ENG 4300-4390-003-097: Senior Seminar: Language and Gender

Buck
Eastern Illinois University

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ENGLISH 4300--Senior Seminar: Language and Gender

Dr. Buck, Professor
Office: Coleman Hall Room 3040
Telephone: Office: 581-5012 (please leave a message if I'm not there)
Mailbox: English Dept Office, Room 3155 Coleman
Office Hours: 10:00-10:50 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 social attitudes?
2) What kinds of power and dominance can we identify, 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 and textual analysis. 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.

**Textbooks**
--Mills, *Language and Sexism*
--Litosseliti, *Gender and Language: Theory and Practice*
--Reserve Readings in Booth Library (lower level) and a few in the Reference Room stacks

**Course Evaluation**
Grade for the course will be based on 3 papers (scope 5 pages—-you can always write more) and a comprehensive final exam. You will also be required to present readings to the class throughout the semester since this is a seminar. Occasionally, we will do some short in-class writing which may be unannounced. Your final grade will consist of the following weighted components:

- Paper I—20%
- Paper II—20%
- Paper III—25%
- Final Exam 25%
- Presentations, discussion, attendance at every class, in-class writing 10% (holistic final grade—see me at any time in my office if you would like to discuss your on-going performance)

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 beginning of each unit. We will have much class discussion while working on these papers in process to help you with your thinking. Always bring in questions you have. You may not use papers you write in other classes to fulfill the requirements of this course.

**Presentations of Readings**
Since this is a seminar, students will carry the discussion of the readings. You should always read carefully and take notes as you read so that you are prepared for class discussion. (1) Be able to summarize the main points and arguments of the text; 2) be prepared with a personal response, comment, critique of the reading; 3) bring a list of important terms and their definitions that come out of the reading; 4) be ready to discuss the importance of the reading in relation to other texts in your reading history (make connections, in other words, with other classes, books, articles, films, knowledge, you have been exposed to). You should come to class with detailed notes that you have taken from the readings and you should discuss from the notes, not from the article. 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 presenting of your paper project results with the rest of the class.
Active Attendance
You are expected to attend every class as scheduled because teaching/learning requires dialogue and without you we can have no dialogue. Our class work is a crucial part of this course; you will be required, too, to do individual and group work in class. Come to class ready to articulate your knowledge and formulate your questions for the class.
An absence policy is important 1) so that I can be equitable to all members of the class and 2) so that you will be successful in this class. Please note that more than four unexcused absences in this course will result in failure of the course.
Definition of an excused absence:
1. University obligation, in which case you will need to present me in advance with a letter explaining the purpose and date of your upcoming absence.
2. Emergency or medical illness, in which case you will need to call my voice mail at 581-5012 BEFORE class begins on the day of your absence. Notifying me after class begins will not be considered excused.
--If you must miss class, I will expect you to find out from someone in the class what you've missed so that you'll be prepared for the next class meeting. Handouts will only be distributed once; it is your responsibility to photocopy assignments from another student if you are absent.

Tardiness
--Please be on time for class; habitual tardiness is disruptive and disrespectful of other class members. I will be taking roll each morning as soon as class begins. If you come in late, it is your responsibility to notify me after class on the day you are late so that I take your name off the absence sheet. If you fail to notify me immediately after class on the day you are late, you will be recorded as absent.

Late Assignments
All written assignments must be submitted when due; no late assignments will be accepted. Papers are due when class begins on the designated dates. Make-up work of different format will be permitted for excused absences only.

Typing and Presentation
All formal papers must be typed (double-spaced) in MLA format.

Where to Go For Help with this Course
1. Come to see me in my office in 3040 Coleman Hall during my office hours and by appointment.
2. Go to the Writing Center, CH 3110, where graduate students can help you with planning, drafting, revising your papers. Their phone number is 581-5929. No one (tutors/peers/parents) may read, edit, proofread, correct, or rewrite any portion of your papers during the semester; you may read portions of your paper out loud to someone for feedback but you must always keep the paper in your own hands in order to keep control and responsibility over your own work.

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.

Plagiarism
The English Department requires that instructors quote to all students the university's policy on plagiarism:
Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--'The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work' (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)--has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of NC for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.
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. MILLS as author refers to your textbook. LITOSSELITI refers to your textbook. (R) following the source means ON RESERVE IN BOOTH LIBRARY. REFERENCE means item is shelved in the REFERENCE ROOM. (R & E) means that the item is a folder on RESERVE but it can also be accessed electronically. Your password is rb4300. Our section number is 003. I've been told that you can't print electronic sources from the Reference Room.

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

GRAMMAR AND GENDER

Aug 24  Introduction to the course

1 Aug 26  Bonvillain, "Cross-Cultural Studies on Language and Gender" (R), pp. 215-241
P35.B6  1993

2 Aug 28  Kramarae, "Gender: How She Speaks" (R), pp. 84-98
P120.V37  A87  1982

FOLK-LINGUISTIC BELIEFS ABOUT GENDER

3 Aug 31  Sunderland, "Early Work on Gender and Language" (R), pp. 2-9
P120.S48  S863.2006

4 Sept 2   Talbot, "Gender Stereotypes: Reproduction and Challenge" (R), pp. 468-486
REFERENCE ROOM P120.S48 H36 2003

5 Sept 4  Litosseliti, Chapter 5, "Gender and Language in the Media"

Sept 7  Holiday

Sept 9  Gender and Language in the Media, continued

SEMANTICS: THE WAY WORDS MEAN

6 Sept 11  Mills, Feminist Stylistics, "Analysis at the Level of the Word" (R)
--Generic Pronouns, pp. 87-88
--Generic Nouns, pp. 89-93
--Women as Marked Term, pp. 93-95
--Effects of Sexist Language, p. 95
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

7 Sept 14  Bing, "Penguins Can't Fly and Women Don't Count: Language and Thought" (R & E)

8 Sept 16  Martyna, "The Psychology of the Generic Masculine" (R & E)

7 Sept 16  August, "Real Men Don't: Anti-Male Bias in English" (R & E)

Litosseliti, Chapter 1

PRESENT PAPERS/ DISCUSS PAPERS/ REVISE PAPERS

Sept 18  Paper I complete draft due. Read to class
PAPER I OPTIONS (scope 5 pages)

OPTION 1
Cross-Cultural Studies in Language and Gender--further investigations
Consult Gender Across Languages: The Linguistic Representation of Women and Men by Hellinger and Bußmann, on Reserve (multiple volumes). Each chapter focuses on a specific language (i.e., Arabic, French, Spanish, Swahili, Polish, German, Hindi, Chinese, etc.). Select a language you are interested in and read that chapter (you may not do English). Write a summary paper teaching the class what you learned about the representation of gender in that language. Thirty languages are represented in 3 volumes. You will not be able to understand all the linguistic details. Read for general understanding. Select what seems most interesting and clear to you.

OPTION 2
Studying American Proverbs
Read carefully the introduction and conclusion of American Proverbs about Women by Lois Kerschen (pp. 11-17 and pp. 123-128), on Reserve (PN6426.K47 1998). Write a summary paper in which you instruct us on the aim of the book. Then select a few topics with examples that you study and analyze, using theory we discussed in Unit I.

OPTION 3
Analyzing Quotations
Read carefully the introduction (pp. viii-xi) of Like A Fish Needs a Bicycle, edited by Anne Stibbs, on Reserve. Write a summary paper in which you instruct us on the aim of the book. Then select a topic and choose some examples that you study and analyze, using theory we discussed in Unit I.

OPTION 4
Gender and Language in the Media
Choose 5 advertisements from magazines that each illustrate a different point about gender stereotypes and assumptions we learned about in Unit I. You should pick ones that illustrate very subtle attitudes; please do not pick obvious ones. Photocopy them and include them with your paper. Analyze them using theory from Mills (RP), Litoselliti, and Talbot. You must analyze the language and show how image and text work together to generate and sustain bias and stereotypic frames of reference. You may not rely solely on images--text must be central. The point is to analyze the presuppositions they entail that might be missed by a general, uncritically-conscious audience.
PRINT RESERVES ITEM STATUS REPORT

This is a copy of your classes and items currently listed in Print Reserves. For any changes, contact the Reserves Desk, call 581-6092 or email boothrsv@eiu.edu.

Loan Periods: 3Hr (B)-Building Use Only, 3 Hr (O)-Overnight

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| P120.S48 H36 2003 | The Handbook of Language and Gender (Holmes and Meyerhoff) |
| HQ1115.M546 1992 | Woman Words (Jane Mills) |