

LING/WOMS 222: Language & Gender

Winter 2009

Instructor:

Karthik Durvasula
46 E. Delaware Ave. (rm.102)
E-mail: karthikd@udel.edu

Class Schedule / Location:

MTWRF 1:15PM – 2:45PM Gore Hall 304

COURSE GOALS:

There are two main goals of this course. The first goal is to explore various ways in which gender is reflected in language. In doing this, we will look into topics such as: differential usage of language by men and women, sexism in language, differences in the structural aspects of men's and women's language and conversational style. Special emphasis will be placed on the social implications of these differences and their cross-linguistic comparison.

The second goal of this course is to learn how to think intelligently about language from a scientific standpoint. In an effort to achieve this goal, class will essentially be a detailed discussion and critical review of daily readings. You will also be working on a research project throughout the semester.

REQUIRED MATERIAL:

- **Textbook:** *Language and Gender: A Reader* (1998), edited by Jennifer Coates, Blackwell Publishers.
- All other required materials will be a) distributed in class, b) posted on the web, and/or c) placed on reserve in the library.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

You are expected to:

- attend all classes. Attendance will be taken on a regular basis.
- do the required readings and write a short review of each article that includes the article's main claim and the arguments used to support it.
- participate in class discussions
- give a 30-minute oral presentation of an article from the textbook (or an approved article from other sources).
- research a topic (collect data through fieldwork, questionnaires, experimental work, corpus analysis); write a term paper using these data; and do a final presentation of this work. You may work in a group for this, but it is not obligatorily group work.
- **NO EXAMS!**

NOTE: If you are sick or have an emergency and have to miss class, YOU are responsible for finding out what was covered in your absence.

Projects

Final project (your term paper): to be presented during the last two days of class. You are required to hand in a short description of your project (including a workplan) no later than Nov 8th. The final paper will be due Dec 3rd. You may work in groups up to three people or on your own. You can choose any of the following. (Detailed instructions will be provided on how to carry out the research part of each project and what your report should contain. You can also come up with your own topic, but you need the instructor's permission to do so.)

- Poll a number of people (family, friends) of both sexes: how do they believe men's and women's language are different?
- Stereotypes: soap operas/situation comedies/TV dramas (experiment).
- Male/female depictions of: people of either sex; people of indeterminate sex; activities, etc. (experiment).
- Male/female evaluations of: women and men who use the same linguistic forms.
- Greeting cards: roles, activities, behaviors of men versus women.
- Children's books: gender differences in emotional language, use of adjectives, taking initiatives, giving advice, etc. in books targeted at different age groups, also in books from different decades (e.g. books from the 1980s versus books printed after 2000).
- (extralinguistic constructions of gender) Body posture in: contemporary advertisements; everyday interactions.
- Compare males and females as: writers of personals ads, callers to talk shows, questioners at meetings or in class.
- Politeness: use of expletives, polite requests, compliments, intonation.
- Explore particular women's and men's genres: women's narratives, men's narratives, laments, joke-telling.
- Transcription of casual conversations and quantitative analysis: interruptions, hedges, powerless vs. powerful talk.
- Transcription of casual conversations and quantitative analysis: who talks more?

Grades

Your grades will be computed as follows:

- 25% - Participation
- 35% - Homework
- 15% - Article Presentation
- 25% - Final Project

Late Policy

Homework turned in late will receive half credit, no matter how late. Homework will be collected at the beginning of class.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

This schedule is subject to variation as the semester progresses. So, if you miss a class, be sure to check with me or a classmate.

Week	Date	Topic
1	5 th Jan.	Syllabus and discussion
	6 th Jan.	Movie: Gender and Communication Male/Female Differences in Language and Non- verbal Communication
	7 th Jan.	Discussion of the movie + Introduction
	8 th Jan	Lecture/Discussion of Preconceived Notions
	9 th Jan.	Continued
2	12 th Jan.	Gender Differences in Pronunciation and Grammar (1 & 2)
	13 th Jan.	Gender Differences in Pronunciation and Grammar (1 & 2)
	14 th Jan.	continued (5)
	15 th Jan.	continued (6)
	16 th Jan.	continued (10, 11)
3	19 th Jan.	No classes – Martin Luther King Holiday
	20 th Jan.	Review
	21 st Jan.	Theoretical Debates: Gender or Power (24, 25, 26 and one more TBA)
	22 nd Jan.	continued
	23 rd Jan.	continued
4	26 th Jan.	Review
	27 th Jan.	Theoretical Debates: Difference or Dominance (27, 28, 29, one more TBA)
	28 th Jan.	continued
	29 th Jan.	continued
	30 th Jan.	Review
5	2 nd Feb.	Looking to the Future (30, 31, 32)
	3 rd Feb.	continued
	4 th Feb.	continued
	5 th Feb.	Review
	6 th Feb.	Presentations