

STS 342-101/HM1: GENDER, TECHNOLOGY & SOCIETY

How We Think About Identity—Now

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Nancy Steffen-Fluhr

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COURSE CANVAS: <https://njit.instructure.com/courses/57934>

CLASS MEETINGS:

Tuesdays, 6:00-8:50 pm Cullimore Lecture Hall #1

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BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION: STS 342 focuses on the intersection of gender, sexual identity, race, and ethnicity in the world today. Using a variety of print and digital materials--including SF films, video games, and web content in all its forms--we'll explore the ways in which gender and ethnic/racial identity are being contested..in politics, mass media, and high-tech workplaces.

REQUIRED TEXTS: There are no textbooks to buy for this course. There is one novel on the syllabus, however: *Annie Bot* by Sierra Greer (Mariner Books, 2024). It's available from Amazon as either a paperback or a Kindle e-book. All of the other required readings are available in our course Canvas either as downloadable files or URLs.

REQUIRED FILM VIEWING: I will show several films and film clips in class. You will also be asked to see additional films on your own. Some of the films/videos are available for free at the URLs indicated in the syllabus. The others are widely available for a small rental fee on YouTube, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, iTunes, and/or Vudu, among other sources. If you have trouble finding a given film, please contact me.

COURSE GRADING SCALE:

GRADE	POINTS
A	90-100
B+	88-90
B	80-87
C+	78-80
C	70-77
D	65-70
F	Below 65

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/ GRADING (Here's How You Earn those 100 Points!)

Two analytical essays on assigned topics--

Essay #1: due November 18 **20 points**

Essay #2: due December 10 **20**

Midterm exam: October 21 **20**

Cumulative Final Exam: December 16 **30**

Weekly In-Class Quizzes **5** **[10 quizzes @ 0.5 points each]**

Weekly Class Participation Grade **5**

COURSE POLICY ON AI USE:

I chat with ChatGPT and expect that most of you do as well. In this course, however—where the content is often very personal—the important thing is for us to chat with each other. With that in mind, the policy in the course prohibits you from using AI in any form when you write the required essays. And, of course, you should do all the course readings on your own and not rely on AI summaries. (Your knowledge of and distinctive personal responses to the readings and films will be tested on our in-class exams which will require you to write extensive essays.) In the second half of the course, I may relax the AI prohibition briefly and allow you to use AI as a research tool for one specific assignment. In that instance, the AI must be cited as shown in the NJIT Library AI citation page: <https://researchguides.njit.edu/AI/home> If you have any questions or concerns about AI technology use in this class, please reach out to me.

WEEKLY READING/ DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

The schedule below provides a basic outline of each week's readings/films and discussion topics. You should have completed the assigned reading and/or seen the assigned film by the date on which it is scheduled for discussion. There will be a short quiz at the beginning of each class.

September 2 FIRST CLASS MEETING: Course Overview

Discussion Topics: Course objectives; course structure; grading process; the meaning of *gender*; the social construction of norms; changing views of gender identity

PowerPoint Lecture: Women and Technology: Images & Realities

In-class exercises: “Who Are You?” and the Bem Gender-Role Inventory

In-class feature film: *Zootopia* (2016)



Homework--to be completed by Sept. 9:

- Become a member of our course Canvas. Respond to the *Zootopia* Forum Assignment.
- Complete Core Readings 1a-1c
- Take Implicit Bias Tests [See below]
- See the film “Barbie” (2023)

MODULE 1

September 9 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER--part 1

READINGS:

1a. Messner, Mike. “Ah, Ya Throw Like A Girl!” In *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study*, (4th ed.) ed. Paula Rothenberg, 46-48. New York: St. Martins, 1998. **CANVAS**

1b. Kimmel, Michael. *The Gendered Society* (6th ed. 2017). New York: Oxford UP, 2000. [Hereafter “Kimmel”] **KIMMEL EXCERPT #1” CANVAS**

1c. Fausto-Sterling Anne. “Where Does Gender Come From?” in Kimmel, Michael and Amy Aronson. **CANVAS**

HOMEWORK EXERCISE: Take the GENDER-SCIENCE IAT test at: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>

DISCUSSION TOPICS: Decoding *Zootopia*; the social construction of gender; implicit bias; Barbie’s pink and blue world.

In-class Film Clips:

“Implicit Bias/ Concepts Unwrapped”

“Barbie” (2023)

MODULE 2

September 16 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER--part 2

READINGS:

2a. Bem, Sandra L. “In a Male-Centered World, Female Differences Are Transformed into Female Disadvantages,” **CANVAS**

2b. Hyde, Janet. The Gender Similarities Hypothesis” *American Psychologist* (September 2005): 581-592. **CANVAS**

2c. Kimmel. “KIMMEL EXCERPT 2” **CANVAS**

2d. Rippon. Gender and Our Brains **CANVAS**

2e. Fuentes, Augustin. “Biological Science Rejects the Sex Binary, and That’s Good for Humanity.” *The Scientist*. 12 May 2022. **CANVAS**

2f. “Busting Myths About Sex and Gender.” Excerpted from the second edition of *Race, Monogamy, and Other Lies They Told You*. © 2022 by Agustín Fuentes. Published by the University of California Press. **CANVAS**



Homework Film Assignment (due September 23): See the film *North Country* (2005) directed by Niki Caro

MODULE 3 September 23 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER & WORK

READINGS:

3a. KIMMEL EXCERPT #3 CANVAS
3b. Willer, Robb et. al. "Overdoing Gender: A Test of the Masculine Overcompensation Thesis." In Kimmel & Aronson. CANVAS
3c. Kimmel, Michael. "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity." In *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study*, (11th ed.) ed. Paula Rothenberg with Christina Hsu Accomando, I:7. New York: Worth Publisher/Macmillan Learning. New York 2020. CANVAS
3d. Ely Robin and Debra Meyerson. "Unmasking Manly Men." In Kimmel & Aronson. CANVAS

FILM TO SEE BEFORE CLASS: *North Country* (2005) [Amazon, Vudu, iTunes, 2 hours, 6 minutes]

In-class short film and discussion: "Who Are You?"

DISCUSSION TOPICS: The social construction of gender and work in *North Country* and in our country.

 **Homework Film Assignment (due October 1):** *Her* (2013) directed by Spike Jonze [Amazon, MAX, 126 minutes]
Have completed reading the 2024 novel *Annie Bot*

MODULE 4 September 30 GENDER, EMBODIMENT—and BOTS

Discussion: Gender and agency in *Annie Bot* and *Her*.

 **Homework Film Assignment (due October 7):** *Hidden Figures* (2016) [Amazon, iTunes, Vudu, 2 hours, 7 minutes]

MODULE 5 October 7 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE

READINGS:

4a. Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. "Racial Formations" in Rothenberg: 13-22. (excerpt) CANVAS
4b. Smedley, Audrey and Brian Smedley. "Race as Biology Is Fiction, Racism as a Social Problem Is Real: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives on the Social Construction of Race." *American Psychologist* (January 2005): 16-26. CANVAS
4c. Jen, Gish. "An Ethnic Trump." In Rothenberg, 284-86. CANVAS
4e. Rutherford. *How to Argue with a Racist: What Our Genes Do (and Don't) Say About Human Difference*. Amazon/ The Experiment, 2020. (excerpt) CANVAS
4d. Elizabeth Aries on the impact of college diversity: <https://theconversation.com/at-a-small-liberal-arts-college-black-students-learned-to-become-bicultural-to-succeed-and-get-jobs-but-stress-followed-193429>

FILM TO SEE BEFORE CLASS: *Hidden Figures* (2016) [Amazon, iTunes, Vudu, 2 hours, 7 minutes]

In-Class Short Film & Discussion: *Lunch Date* (1990)

In-Class Video: [Can Artificial Intelligence Have a Bias?](#)

DISCUSSION TOPICS: The social construction of race; racism in *Hidden Figures* and *Lunch Date*—and in our world today; the "Alt-Right"; microaggressions

 **Homework Film Assignment (due October 14):** *No Ordinary Man* (2020) [Amazon, Vudu, YouTube, 1 hour, 23 minutes]

MODULE 6 October 14 TRANSGENDER IDENTITY

READINGS:

5a. Strangio, Chase. "The Unbearable (In)visibility of Being Trans." In *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study*, (11th ed.) ed. Paula Rothenberg with Christina Hsu Accomando, VI:12. New York: Worth Publisher/Macmillan Learning. New York 2020. CANVAS
5b. Excerpt: Butler, Judith. *Who's Afraid of Gender?* (New Yor: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2024). CANVAS

FILM TO SEE BEFORE CLASS: *No Ordinary Man* (2020) [Amazon, Vudu, YouTube, 1 hour, 23 minutes]

In-Class Videos:

[For Nonna Anna](#)
[Maya Henry: Male to Female Transition Timeline](#)
[Dr. Sasha Costanza-Chock on Design Justice](#)

DISCUSSION TOPICS: sex and gender identity

October 21 MIDTERM EXAM + film excerpts

In-Class Film & Discussion (after the midterm Exam): *Picture a Scientist* (2020) [excerpts]

MODULE 7 October 28 SCIENCE AND GENDER (Then and Now)

READINGS:

7a. Barrett, Andrea. "Rare Bird." In *Ship Fever*. 59-79. New York: Norton, 1996. **CANVAS**
7c. Moss-Racusin, Corinne A., John F. Dovidio, Victoria L. Brescoll, Mark J. Graham, and Jo Handelsman. "Science faculty's subtle gender biases favor male students." *PNAS* October 9, 2012 vol. 109 no. 41 16474-16479

In-Class Film Clips: *Picture a Scientist* (2020)

DISCUSSION TOPICS: *Picture a Scientist*—then and now; Explicit and implicit bias in science; the Old Maid stereotype; the Imposter/Perfect Girl Syndromes; the 80%-20% rule

 **Homework Film Assignment (due November 5):** See *The Race for the Double Helix* (1987) Vimeo [97 minutes]

Best online source: <https://vimeo.com/179934156>

Lower Quality Option:

PART I: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xitlyu>
PART II: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xitmuj3>

MODULE 8 November 4 APPLYING GENDER SCHEMA THEORY TO THE FRANKLIN CASE

FILM TO SEE BEFORE CLASS: *The Race for the Double Helix* [aka *Life Story*] (1987) [97 minutes]

Best online source: <https://vimeo.com/179934156>

Lower Quality Option:

PART I: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xitlyu>
PART II: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xitmuj3>

In-Class Film Excerpts:

NOVA "The Secret of Photo 51" [56 minutes]

OPTIONAL READING FOR THIS CASE STUDY:

Brenda Maddox. *Rosalind Franklin. The Dark Lady of DNA* (Paperback). Harper Perennial (October 1, 2003).
James Watson. *The Double Helix*. New York: Mentor NAL, 1968.

VISUAL HISTORY: [17 Rare Images Tell the Real Story of Women in Tech.](#)

DISCUSSION TOPICS: The Franklin Case; Women in STEM—Then and Now

 **Homework Film Assignment (due November 12):** *Arrival* (2016) [Amazon, Vudu, iTunes, 2 hours]

MODULE 9 November 11 GENDER AND LEADERSHIP...in OUTER SPACE

REMINDER: ESSAY #1 IS DUE NEXT WEEK



FILM TO SEE BEFORE CLASS: *Arrival* (2016) starring Amy Adams [Amazon, Vudu, iTunes, 2 hours]

In-Class Film Clip: “Kate Bowman” and her computer “Lucille” in *Red Planet* (2000)]

DISCUSSION TOPICS: Continued discussion of Franklin case; discussion of women in SF

MODULE 10 November 18 GENDER, EMBODIMENT—and BOTS Part 2

REMINDER ESSAY #1 IS DUE TODAY, NOVEMBER 18!

In-Class Film & Discussion: *Ex Machina* (2013) directed by Alex Garland. (109 minutes)

NO CLASS ON NOVEMBER 25

HAPPY THURSDAY TURKEY DAY!

MODULES 11-12 December 2 CAREER SUCCESS STRATEGIES

READINGS:

11a. Aries Elizabeth. “Women and Men Talking: Are They Worlds Apart?” In Walsh: 91-100. **CANVAS**

12b. KIMMEL EXCERPT #5. **CANVAS**

In-Class Film Clips:

Deborah Tannen’s corporate training film *Talking 9 to 5* (1997)

Joan Williams. “What Works for Women at Work”

MODULE 13 December 9 LAST CLASS! ESSAY #2 DUE TOMORROW!

Course review; final exam preparation

December 16 FINAL EXAM!