

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

## LING/WOMNST 1235: Language, Gender, and Society

**Instructor:** Scott F. Kiesling (Ph.D. 1996, Georgetown University)

**Office Hours:** Wednesday and Friday 1-2pm. If you can, let me know via email if you are planning to come (but not required). For brief questions, I will be available before and after class.

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**Required Text:** Eckert, Penelope, and Sally McConnell-Ginet. 2013. *Language and Gender*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York & Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-1-107-65936-0.

### Course Rationale

Myths and misconceptions about both language and gender abound. Gender is most commonly thought to be an attribute of a person, but it is better thought of as an ongoing practice. In addition, there is more to gender than just men and women, as other social identities such as age, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality affect the kind of gender one performs. Similarly, language is often seen as something static that a person acquires, whereas it is in fact a social practice through which we create and display our gender and other social identities.

### Course Goals

At the end of this course, you will:

- understand how gender is performed, created, and recreated through language;
- know the various ways that individuals use linguistic resources to create personal styles, and how these styles are gendered;
- appreciate that these personal gender styles are also creating other aspects of social identity such as sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, and age;
- understand how linguistic resources create meaning in context at the same time that they draw on general social ideologies and discourses to create that meaning;
- appreciate that people are positioned by the ideologies and discourses of society and culture – individuals can only work with the social and linguistic resources available to each individual;
- understand and begin to accept differences in how people use language and how such linguistic performances affect your view of others;
- be willing to try to be sensitive to people in social positions different from yours, and attempt to understand that different social world, and the language used to construct it;
- have improved your skills in writing and verbal expression.

## Expectations

### ***My expectations of you:***

You will respect the views of all the participants in this class, especially all of your fellow students.

Everyone in this class is intelligent enough to learn the material: if you put in the effort, it is possible for everyone to get an A.

While you are partially motivated by an inherent interest in this subject, you will be largely motivated by assessment (i.e., things that count for a grade).

You are intelligent and mature, and can be relied upon to do work that results in more learning, and better grades.

You will submit work on time and put your best effort into most assignments.

Your background in linguistics and gender studies is quite varied. I assume at least one of you does not have some basic knowledge in each of these subjects.

You also have quite varied skills in reading, writing, and learning. You range in academic level from freshman undergraduates to PhD candidates.

You each learn in a unique way, and I cannot expect everyone to arrive at the goals through the same path.

Most of you need guidance on how to organize what you read and why it is significant.

You will work on this course an average of about 8 hours per week, in addition to class meetings.

You would like a course that is relevant to your lives, or your future lives, in some way.

### ***Your expectations of me:***

I will present my goals, objectives, and standards clearly and openly. Everything we do will be focused on the ultimate goal of your learning. I am not your adversary, but your advocate.

I am an expert in this field. If you are interested in my research beyond what we talk about in class, please ask.

I will respect every student's perspective, and attempt to balance all perspectives and allow every student a voice. If you feel uncomfortable in class, you can expect me to listen to your concerns.

I will very rarely give extensions and forgiveness for late or missing assignments. If there is a reason for lateness, you must document it. All due dates [JLG147@pitt.edu](mailto:JLG147@pitt.edu) are listed on the calendar below. Plan accordingly.

I will return your work promptly and with enough comments that you will be able to improve that work upon revision or on the next assignment. If any comments are not clear, I will be happy to discuss them with you.

You will have the chance, during the semester, to give me feedback about what is good and bad about the course, and I will consider seriously whether I should change the course in light of these comments.

I will likely put in an average of 15 hours per week, in addition to class time, preparing for class.

I may change any portion of the course at any time, but I will give you plenty of warning.

## **Requirements**

### **Main requirements**

- **Class participation:** This grade will be based on attendance, courtesy to other students, and willingness to participate in class. I recognize that not everyone likes to speak out in front of the entire class, so I will give ample opportunity for you to participate in smaller groups and dyads. Participation in these groups counts for this grade as well.
- **Reading responses/questions:** Every day that an *article* is due, a 100- to 200-word response to that reading is due. This requirement fulfills several functions. It makes sure you do the readings. But it also makes you read more thoughtfully, to the point that you will be used to reading thoughtfully, and your learning will increase. And, it's better than worksheets or other make-work. For these responses, as long as you start with the reading, you can take it in any number of directions: You can disagree with a point and dispute it. You can agree with a point and back it up. You can tell a story about something that happened to you that is a nice illustration of what is in the reading. I will grade these responses on whether they are thoughtful and relevant. That means they have to connect to the text, and they have to show you thought about it. You should bring three copies of this response to class on the day the reading is due.

There will also be other short writing assignments that will count with your reading response grade.

On days that textbook reading is due, you still need to produce something. I will provide a list of questions about the texts which will form the background of our discussion of the text. You must bring your answers to class and I will call on students to answer.

- **Assignments:** There will be two writing assignments. These assignments will ask you to take the knowledge and skills you have developed in the preceding unit, along with some data or perspective, and produce some kind of written piece. You will have options with respect to how you address the main topic.
- **Exams:** There will be two exams, a midterm and a 'final' covering the second half of the course. Exams are in class, closed book. Questions and very specific topics will be distributed at least one week in advance.

### **Punctuality requirement**

***Late work will have 5% deducted from the grade each day late***, beginning the time it is due. If there is a reason for lateness, I will need documentation. If you are late because of something you knew about in advance, then you should have done the work ahead of time or made arrangements with me ahead of time.

### **W-course requirement**

Because this course is meant to teach you not only knowledge about language and gender, but the skills of writing as well, **all of your work except exams will be graded on writing as well as**

**content.** I will talk about what I look for in writing, and also about the writing process more generally. Students may rewrite any assignment for up to full credit (no more than two revisions).

### **Weighting of requirements**

Assignments	30% (equally weighted)
Exams	30% (equally weighted)
Class participation	15%
Article responses	25%

## ***Practical Information and Course Policies***

### **Grading scale**

98-100	A+	88-89	B+	78-79	C+	68-69	D+	Below 60	F
93-97	A	83-87	B	73-77	C	63-67	D		
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-	60-62	D-		

### **Electronic submissions**

All reading responses must be submitted on courseweb, and three copies must be brought to class. Assignments should be submitted on courseweb. You should submit early so that if there are internet troubles, you have another chance.

### **Cell phones, texting, laptops**

Turn off your phone in class. If you text in class I will reduce your participation grade. If your phone goes off accidentally, no big deal, but don't answer it, unless it is an emergency (I will answer my own cell phone if my babysitter's number comes up!). If you answer, I'll ask about the emergency. I will not smash your phone on the floor like some professors on youtube. Laptops are good for taking notes, but I am mobile and might like to see what you are writing. If we are talking in groups, you should have your laptop closed. If you are bored in class let me know, either right then or later, and I'll work on making things more interesting.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

### **Accommodation for Students with Special Needs**

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both me and the [Disability Resources and Services](#) (DRS) no later than the 2nd week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources

and Services, call 648-7890 (Voice or TTD) to schedule an appointment. The Office is located in 216 William Pitt Union. The DRS website is located at <http://www.pitt.edu/osaweb/drs/drs.html>. Guidelines for alternative access to Blackboard are located at <http://products.blackboard.com/cp/bb5/access/index/cgi>.