Sociology of gender is an immense field, featuring very fluid boundaries with other disciplines. It has developed in leaps and bounds over the five decades since the start of the Women’s Liberation Movement. Scholars’ initial concern was understanding women’s unequal social position – conceptualized in terms of “sex roles” in sociology or power/oppression due to either “patriarchy” or patriarchal capitalism by feminist theorists. While concern about inequality persists, the issues, questions, methods and theoretical approaches have multiplied over time, and the understanding of gender inequality has deepened. As a concept, gender has many meanings. But it is now conceptualized less as a characteristic of individuals and more in terms of historically specific and socially constructed social relations, social practices, subject positions, systems of meaning, or a structural division (and even as a social structure itself). Moreover, the influence of postmodernism/post-structuralism has meant that materialist perspectives have become less popular and cultural analyses more popular; and post-structural critiques have moved scholars’ attention from social structure (or social organization) to individual agency. To an extent, attention has shifted from questions about the nature and sources of gender inequality to questions about meaning and identity. At the same time, questions about inequality have also become more complicated, as gender is increasingly understood to be entangled with social class and race, as well as sexuality. In short, the field continues to grow, and to diversify, so it is an incredibly interesting area to explore.

This is a survey course, meant to acquaint you with many of the major areas of inquiry, questions, debates and arguments – and the work of influential and/or interesting researchers – on gender. Although I aimed to choose topics and readings that are most important for sociology students to be familiar with, my own interests and knowledge are clearly reflected in the course outline. Different approaches to the study of gender are represented here, but the issue of identity is given much less attention than is structural (or systemic) inequality, for example.

Each day’s topics and readings are given in the outline below, and in class I will provide background, and an overview of the research on the issue, as well as make connections among the different topics and groups of readings. In general, readings include both theoretical or conceptual works and empirical works. Overall, the course attempts to address issues about both social structure
and individual agency in its survey of a range of issues and approaches to the study of gender.

**Course requirements**

This course is focused on reading, critical thinking and writing, and it assumes that every student has a solid foundation in sociology. Everyone is expected to do all of the reading and to take part in class discussions. In order to help you consolidate your understanding of the readings, and prepare for the discussion, you will hand in a short (one- or two-page) comment on at least one of the assigned readings for each class. This very short comment piece should briefly state one of the writer’s main arguments (or points), and comment on that argument (i.e., talk about any weaknesses or flaws in the argument (sociological or logical), or otherwise evaluate it; you might also talk about its implications for understanding gender, or discuss an empirical question it suggests to you). This short essay will be handed in before each class.

The other written work will consist of three short (10- to 12-page) critical essays on all of the readings assigned in a particular day. These essays should be critical reviews of the central questions and arguments (and evidence, if relevant) presented in a day's readings. Each essay must discuss ALL of the readings for one day. The essay should clearly summarize the main arguments in each of the readings, and then evaluate them critically. Two of these essays is worth 25 percent of the grade; and one (the strongest) will be worth 30 percent.

The critical essays should be handed in on the day the readings in question are being discussed, but may be handed in later – in which case the standards for grading will be higher (as the essay should reflect the understanding gained from the class discussion). One of these essays must be handed in by May 29. The second of these essays must be handed in by June 18. **All essays must be in by June 25.**

**Grading**

Class participation [and short daily comments]----------------20%

Two critical essays, each worth 25% --------------------------50%

Third critical essay --------------------------30%
Readings

The readings consist almost entirely of articles and book chapters; the latter will be made available on the first day of class, the former are available in the library’s E-journal holdings.

Two books should be purchased, and will be available at the U of T bookstore:


COURSE OUTLINE

May 1 Office hour only (1:00-2:00) – for students with questions about the course

May 3 Introduction [in room 41 today]

May 8 Ongoing Gender Inequalities: Different Issues, Different Approaches

Readings:
- Meg Luxton, forthcoming. Never done: the challenge of unpaid work in the home

These essays review changes and lack of change in a range of matters central to gender relations, from unpaid and paid work to popular culture’s images of girls and women – and offer a good introduction to feminist work on gender inequality. The first two are by sociologists, the last two by feminist scholars who study culture. These readings represent different kinds of feminism (with different ideals and goals). These different types of feminism are related to different theoretical approaches to the study of gender and gender inequality. They introduce the first part of the course which focuses on different theoretical approaches.
May 10  Gender as a Social Construction & Gender as a Social Structure (or Institution -- perhaps ‘patriarchy’)

Readings:
  Bonnie Fox, 1988. Conceptualizing patriarchy. Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology 25, 2: 163-82 [a critique – read if you have time]

How we conceptualize gender, both in terms of individuals and society, is a complicated one. Sociologist Judith Lorber provides an introduction to how many sociologists studying gender think about it. She assumes a tremendous influence of childhood socialization, but also argues that gender is continually socially constructed in daily interactions. Lorber also proposes that we think of gender as a “social institution.” This argument that gender is a distinct structure or institution bears resemblance to Heidi Hartmann’s influential argument that “patriarchy” is a distinct system. Hers is what used to be called a “dual-systems” argument. (Be aware that Hartman’s is a very early argument in second-wave feminism. It was written in response to the impact that Marxist feminism had on feminist writing in the 1970s.) More recently, Barbara Risman makes a similar case for thinking of gender as a distinct structure or institution (rather than as sets of social relations or assumptions/beliefs that are now embedded in the capitalist economy, and this society generally). My article is old, but I have you read it for its critique of the idea that gender should be conceptualized as a separate structure (or system/institution). See Anna Pollert (below) and Meg Luxton (2006, May 15 reading) for a more thorough but similar critique (in the case of Pollert) and an alternative, single-system model (outlined by both writers).

Supplementary readings:  Anna Pollert, 1996. Gender and class revisited: Or the poverty of patriarchy. Sociology 30, 4: 639-659 [a powerful critique of dual-systems arguments]
  Sylvia Walby, 1989/ Theorizing patriarchy. Sociology 23, 2: 213-234 [a dual systems argument]
  Cecilia Ridgeway and Shelley Correll, 2004. Unpacking the gender system. Gender & Society 18, 5: 510-531  [based on social-psych. findings -- ‘expectations-states’ research – an argument that gender is a system]
May 15  Canadian Feminist Political Economy (and its predecessor, Marxist Feminism/Socialist Feminism)

Readings:
Genevieve Le Baron and Adrienne Roberts, 2010. Toward a feminist political economy of capitalism and carcerality. Signs 36, 1: 20-44 [OPTIONAL]

This approach, a fairly common one among Canadian feminist researchers, developed from Marxist theory. Meg Luxton’s 1980 book, More Than a Labour of Love – a study of women’s ‘domestic labour’ by an anthropologist that has become a Canadian classic – made the case for a Marxist-feminist approach. (Note the date of this reading; it is a very early piece that presents a different argument from Hartmann’s.) The 2006 essay by Luxton describes a way to think about the relationship between gender and capitalism that does not see gender and the economy as different systems, but instead as different sets of relationships in our society. She argues that gender is most fruitfully conceptualized and studied with a focus on the way “social reproduction” is shaped by and embedded in the neoliberal-capitalist political economy. The chapters from Daiva Stasiulis and Abigail Bakan’s book provide a good example of the kinds of research that Cdn. feminist political economists have done – analyzing the global economy and social policy as well as the material situation of paid domestic workers. Finally, if you have time, Genevieve Le Baron and Adrienne Roberts, Canadian political scientists, offer a very provocative argument about some of the less obvious impacts of capitalism on daily life. You have read a critique of this (political-economy) approach last week, in Hartmann.

Anna Pollert, 1996. Gender and class revisited: or, the poverty of patriarchy. Sociology 30, 4: 639-59
May 17  Intersectionality: Race, Class and Gender

Readings:


Kimberle Crenshaw’s is an early article that makes the case for using this approach (and you should read as much of it as you need to understand her argument). Evelyn Nakano Glenn’s chapter from *Revisioning Gender* explains how gender and race are “mutually constituted systems of relationships.” She discusses what an intersectional approach involves, and provides some applications of that approach. Sedef Arat-Koc’s description and analysis of paid domestic labour in Canada (originally published in 1987 and recently revised) is a good example of an early intersectional argument (as well as a political-economic argument). And the article by Hae Yeon Choo and Myra Marx Ferree offers a critique of some respected sociological work, to show how the absence of a consideration of the joint axes of gender, race and class inequalities weakens the research.


*Evelyn Nakano Glenn, 1992. From servitude to service work: Historical continuities in the racial divisions of paid reproductive labor. *Signs* 18, 1: 1-43


May 22 “Doing Gender” -- a Popular Social-Constructionist Approach Focusing on Interpersonal Interaction

Readings:
Dorothy E. Smith, 2009. Categories are not enough. Gender & Society 23, 1: 76-80

This ethnomethodological approach has been very influential, especially in American sociology of gender. It could be argued that it has been influential in shifting the focus of inquiry away from social organization and to the individual. Only fairly recently has criticism of it developed. West and Zimmerman’s is the article that has inspired so many researchers, although they were not the first to make the argument. Patricia Yancey Martin’s article is one of over a hundred that use the approach. Right after this article appeared three critical comments were published in Gender & Society (and those by Myra Marx Ferree and Dorothy Smith are two of them). Psychologist Francine Deutsch’s article was the first critique of “doing gender” to be published in Gender & Society, and it offers more than just criticism.

May 24  Transnational Feminist Analyses with a Focus on Discourse

Readings:
Hae Yeon Choo, 2013. The cost of rights: migrant women, feminist advocacy and gendered morality in South Korea. Gender & Society 27, 4: 445-468
Gokce Yurdakul and Anna Korteweg, 2013. Gender equality and immigrant integration: honor killing and forced marriage debates in the Netherlands, Germany and Britain. Women’s Studies International Forum 41: 204-214

Intersectional analysis widens our lens, and transnational analysis widens it even more. One way it does so is to raise questions about the state as well as the economy. Chandra Mohanty’s “Under Western Eyes” has become a classic, raising important questions about how Third World women have been thought about by Western scholars, and also presenting a broad approach for studying gender. The article was apparently widely misunderstood, so Mohanty later wrote the Signs article to clarify. The articles by Hae Yeon Choo and Gokce Yurdakul and Anna Korteweg tackle important issues, from an approach that attends to discourse as well as agency.


May 29  Sexuality: Heteronormativity, Heterosexuality/Homosexuality

Readings:

Some feminists have argued that gender follows from heteronormativity – the institutionalization and cultural dominance of heterosexuality – while others see gender, and specifically male dominance, as the necessary precondition for heteronormativity. Since Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, much thought has been given to the discursive construction of sexuality, and its regulatory effects. Julia Ericksen describes some of the history of American research on sexuality, and argues that the researchers themselves significantly influenced popular ideas about sexuality. L. Hamilton and E. Armstrong’s article is one of several by them (and Paula England) that report the findings of a very large study of the sexual practices of young adults, with a focus on gender differences and inequalities. And Barry Adam describes his findings on the nature of intimate gay relationships.


Yen Le Espiritu, 2001. ‘We don’t sleep around like white girls do’: family, culture and gender in Filipina American lives. *Signs* 26, 2: 415-440


May 31  On the Study of Masculinity and Men

Readings:

The study of masculinity is a much newer enterprise than the study of women’s inequality. R.W. Connell’s book explains how a leading scholar in the field thinks about masculinity – or at least did at the time of the writing. Connell’s concept of “hegemonic masculinity” has been central to conceptualizing and studying men and masculinity. Connell and James Messerschmidt’s review of research and consideration of how the concept has been used is an important place to begin discussion. The three empirical articles, by Jennifer Carlson, C.J. Pascoe and Kris Paap, offer very rich analyses of what masculinity means – in specific contexts and groups of men -- and how it is created and enacted.


June 5  Bodies and Beauty

Readings:


We turn to the issue of bodies to consider beauty ideals, one of their consequences -- eating disorders -- and resistance to those ideals. Cultural analyst Susan Bordo offers an insightful argument about the gender messages in ads for food (and her book offers rich analysis of popular culture and its body ideals, and of postmodern analyses of them). Debra Gimlin’s ethnographic study of various forms of “body work” done in salons, nail parlours and aerobics classes challenges any implicit or explicit argument that women are victims. And Becky Thompson’s study of eating disorders examines one of the most obvious negative consequences of this culture’s obsession with thinness, eating disorders, but does so with a focus on Black women and lesbians (who are typically ignored in analyses of eating disorders). Michelle Lazar’s essay takes up the argument that Angela McRobbie made, about so-called post-feminist messages in the commercial media. Josee Johnston and Judy Taylor examine important questions about resistance to and subversion of beauty ideals, in their look at a corporate campaign and a grassroots campaign to do so.


June 7  Motherhood: Analyses from Several Different Approaches

Readings:


Tina Miller, 2007. “Is this what motherhood is all about?” Weaving experiences and discourse through transition to first-time motherhood. Gender & Society 21, 3: 337-358


Aside from examining the issue of motherhood, these readings also illustrate a variety of theoretical (and methodological) approaches to the study of gender. Recent feminist sociological work on motherhood has focused on its social construction, especially through a discourse that Sharon Hays (1996) has called “intensive mothering.” Martha McMahon is a symbolic interactionist; her award-winning book shows how motherhood reinforces gender identity, and this is a chapter from it. Tina Miller’s article typifies a focus on the power of discourse or ideology; it involves a narrative analysis. Glenda Wall’s article is also an analysis of discourse, but one informed by political economy. My piece – an early summary of some of the findings in my book -- focuses on changes in social relations (gender relations) when (heterosexual) couples become parents. And Patricia Hill Collins’s essay, and its intersectional analysis, reminds us of a limitation in the other works.


Bonnie Fox, 2009. When Couples Become Parents: the Creation of Gender in the Transition to Parenthood. Univ. of Toronto Press


**June 12 Gender Inequality in the Labour Force, and “Work/Family” Conflict**

Readings:

*Opting Out?* is a fine example of sociological research that systematically examines a question that journalists had been writing about for years (and making assumptions about, without any empirical evidence): Why do some successful career women abandon their jobs to stay home with their children? Stone’s findings and argument offer a good illustration of Joan Acker’s very influential argument that workplaces are “gendered organizations,” in that assumptions about gender are embedded in their organization, practices and culture. These readings address the so-called work/family conflict that so many women (and men, to a lesser extent) in dual-earner families face daily; more, they offer some understanding of gender inequality in paid work. Diane Elson’s article gives us a good sense of what causes the gender gap in earnings.

Supplementary readings:  *Sonya Rose, 1992. Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England*. Univ. of California Press [an exceptionally rich study, both theoretically and empirically, of how gender shaped the development of industrial capitalism and how working-class masculinity was constructed as trade unionists fought for better working conditions and for dignity]


**June 14 Juggling Employment and Family Responsibilities**


Arlie Hochschild’s now-classic book, *The Second Shift*, has been the most important study of dual-earner couples’ negotiations of household work. The study is important for the insights that Hochschild provides on these complex gendered negotiations but also for its rich understanding of gender. Like Hochschild, Sassler and Miller’s examination of couples’ cohabiting relationships offers us more than the usual analyses of how housework is allocated between men and women; their study provides findings on decision making on contraception and other important matters, as well as a focus on class differences among couples.

Supplementary readings:


Note: see these works for references to the many articles featuring statistical analyses of the gendered division of work in households.