in Geography” (on Bb)  Discussion of last week’s reading |  |  |
|  | Jan 24 |  | Discussion of last week’s reading (cont’d) | **No plenary** |  |
|  | Jan 26 |  | Domosh and Seager, from “Putting Women in Place” (on Bb)  Discussion of Gendered Space Assignment (GSA) |  |  |
| 3 | Jan 29 | **Male and Female Created He Them**  **‘** | Genesis, Chaps. 1-3: Adam and Eve (on Bb under Required Reading) |  |  |
|  | Jan 31 |  | Genesis 2-3 | **No plenary** | **Unit Assignment #1**  Due Wednesday, Jan 31 by 11:59 PM on Bb  Note: I will be adding the due dates for the rest of the assignments over the next week or so, and will update the syllabus when I do. For now, just put this one in your planners. |
|  | Feb 2 | **No class** | Alas, my obligations as Dean prevent me from being in class once again. Instead of meeting this morning, I’ll ask you to conduct a discussion on Blackboard in response to a set of prompts I’ll provide. The discussion can begin today at 8AM, and will close twelve hours later at 8PM. Everyone must have contributed at least twice to the discussion—ideally with an entry of their own as well as a response to one or more of your peers’ entries. |  |  |
| 4 | Feb 5 |  | Genesis 2-3 |  |  |
|  | Feb 7 |  | Genesis 38 | **Plenary Feb 7:**  Alison Bechdel, “Dykes, Dads, and Moms to Watch Out For”  5:05  Billings Lecture Hall  Attendance mandatory |  |
|  | Feb 9 |  | Deborah Rooke, “Feminist Criticism of the Old Testament: Why Bother?” (on Bb) |  |  |
| 5 | Feb  12 |  | Group contract and discussion– GSA assignment |  |  |
|  | Feb 14 | **Genesis 2-3 revisited:**  **Opening up the space of interpretation** | John Milton, *Paradise Lost*  - Introduction | **No plenary** |  |
|  | Feb 16 |  | *Paradise Lost*  Book IV – Eve’s version |  |  |
| 6 | **Feb 19** | **President’s Day** | **No classes** |  |  |
|  | Feb 21 |  | *Paradise Lost*  Book IV (cont’d) | **No plenary** |  |
|  | Feb 23 |  | *Paradise Lost*  Book VII – Raphael’s version |  |  |
| 7 | Feb 26 |  | *Paradise Lost*  Book VIII – Adam’s version |  |  |
|  | Feb 28 |  | *Paradise Lost*  Book VIII (cont’d) | **Plenary Feb. 28**: Pablo Bose, “Welcome and Hope/Fear and Loathing: The Politics of Refugee Resettlement in the Current Climate”  5:05  Billings Lecture Hall  Attendance mandatory |  |
|  | Mar 2 |  | *Paradise Lost*  Book IX – What happens? |  |  |
| 8 | Mar 5 |  | *Paradise Lost*  Book IX (cont’d) |  |  |
|  | Mar 7 |  | *Paradise Lost*  Book X – And then what happens? | **No plenary** |  |
|  | Mar 9 |  | GSA workshop |  |  |
|  | **Mar 12-16** | **Spring Break** | **No classes** |  |  |
| 9 | Mar 19 | **Disrupting the binary** | Judith Butler, “Imitation and Gender Subordination” (on Bb) |  |  |
|  | Mar 21 |  | “Imitation and Gender Subordination” (cont’d) | **Plenary, Mar 21**  Poster Plenary (information plenary on the poster project)  5:05  Billings Lecture Hall  Attendance mandatory |  |
|  | Mar 23 |  | GSA Workshop |  |  |
| 10 | Mar 26 | **Gender Comes Home** | Alison Bechtel, *Fun Home* |  |  |
|  | Mar 28 |  | *Fun Home* | **No plenary** |  |
|  | Mar 30 |  | *Fun Home* |  |  |
| 11 | Apr 2 |  | *Fun Home* |  |  |
|  | Apr 4 |  | *Fun Home* | **No plenary** |  |
|  | Apr 6 |  | *Fun Home* |  |  |
| 12 | Apr 9 |  | Presentation workshop – Groups 1 and 2 |  |  |
|  | Apr 11 | **Crossing Over Part I** | *Paris is Burning* | **April 11**: Poster presentation #1  UHN, Multi-purpose Room  5:05 |  |
|  | Apr 13 |  | *Paris is Burning* |  |  |
| 13 | Apr 16 |  | Presentation workshop – Groups 3 &4 |  |  |
|  | Apr 18 | **Crossing Over Part II** | Janet Mock, *Redefining Realness* | **April 18**:  Poster presentation #2  UHN Multipurpose Room  5:05 |  |
|  | Apr 20 |  | *Redefining Realness* |  |  |
| 14 | Apr 23 |  | *Redefining Realness* |  |  |
|  | Apr 25 |  | *Redefining Realness* | **April 25**:  First-Year Research Symposium    UVM Alumni House  61 Summit Street |  |
|  | Apr 27 |  | *Redefining Realness* |  |  |
| 15 | Apr 30 | **Google It** | Google memo (on Bb) |  |  |
|  | May 2 |  | Google memo (cont’d)  Evaluations |  |  |
|  | May 4 |  | “Last Class” |  |  |
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