

(De)Constructing Difference: Race, Sex, Disability

IS 399 - 005, Syllabus (v1)

Course Info

Instructors

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All correspondence should be sent to both instructors. Failure to do so will result in a delayed response.

Meeting Time:

T/R 3:30-4:45, Peck 3417

Office Hours:

Spurgas: Tuesday 5:00-6:00PM (and by appointment), Peck Hall 1213

Fry: Tuesday/Thursday 2:00-3:00PM (and by appointment), Peck Hall 3210

Course Description

Terms that sort people into categories are pervasive in everyday discourse. These terms that delineate other individuals into kinds are robustly multifarious: we have terms for race, sex, gender, sexuality, and disability, among others. These terms purport to track real differences in people's internal characteristics. In this course, we will investigate the history, usefulness, and ethical status of such terms, ultimately assessing what we gain from deploying these sorts of terms, if anything.

Course Goals

This course has several goals:

- To use philosophical and sociological writing to introduce you to problems of social categories.
- To cultivate your own thinking about central problems in the areas of sex/gender, race, and disability, especially as they bear on your own life.
- To improve your analytical reading and writing skills.
- To develop essential life skills such as time management, communication when encountering difficulties, and thoughtful engagement with others.

Required Texts

None — All readings will be made available through Blackboard. You are responsible for bringing these readings to class.

Policies

Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism

- You are expected and required to uphold SIUE's standards of academic honesty in this course.
- Plagiarism of ideas or words is unacceptable.
- Confirmed academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course.
- Familiarize yourself with what counts as plagiarism and SIUE's policies:
 - <http://www.siu.edu/lovejoylibrary/services/instruction/plagiarism.shtml>,
 - <http://www.siu.edu/policies/3c2.shtml>

Personal Conduct

Preparedness and Attendance

- You are responsible for arriving on time, being prepared, and comporting yourself in an appropriate manner.

A Safe and Productive Environment

- You are responsible for helping to foster a safe and productive learning environment.
- Some of the topics we will address this semester can provoke powerful emotions,
- This is especially true for people who have had or are having difficult experiences.
- Be mindful of how topics under discussion may differently impact members of the class.
- Treat your classmates with respect and courtesy.

Due Dates

- You are responsible for turning in your work on time.
- For each 24 hours late after the due date for a piece of written work is submitted, 3% will be subtracted from whatever grade it earns.
- All work more than a week late will receive an F.

Grading

Missed Exams

- Missed examinations will be assessed at 0%, unless (a) a doctor's note is provided, or (b) we agree to an alternate examination time *at least 24 hours before the exam* due to, e.g., bereavement/funeral, or (c) evidence of some other catastrophic event is presented.

Extensions

- If you need an extension for written work, email us with a brief description of your situation.
- If we approve an extension, we will work out an appropriate timeframe.
- Extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the assignment is due.

Anonymous Grading

- The papers for this course will be graded anonymously.
- Work submitted through Blackboard should not have your name in the text or the filename.

- Failure to properly anonymize your submission will result in a 10% penalty to your grade.

Grade Appeals

- If you believe your work deserves a different grade than it received, you may ask in writing for reconsideration.
- Submit your request *to both instructors* within one week, but no sooner than one day after the assignment is returned.
- Your written request must explain why you believe the work deserves a different grade.
- Please note that if a change is made, the new grade may be either higher or lower.

Changes

- We reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus at any time.
- Changes will be announced in class and a new version of the syllabus posted to Blackboard.

Assignments and Assessment

More details about these assignments will be distributed online and in class throughout the semester.

Short Papers (35%)

- You will write two short (400-500 word) papers.
- You will identify and explain arguments and positions from texts we talked about in class.
- You will work out views and arguments—not report opinions or personal experience.
- Assignment sheets with a list of topics will be given at least two weeks before each of these papers is due.
- The better of these will count 20% toward your final grade, the other for 15%.

Midterm Exam (20%), Final Exam (20%)

- You will be given a multiple-choice mid-term and final exam covering all course material.
- This exam should be straightforward if you've come to class and paid attention throughout the semester (and reviewed your notes beforehand).

Observation Journal (25%)

- At the end of the semester, you'll turn in a journal detailing cases you've observed where people appeal to group membership to explain someone's behavior.
- You'll be expected to link these cases up with readings and class discussion where appropriate, and to have worked on this assignment throughout the semester.
- Details for this assignment will be posted on Blackboard within the first month of class.

Participation and Comportment

- We reserve the right to adjust your grade by $\pm 3\%$ based on your comportment in class.
- This grade includes reading and bringing the assigned material, arriving on time, and participating in discussion. You can also participate by coming to office hours or emailing us.
- Not coming to class, sleeping, not bringing assigned readings, arriving consistently late, acting disrespectfully to me or your peers (by, e.g., having your phone out), *etc.*, will lose you points.

Calendar of Class Meetings

with Readings and Assignment Due Dates

You are expected to read the material listed before the class-day listed.

Part 1: Introductions: What's going on here?

23 Aug - Introduction to the Course

What will we talk about? What will we read? How will I be evaluated?

Part 2: Sex and Gender

25 Aug - Introduction: What are 'kind' terms?

Read: Nicholls - "Do Vegetables Really Exist?"

Read: Dupré - *The Disorder of Things*, Ch1

30 Aug - Kinds and Species

Read: Dupré - *The Disorder of Things*, Ch2

01 Sep - Kinds and Concepts like 'Sex'

Read: Dupré - *The Disorder of Things*, Ch3

06 Sep - Kinds as Purpose-Dependent

Re-read: Dupré - *The Disorder of Things*, Ch1, p.34-36

Read: SMBC - "Linnaeus"

08 Sep - Purposes and Power

Read: Lewontin - *Biology as Ideology* - Ch1

Read: Lewontin - *Biology as Ideology* - Ch5

13 Sep - Purposes and Power (continued)

Optional Read: Laqueur - *Making Sex* - Ch1

Read: Laqueur - *Making Sex* - Ch5

15 Sep - Sex Differences: Bodies

Read: Blackless - "How Sexually Dimorphic Are We?"

Read: Sax - "How Common is Intersex?"

Read: Dreger - "Sex Typing for Sport"

20 Sep - Medical Creation of Sex

Read: Fausto-Sterling - "The Five Sexes"

Read: Fausto-Sterling - "The Five Sexes Revisited"

Read: Fausto-Sterling - "The Bare Bones of Sex: Part 1 - Sex and Gender"

22 Sep - *Medical Creation of Sex... and the Brain*

Read: Jordan-Young - *Brain Storm*, Ch1- 2

27 Sep - *Sex, Gender and the Brain*

Read: Fine - *Delusions of Gender* - Intro

29 Sep - *Sex, Gender and the Brain (continued)*

Read: Fine - *Delusions of Gender* - Ch1-3

Read: Frankish - "Whatever you think, you don't necessarily know your own mind"

04 Oct - *Sex, Gender and the Brain (continued)*

Read: Fine - *Delusions of Gender* - Ch4-6

06 Oct - *Sex, Gender and the Brain (continued)*

Read: Fine - *Delusions of Gender* - Ch7-8, epilogue

Short Paper 1 due by 11:59PM

Part 3: Race

11 Oct - *Race and Biology*

Read: Fairbanks - *Everyone is African* - Ch1 and Epilogue

Watch: Gray - "Racial Ontology, part 1"

Watch: Roberts - "The Problem with Race Based Medicine"

Watch: Harris - "The myth of race, debunked in 3 minutes"

Optional Read: Fairbanks - *Everyone is African* - Ch7

13 Oct - *Introduction to Biopolitics*

Read: Lemke - *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* - Ch3

Read: Katz Rothman - *The Book of Life* (excerpts)

18 Oct - *Colonialism and Scientific Research*

Read: Fausto-Sterling - "Gender, Race and Nation: The Comparative Anatomy of 'Hottentot' Women in Europe, 1815-1817"

20 Oct - *Race as Political Category / Race and Social Organization*

Read: Samuels - *Fantasies of Identification* - Intro

Optional Read: Samuels - *Fantasies of Identification* - Ch7-8

25 Oct - *Race and Social Organization in the U.S. Today*

Read: Gilmore - *Golden Gulag* (excerpts)

Read: Giroux - "Reading Hurricane Katrina: Race, Class, and the Biopolitics of Disposability"

27 Oct - *Midterm exam*

Part 4: Disability

01 Nov - *Similarities and Dissimilarities to Sex/Gender and Race*

Read: Samuels - *Fantasies of Identification* - Ch6

03 Nov - *Medical vs. Social Models*

Read: Kafer - *Feminist, Queer, Crip* - Intro

Optional Read: Kafer - *Feminist, Queer, Crip* - Ch1

08 Nov - *Medical vs. Social Models (continued)*

Watch/Read: Deadspin - "Stupid Nike Uniforms Wreaking Havoc On Colorblind NFL Fans"

Read: Goulart - "Is Being Colorblind Actually an Advantage?"

10 Nov - *Deaf Gain and Neurodiversity*

Read: Dirksen et al. - "Deaf Gain: An Introduction"

15 Nov - *Deaf Gain and Neurodiversity (continued)*

Read: Armstrong - "Neurodiversity: A Concept whose Time has Come"

Short Paper 2 due by 11:59PM

17 Nov - *Deaf Gain and Neurodiversity (continued)*

Read: Lewontin - *Biology as Ideology* - Ch6

29 Nov - *Obesity, Disability and Concern Trolling*

Read: Warner - "What is Concern Trolling?"

Read: Mina - "A Plus Size Woman's Open Letter To The Internet Trolls, Haters, And All Those Who Have Something To Say About Fat Bodies"

Read: LeBesco - "Neoliberalism, Public Health, and the Moral Perils of Fatness"

01 Dec - *Obesity, Disability and Concern Trolling (continued)*

No new reading

5: Ethical Implications of Deconstructing Kinds

06 Dec -

Reading TBA

08 Dec -

Reading TBA

Journals due by 11:59PM

The final exam will be given at the time/place scheduled by the registrar.

Resources

Academic Resources

Disability Support Services

- Student Success Center, Room 1270
- <http://www.siu.edu/dss/> and disabilitysupport@siu.edu
- Provides accommodations to disabled students.
- DSS also has services which students can use to increase skills in learning, time management, and test-taking.

Instructional Services

- <http://www.siu.edu/is/>
- Provides instructional support unit for the students, faculty and staff. Helps the underprepared to prepare, the prepared to advance, and the advanced to excel.

Writing Center

- in the Academic Advancement Center
- <http://www.siu.edu/is/writing/>, 618-650-2045
- “The writing center assists you as you analyze your paper and explore ways to improve it. Our primary concern is to help you become a better writer. To do this, we challenge you to learn more about composition and the conventions of Standard English.”

Health and Wellness Resources

Counseling Services:

- Student Success Center room 0222
- <http://www.siu.edu/counseling/>
- Provides individual counseling, counseling groups, healthy living workshops, consultations, and referrals. Special attention is paid to the ongoing issues affecting college students.

Student Health Clinic Services

- Student Success Center room 0222
- <http://www.siu.edu/healthservice/clinic/index.shtml>