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ENG 4300-001: Senior Seminar: Language and Gender

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ENGLISH 4300--Senior Seminar: Language and Gender

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Office Hours: 1000-10:30 MWF and by appointment

Course Objective
In this course, we will investigate how language reflects cultural assumptions about the changing roles of men and women in contemporary society. The following questions will be central to the course:

1) How does language reveal and perpetuate attitudes?
2) What kinds of power are there, and what role does language play in empowerment or marginalization?

Students will be introduced to different types of linguistic analyses of language used by and about women and men. Furthermore, students will be guided through the research process of data collection (recording and transcribing language in use). The course will be in seminar format: aside from some introductory background lectures, the semester will be arranged around student-directed discussions of assigned readings.

Textbook (available at TRS)
--Sara Mills, Feminist Stylistics (this textbook is also on Reserve in the library)
--Booth Library Reserve Room readings (main floor, north entrance); see syllabus for specific required readings.

Course Evaluation
Grade for the course will be based on 1 exam, 3 paper projects (analytical exercises), and a few quizzes (sometimes unannounced). You will also be required to informally present readings to the class since this is a seminar. You will not be graded on these presentations, but failure to come to class prepared adequately will result in a lowering of the final grade. Your final grade will consist of the following weighted components:

Exam 1--20%
Paper Project I--20%
Paper Project II--20%
Paper Project III--30%
Quizzes--10%

Grading scale in this class is always 100-90% = A; 89-80% = B; 79-70% = C; 69-60% = D; below 60% = F.

Paper Projects
You will be given a detailed description of the requirements and expectations of these projects at the
Please always feel welcome to ask questions early on in the assignment so that the objectives are very clear to you.

**Presentations of Readings**
Since this is a seminar, students will carry the discussion of the readings. We will all take turns presenting to the class 1) a detailed outlined summary of the main points and arguments of the reading; 2) a personal response, comment, critique of the reading; 3) a list of important terms and their definitions that come out of the reading; 4) possible exam questions that pull together the importance of the reading in relation to other articles we have read in the class. You should come to class with detailed notes that you have taken from the reading. Coming to class unprepared and with no notes will result in a lowering of your final grade. Since this is a seminar, you will also be doing informal sharing of your paper project results with the rest of the class.

**Attendance**
I will expect you to attend every class because teaching/learning requires dialogue and without you we can have no dialogue. Please note that with more than five unexcused absences a student fails the course. According to university policy, an excused absence is due to a university obligation, medical reason, or emergency. If you must miss class, please leave a message on my voice mail (581-5012) before or on the day of your absence in order for your absence to be counted as an excused absence. I will assume that you are finding out from someone in the class what you've missed so that you'll be prepared for the next class meeting (note that handouts will only be distributed once; it is your responsibility to photocopy handouts from another student if you are absent). Also, please be respectful of other class members by coming to class on time.

Only students with an excused absence on the day of any scheduled exam may take an alternative exam within the week of the scheduled exam. No late papers will be accepted.

**Students with Disabilities**
If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

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The cover of this 1920 Life said simply, "Congratulations."
**This schedule should be used as a guideline, but we are likely to make changes as we go along depending on the needs of the class. RB means a book on Reserve. RF means a folder on Reserve. Asterisks mean you will receive the article as a handout in class.

Course Readings for English 4300
Language and Gender--Senior Seminar

UNIT I: INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE AND GENDER

Week One
Introduction to the course. Introduction to feminism.
--Film: One Woman, One Vote
Also on Reserve for general reference:
Chafetz and Sworkin, Female Revolt: Women's Movements in World and Historical Perspectives. 1986.

Week Two
Introduction to Language and Gender: Why is Language a Feminist Issue?
--Sara Mills, Feminist Stylistics (introduction, pp. 1-21).

Overview of Linguistic Determinism and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis
--Mills, Chapter 4, pp. 83-87
--Ronald Langacker, "Language and Thought." In Laird and Gorrell, eds. Reading about Language. RF
--Benjamin Whorf, "English and Nootka." In Laird and Gorrell, eds. Reading about Language. RF

Sept 1 Holiday--Labor Day

Week Three
Representation of Men and Women in the Lexicon
--Generic Pronouns, Mills, pp. 87-88
--Generic Nouns, Mills, pp. 89-93
--Women as Marked Term, Mills, pp. 93-95
--Effects of Sexist Language, Mills, p. 95

Psychological Reality of Language Bias
--Gender Free Writing Guidelines, Mills, pp. 96-102
Week Four
Language and Androcentrism: Lexical Asymmetries and Negative Semantic Space
Mills, pp. 102-127

--Naming--what we call things
--Semantic derogation of women
--Endearments and diminutives
--Euphemism and taboo
--Lexical gaps for female experience
--Dictionaries, gatekeepers, strategies


#1 Exam (Sept 19)

UNIT II: UNCOVERING GENDER BIAS IN LANGUAGE STRUCTURES

Weeks Five, Six, and Seven
Gender Analysis at the Level of the Sentence and at the Level of Discourse
Mills, pp. 128-158
Mills, pp. 158-197

Film: Sexism in Language

Individual Conferences: October 8 & 10

#1 Analytical Exercise (Paper) Due (October 6)

UNIT III: GENDER POSITIONING IN READING AND WRITING

Week Eight
Men's Studies in the 90s
Edley and Wetherell, Men in Perspective. 1995. "Feminism and the Politics of Masculinity" (pp. 169-180 and 195-205) and "Masculinity and Social Relations" (pp. 96-110 and 120-125). RB


Eugene August, "Modern Men' or Men's Studies in the 80s." College English 44.6 (1982): 583-96. RF

Eugene August, "Real Men Don't: Anti-Male Bias in English." Language Awareness. pp. 289-300. RF

Oct 17--Out of Town on University Business. No class.

Week Nine
Film: One Man's Struggle with Gender-Biased Language
Film: Men and Masculinity: Changing Roles, Changing Lives

Week Ten
The Gendered Position in Writing and Reading
Mills, pp. 25-43
Mills, pp. 44-65
Mills, pp. 66-79

Film: A Doll's House

#2 Analytical Exercise (Paper) Due (Nov 3)

UNIT IV: ANALYZING GENDERED CONVERSATION

Weeks Eleven, Twelve
Conversations and Speech: The Deficit Model
Pamela Cooper, "Communication and Gender in the Classroom." In Women and Men Communicating, eds. Aaliss and Borisoff. Fort Wort, Texas: Harcourt Brace, 1993. 122-141. RF

Nov 7 & 10--Out of Town on University Business. No class.

Week Thirteen
Conversations and Speech: The Cultural Difference Model

Film: Men and Women Talking Together (Tannen and Bly)

Week Fourteen--Thanksgiving Break

Week Fifteen
Critiques of Models

Week Fifteen
Workshop--Analyzing Conversational Data

Week Sixteen
Workshop--Presentation of Conversations and Analysis to the Class

#3 Final Paper Project Due--Conversational Analysis (Dec 15)