

## COMM 374: Gender and Communication

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Office Hours: by appointment

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### Texts:

Foss, S., Domenico, M.E., & Foss, K. (2013). *Gender stories: Negotiating identity in a binary world*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.

Wood, J. (201x), *Gendered lives: Communication, gender, and culture*. 9<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

### Goals:

Women, men, and people who see themselves as neither, share the world. Just what that means and how we should live out the sharing is up for argument. Some believe in divine creation of gender as a binary truth. Some believe humans evolved in ways that helped them to survive. Of those who believe in evolutionary gender differences, some claim men's aggressiveness serves the human race, while some argue women's care-giving has been the saving grace of humanity. Within humankind, there is both commonality (humanity) and distinction (gender). For the purposes of this class, no matter how we got here, we're here together, and together, we negotiate meaning and life choices.

Gender encompasses far more than masculinity and femininity, including sexual identity and orientation. While much of what we are may be biological givens, human beings construct gender through symbols and actions that translate into expectations. Gender communication does not entail the simple matter of learning the right role behavior and then acting it out, especially now, when concepts of gender encompass heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgender identity. Some people think a person's anatomy straightforwardly determines gender. That's just not the case. Gender has always been enacted by individuals, and cultures have always suggested, more or less clearly, what is proper for people identified as women and men to do, and human beings have always lived in ways other than those seemingly determined for them.

This class will focus on gender relations and how communication practices shape those relations in 21st century America. We will look at how masculinity and femininity; heterosexuality, bisexuality, and homosexuality; identity and orientation, and other positions on the gender continuum have been defined and are played out in interpersonal relations, business settings, family life, differing race and class contexts, and in the media. In so doing, we will see communication plays a crucial role in suggesting and correcting gender relations and enactments.

My goals for you in this class are that you will:

- understand the communication aspects of cultural, physical, and social forces that influence gender relations
- be able to use both communication and gender theories to describe, explain, interpret and evaluate those forces (orally and in writing)
- develop a respectful, caring perspective on gender relations that you can use in your life.

### **Course Expectations:**

My first and strongest expectation of you is that you will engage yourself fully in the course material. Our textbooks are the necessary tip of the iceberg of what you will be reading, viewing and researching in this semester. I expect you to come to class having read the assigned chapters, fully prepared, fully ready to discuss the material. So, read, take notes, argue out ideas with your classmates and roommates, and have your own point of view ready to try out by the time class starts each day.

You will be graded on the basis of two tests (non-cumulative), an orally presented and written book review, a course group project, and your level of contribution to the class, as determined by in-class contributions and activity on our Google Plus. Other than the Google Plus posts, all written assignments will be submitted through SafeAssign on Blackboard.

**Each assignment will count for 20% of your grade (the combined oral and written book report count as one assignment).**

**Extra credit: I encourage you to do extra credit in this class. Go to an approved gender-based presentation on campus and write a half-page, single-spaced paper summarizing the presentation and your response to it. Each paper will be worth 1 overall percentage point. So, an 89 becomes a 90 and so on. There is no limit to the extra credit work in this class.**

### **Class contribution (20% of your grade):**

Your class contribution will be measured by your posts on Google Plus (three substantive posts will be required, as well as three comments on other people's posts), attendance, extra credit work, and conversations in class and will factor into the final grade. I take attendance every day. **You are allowed two unexcused absences for the class. Any absence after that will reduce your grade by two overall percentage points for each absence (so, a 90 drops to an 88 and so on).**

### **Tests (20% each=40% of your grade):**

Tests will combine objective and subjective questions, testing your grasp of both the objective facts found in the readings and also your subjective ability to understand, analyze and synthesize the course material. **No missed test without prior authorization can be made up—you will get a zero for that test.**

### **Book review (20% of your grade):**

**The written part of the book review** will take the following form—a 750-1,000 word, double-spaced report and reflection on one of the books in the attached bibliography list. The summary-of-the-book section will take **no more than one page**. The rest of the paper will reflect on the meaning of the book—explaining the difference its ideas make in how you (and other people) frame gender and communication.

The sections of the paper are as follows:

First page, at the top, instead of a title, write the full APA citation of the book. Then,

- section one: start with a brief introduction;
- section two: present the report;
- section three: develop the reflection (make 3-4 substantive, well-developed points that develop your response to the book);
- section four: conclude by answering “so what?”—what’s the difference that this book makes?

Any quotations can be internally cited by putting the page number in quotation marks: (12).

**The oral part of the book review** will show high levels of preparation and practice, sensitivity to audience, and extemporaneous delivery. The oral presentation will take 5-6 minutes and follow the structure of the written report. Each person will present their report to a group of students in class.

**If you miss the oral presentation of the book, you will get a zero for half of the grade of the book review.**

### **The group project (20% of your grade):**

I will assign each of you to a group. Each group project will have three parts, one shared and two individual.

The **first** is a group presentation consisting of a well-constructed, carefully planned half hour presentation of a gender-related critical analysis of a media artifact or phenomena of your group's choice, ending with a recommendation for positive gender transformation.

The **second** is your individual annotated bibliography of at least two primary sources and at least three secondary sources (all three must be either peer-reviewed communication articles found on the Communication and Mass Media Complete database or books).

The **third** is the evaluation of your contribution to the group project, **made by your group members.**

Your individual grade will be determined through this way:

- group presentation grade=60% of the grade for the assignment
- annotated bibliography grade=25% of the grade for the assignment
- evaluation by your group members=15% of the grade for the assignment

**Criteria by which you'll be graded:**

**For the group presentation:**

--creativity, solid content and polished presentation style all are required.

--topic must show thoughtful engagement with gender and media.

--presentation must have **at least ten orally cited scholarly journals or chapters** (meaning, your group has to find a way to use and name **ten** significant sources as you present to the class. A good database to use is Communication & Mass Media Complete).

--presentation must use at least **two** different sorts of media (music, print, clips, powerpoint, etc.)

--presentation must have a **class handout** that creatively captures the main argument of your presentation and also gives the class full MLA citations of the ten+ sources your group uses.

--presentation **must be performed as a scenario** directly related to the media artifact under analysis. For example, you might be a production group for a new tv show or film who analyzes past failures/successes in order to come up with a new pitch or a self-help group trying to break free from stereotyped images of masculinity or a group of reviewers for a film or a Human Resources group tasked with developing sexual harassment standards. The handout, costuming,

playing of characters, use of PowerPoint, clips and so on all must be of the highest quality and integrated through the scenario.

--all group members get the same grade on the presentation.

### **For the annotated bibliography:**

--at least **two primary sources** (two examples of the media artifact or phenomena under study), fully cited in APA format (consult the website <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> ).

--at least **three secondary sources** (significant sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, books, or reviews in respectable publications which comment on the primary source), fully cited in APA format.

--**each source is annotated** (explained) by a short summary paragraph, written completely by you—you may not cut and paste or quote from the source. You must describe what the source said and what its value was to understanding or critiquing your topic. Any cutting and pasting will be considered academic dishonesty.

--**the annotated bibliography must be submitted to SafeAssign**

### **For the grades given by group members:**

Each class member will assign a grade (A,B,C,D,F, along with a percentage score out of 100%) for each group member, along with a written explanation of the grade, representing the quality of each member's contribution to the group project, based upon attendance at group meetings, preparation for meetings, and work done toward the final project.

### **Honesty**

I place a high premium on original work and academic honesty. Your learning and thinking is reflected in your words. I expect you to cite all sources appropriately and to give credit where it's due. You are expected to use APA citation format and style. Consult with <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> for advice on how to format your paper and sources appropriately.

You are expected to cite all the sources used in your bibliography. If a source is not cited, it should not appear in a bibliography. "Padding" is the term for having sources in your bibliography that you do not cite in a paper or oral presentation and is unethical.

If I find you have plagiarized any written material or have made up any sources, I will give you a **zero** for the assignment. Effectively, that will mean you could fail the class. I take plagiarism very seriously—it indicates you have not personally engaged with the material you read and do not trust yourself enough to speak your mind as you write. Further, it steals from another person one of the few

things that humans actually own, our thoughts and the way we put them together. So, trust your own creativity and the intellectual property of others by practicing scrupulous scholarship.

### **Technology**

In class, our main job is to be present for each other. This time is ours and it is precious. Turn your cell phones to silent and check them after class. Any use of phones, ipads and laptops is limited to class materials, such as taking notes or checking information. As is true in movie theaters, when you use your technology, you distract not only yourself, but also other people around you and reduce the value of the experience we're sharing.

### **Office Hours**

My main concern is teaching you and learning with you. Often, we won't have time in class to touch on everything everyone is interested in. I welcome you to visit with me to talk over issues and ideas we may not have discussed in class. When my office door is open, you are welcome to see me. I'd appreciate an email letting me know when you're coming so I can make time for you.

### **COMM 374 Class Schedule:**

**All class readings (with the exception of the first day) must have been read before coming to class—otherwise, we can't have good conversations.**

**January 23:** Introduction to the class, to each other.

**January 25:** No in-person class. Assignment: locate 2 appropriate links for the Google Plus assignment.

**January 30:** Introduction to gender and communication.

**Read:** Wood, Chapter One: The Study of Communication, Gender and Culture.

**February 1:** Gender as narrative.

**Read:** Foss, Domenico, and Foss, Chapter One: Gender Stories: An Introduction.

**February 6:** Theoretical framing of gender.

**Read:** Wood, Chapter Two: Theoretical Approaches to Gender Development

**February 8:** Dramatic gender fictions.

**Read:** Foss, Domenico, and Foss, Chapter Two: Dramatic Fiction: The Social Construction of Reality.

**February 13:** The rhetorical shaping of gender

**Read:** Wood, Chapter Three: The Rhetorical Shaping of Gender: Women's Movements in the United States

**February 15:** The rhetorical shaping of gender

**Read:** Wood: Chapter Four: The Rhetorical Shaping of Gender: Men's Movements in the United States.

**February 20:** The gender binary.

**Read:** Foss, Domenico, and Foss, Chapter Three: The Classics: The Gender Binary.

**Also on February 20, there is an extra credit opportunity. View 'Deej' at the Capitol Arts Theater, downtown, and write a half-page, single-spaced response to the challenges found in the movie to standard American masculinity. The paper is due on Feb. 27.**

**February 22:** Gendered verbal communication.

**Read:** Wood, Chapter Five: Gendered Verbal Communication.

**February 27:** Science fiction.

**Read:** Foss, Domenico, and Foss, Chapter Four: Science Fiction: Gender Stories in Scientific Research.

**For extra credit, you may attend Michael Butterworth's lecture on black athletes 'taking a knee' and what that means about American culture. Due: April 6.**

**For extra credit, you may watch the movie, 'Hidden Figures,' and write a half-page, single-space personal response to the film. Due: March 6.**

**March 1: Test One over all the material covered to this point.**

**March 6:** Gendered nonverbal communication.

**Read:** Wood, Chapter Six, Gendered Nonverbal Communication.

**March 8:** Becoming gendered.

**Read:** Wood, Chapter Seven, Becoming Gendered: The Early Years

**March 12-15: Spring break. No classes.**

**March 20:** Gendered close relationships.

**Read:** Wood, Chapter Nine: Gendered Close Relationships

**March 22:** Gender stories.

**Read:** Foss, Domenico, and Foss, Chapter Five: Best Sellers: Gender Stories in Popular Culture.

**March 27:** Gendered organizational communication.

**Read:** Wood, Chapter Ten: Gendered Organizational Relationships..

**March 29:** In-Class workday on final projects. By the end of class, the project topic and also the project scenarios are due.

**April 3:** Crafting gender stories.

**Read:** Foss, Domenico, and Foss, Chapter Six: Crafting: Developing Gender Stories.

**April 5: No class. Dr. Sterk is attending a conference. Use the class period to meet with your project group.**

**April 10: Present book reviews. Each person will present their book to a small group. Each group will choose the book review presentation they would like the class to hear on the 12th.**

**April 12: Top book presentation from each group will be presented to the entire class.**

**Due from everyone: Written portion of the book review.**

**April 17:** Gendered power and violence.

**Read:** Wood, Chapter Twelve: Gendered Power and Violence.

**April 19:** Discussion of the #metoo and #timesup movements.

**April 24:** Reworking: Managing responses to gender performances.

**Read:** Foss, Domenico, and Foss, Chapter Eight: Reworking: Managing responses to gender performances.

**April 26:** The next chapter: Constructing gendered worlds.

**Read:** Foss, Domenico, and Foss, Chapter Nine: The Next Chapter: Creating Gendered Worlds.

**May 1: Test Two over material since Test One.**

**May 10: 8-10 am. Presentation of group projects.**

**Due: Annotated bibliography and grades for group members.**