

University of Vermont  
Honors College

HCOL 086A  
Gender and Ways of Knowing  
Professor Lisa Schnell  
Spring 2019

Class meetings: M/W; 3:30-4:45	Professor Lisa Schnell
Plenary lectures: Wednesdays 5:05-6:35, Billings Lecture Hall (after Spring Break only!)	Office hours: 439 Old Mill Sign-ups weekly on Blackboard
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In the Fall semester of the FY Honors College seminar, we examined three philosophical positions— rationalism, empiricism, and a kind of humanistic thinking that I would refer to as narrativism—that gave us three different perspectives on how and what we know. In the reading and discussions that accompanied and followed our exploration of those philosophical texts, you probably examined the way those different ways of knowing spoke to each other and often *with* each other in the interdisciplinary space between texts. And 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 that intersectional 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.

This course used to be titled “Gender and the *Space* of Knowing,” but I changed it, as too many people assumed it was going to be a geography class. Still, I want to invoke space here as something that we will indeed be thinking about, for as a literature professor I find myself thinking all the time about the *spaces of possibility* opened up by imaginative acts. This course will allow us to investigate the space of language, the space of our bodies, 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, to be sure, the actual physical and virtual spaces of our lives.

This course is designed 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* (Penguin Classics; ISBN-13: 978-0140424393 )

**NOTE: It is *really* important that you use this exact edition of the poem. Other editions might be slightly less expensive, but they do not contain line numbers or even the correct 1667 12-book edition of the poem.)**

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (Houghton Mifflin)

Janet Mock, *Redefining Realness* (Atria Books)

Additional readings will be available in a course packet.

### Assignments and Grades

Paper #1 - due Monday, January 28 by midnight - 10%

Paper #2 - due Friday, March 8 by midnight - 10%

Paper #3 - due Friday, April 26 by midnight - 10%

Poster Project - 25%

15% individual contribution, which includes the Proposal and the Short First Draft of your Term Project; 10% group grade

Final Term Project - due Monday, May 6 by midnight - 20%

Homework - 10%

There will be homework at least once a week. You'll find it under "Homework Assignments" on Bb. You'll do a lot of it in your Homework Journal—also found on Bb. After the first three weeks (during which all homework assignments will be required), I will grant you each four "homework passes." You can cash them in by saying "Homework pass #\_\_" in your Homework Journal, so I know you didn't just blow the homework off completely. **There are no homework passes for the reading though—you must *always* have all the assigned reading done for class.**

Participation - 15%

Participation **in class** is worth 10% of your grade. The other 5% comes from your attendance and short write-up from at least three on-campus talks that have to do with gender and sexuality. You will get 1% for going to one talk (and writing it up), 2% for going to two talks, and the full 5% if you go to three (and write them all up). There will be a space on Bb for you to upload your two-paragraph summaries and reactions (one paragraph summary; one paragraph your thoughtful reaction).

### 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?)
- 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 3:30 on the dot; everyone should be in their seats with their books open at 3:29.**

- 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 are not distracted by hunger. Bring a snack to class if you'd like.

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 (but announcements will also disappear from the feed when appropriate). **Please make a habit of checking the Blackboard site for this course frequently, as in, every day.**

		Topic	Reading	Plenary	Formal Assignments
					<p>Note that these are separate from the course's homework, which will be assigned regularly on Blackboard.</p> <p>Everything that will be graded in this course (other than homework and participation) is noted with aqua highlighting.</p>
1	Jan 14	Setting the terms of the conversation	<p>Robert Nash, "Fostering Moral Conversations" (print from Bb; bring to class)</p> <p>Intro to <i>Gendered Worlds</i> (print from Bb; bring to class)</p> <p>Meghan Cope, "Feminist Epistemology in Geography" (print from Bb; bring to class)</p>		

	Jan 16		Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?" (print from Bb; bring to class)	No plenary	
2	Jan 21	MLK Day	No classes		
	Jan 23		Haslanger, cont'd. Virginia Valian, from <i>Why So Slow?</i> (print from Bb; bring to class)	No plenary	
3	Jan 28	Male and Female Created He Them	Introduction of Poster and Term Project Genesis, Chaps. 1-3: Adam and Eve (print from Bb; bring to class)		Paper #1 due by midnight
	Jan 30		Genesis 2-3	No plenary	
4	Feb 4		Genesis 38 (in packet)		
	Feb 6		Lisa is away, so instead of an in-person class, there will be an <b>online Blackboard discussion that is held--and completed--during class time.</b> Participation is mandatory.	No plenary	
5	Feb 11		Deborah Rooke, "Feminist Criticism of the Old Testament: Why Bother?" (print from Bb; bring to class)		Monday: Proposal for Term Project due by midnight.
	Feb 13	Genesis 2-3 revisited: Opening up the space of interpretation	John Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> - Introduction	No plenary	
6	Feb 17	President's Day	No classes		
	Feb 19		<i>Paradise Lost</i> Book IV - Eve's version	No plenary	
7	Feb 25		<i>Paradise Lost</i> Book VII - Raphael's version		
	Feb 27		<i>Paradise Lost</i> Book VIII - Adam's version	No plenary	Wednesday: Short Draft of Term Project due by midnight.
8	Mar 4		<i>Paradise Lost</i> Book IX - What happens?		

			Read ll 1-495		
	Mar 6		<i>Paradise Lost</i> Book X - And then what happens?	No plenary	
	Mar 8				Friday: Paper #2 due by midnight
	Mar 11-15	Spring Break	No classes		
9	Mar 18	Disrupting the binary	Poster Project Workshop		
	Mar 20		Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Subordination" (print from Bb; bring to class)	Plenary, Mar 20 5:05 Poster Plenary (information plenary on the poster project) Billings Lecture Hall Attendance mandatory	
10	Mar 25	Gender Comes Home	Alison Bechtel, <i>Fun Home</i>		
	Mar 27		<i>Fun Home</i>	Plenary, Mar 27 5:05 Actors of the London Stage Music Recital Hall Attendance mandatory	
	Mar 29				Friday: Poster Draft due by midnight
11	Apr 1		<i>Fun Home</i>		
	Apr 3		<i>Fun Home</i>	Plenary, April 3 5:05 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst Billings Lecture Hall Attendance mandatory	
	Apr 7				Sunday, April 7 Final posters due by midnight
12	Apr 8		Presentation workshop - Groups 1 and 2  <i>Paris is Burning</i> (last 20 minutes of class)		
	Apr 10	Crossing Over Part I	<i>Paris is Burning</i>	April 10: Poster presentation #1  UHN, Multi-purpose Room	

				5:05	
13	Apr 15		Presentation workshop - Groups 3 &4  Project Implicit - in class exercise; please bring your computers to class		
	Apr 17	Crossing Over Part II	Janet Mock, <i>Redefining Realness</i> (you need to have read the entire book by this day)	April 17: Poster presentation #2  UHN Multipurpose Room 5:05	
14	Apr 22		<i>Redefining Realness</i>		
	Apr 24		<i>Redefining Realness</i>  Robin Dembroff, "Why be nonbinary?" (print from Bb; bring to class)	April 24: First-Year Research Symposium  UVM Alumni House 61 Summit Street	
	Apr 26				Friday, April 26 Paper #3 due by midnight
15	Apr 29	I woke up like this	Beyoncé and bell hooks		
	May 1		"Last Class" Evaluations		
	May 6	Final Draft of Term Project due by midnight			