

**HU 363 Communication and Society: Race, Gender & Sexuality  
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University**

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**Course (Catalog) Description**

An examination of human communication in a variety of cultural settings. Analysis of verbal discourses, non-verbal communication, symbolic imagery and media as a means of constructing identity and social norms. Themes vary by instructor and are listed in the schedule of courses.

**Course Specifics**

Identities are at once intensely personal and deeply social, constituting our sense of who we are and our ideas about our “self,” but always in a context of who others think we are and expect us to be. Further, identities are *enacted*. That is, they are performed socially in the context of particular cultures, subcultures, and relationships.

While identity “roles” change with time and across contexts, they are a matter of great social significance. By adhering to appropriate, but often ambiguous, identity norms we acquire privilege and avoid discrimination. How we choose to identify, or how others identify us, has an impact on what we say and do (i.e., how we communicate). In particular, the gender roles “man” and “woman” profoundly structure social expectations, restrictions and opportunities at every level of human interaction and communication.

In this course, we will discuss identity within society from a variety of perspectives. Specifically, we will focus on our sexualized and gendered identities. We begin by examining current discourses surrounding masculinity, femininity and sexuality. Then, we consider the intersection of other aspects of identity such as race, class, and religion. We will also study the ways popular culture informs (and in some cases problematizes) these identities. And finally, we will work to see what kind of changes we can make to our local social culture. In so doing, I hope we come to better understand how “natural” and “normal” criteria are socially constructed in ways that can cause emotional and physical harm as well as rewards.

Throughout the semester, we will take an active approach to learning. We will use and explore our daily lives as texts for analysis. Gender and Sexuality are not ideas, they are real, lived experiences.

**Goals**

This course provides students with an appreciation for the role human communication plays in the creation and maintenance of society. Coming to understand the social and cultural constructions of identity, students will learn how to analyze and examine discourses about identity as they exist within language, visual imagery, popular culture, television and advertising.

**Textbook:** Foss, S.K., Domenico, M.E. & Foss, K.A., *Gender Stories: Negotiating Identity in a Binary World*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press 2013.

Additional Readings/News Stories/Etc., as needed.

### **Learning Outcomes**

1. Understand the relationship between language and the creation of socio-cultural norms through in class discussion.
2. Demonstrate understanding, through written analysis, of social norms as socially and culturally constructed and dependent upon time and place
3. Through written assignments, discussions, and a final class project, critically examine the role verbal discourse, non-verbal communication, symbolic imagery and mass media play in creating and maintaining identity within society
4. Describe ways in which social and cultural norms change as a result of new language and new media by identifying and discussing such norms.
5. Differentiate between identity as a product of communication and society rather than simply a product of biology.

### **What We Must Be Committed To Do:**

- Be present (both physically and mentally) for all class sessions so that you learn from others and offer your colleagues insight
- Commit yourself to producing well-written, thoughtful, and coherent written work
- Be open to listening, respecting, and understanding perspectives that differ from your own

You may feel challenged by course material. We will discuss many political issues, and class conversations might make you uncomfortable. While I do not ask that you accept any ideas we discuss, I do ask that you tolerate divergent views, respect each other, and maintain an open mind and a positive attitude for conversation. If you think you may have a problem with any of these requests, you should reconsider enrolling in this course. Tolerance is the minimum requirement. Acknowledging and respecting difference is the norm you should embrace in this course.

### **Class Policies, Norms, and Expectations**

1. Most **Written work** will be submitted through Canvas. When/if it is due in class, it is due at the beginning of the class period. If you are late to class your work will be considered late. You must be present in class for your work to be considered on time. I do not accept assignments turned in by other students, except by prior arrangement. No assignments will be accepted after one week beyond the due date; that means before class begins one week later. No make-ups will be granted and there is no extra credit.

All work must be: typed in Times New Roman 12 point font (or something comparable) with one-inch margins, have your name at the top of the first page and stapled – if hard copy is required. If a written assignment does not meet the format guidelines it will be considered late. Late work will be penalized one letter grade per day (a B becomes a C); this means if you hand

in an unstapled assignment in class or submit a document without your name on it, it will be considered late and the grade will be lowered.

2. **24/7 Policy:** If you have a concern about a grade on a paper or a presentation, you must wait at least 24 hours to contact me. During this time, please read over my comments and prepare to see me with specific questions about improvement. After 7 days, I will not discuss graded assignments. Additionally, no grades will be discussed over email. Any questions with regard to grades must be discussed in person during office hours, or during a scheduled appointment.

3. Do not use inappropriate language in class. In this course, it is important for people and ideas to be treated with respect. Productive use of class time is essential. Please avoid any behavior that makes it difficult to accomplish our mutual objectives (i.e. side conversations or disrespectful comments). Turn off cell phones and any other noise making electrical devices before class starts.

4. Email is the best way to reach me.

### Canvas

Announcements, reading, assignments, and handouts will be posted on Canvas; students are expected to check the course website daily and to be prepared for class by **bringing the necessary materials to class on the appropriate days**. You may also receive emails about class from Canvas.

### Communication/Messages

The university's official means of communicating with students is through its email system. Even though you may have a different, or additional, email address, **you are responsible for checking your ERAU email**, which is the medium I will use, in addition to Canvas.

### Academic Integrity

**ERAU is committed to intellectual integrity and considers academic dishonesty a very serious offense.** Such offenses include

- **Cheating**—i.e. accepting unauthorized assistance in preparing assignments
- **Fraud**—i.e. gaining unfair advantage through deceit, trickery, or falsification of records, including self- and teammate contribution reports; unless a student has been granted prior permission from each professor, double/multiple submission (submitting identical or substantially similar written assignments to fulfill a requirement in more than one course, regardless of term) constitutes one form of academic fraud
- **Plagiarism**—i.e. taking ideas, writings, words, and/or the work of another and representing them as one's own without proper acknowledgement

A student who commits any academic integrity violation will receive an F for the course. In addition, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students. If any other violations have been documented, the student will be recommended for dismissal.

### Assignments

Attendance & Participation

Group Presentation  
Textual Analysis  
Activism Paper/Project  
Gender Portfolio

### **Attendance and Participation**

Some of the greatest opportunities for learning take place during in-class discussions. You make the best of this class when you attend it. For that reason, I not only expect you to attend class but I expect you to participate in class discussions and activities.

Participation is not graded on quantity but rather on quality. You must demonstrate familiarity with the readings throughout class discussions if you hope to earn a high mark in participation.

I will note attendance at every class. You must come to class every day, on time, and stay for the duration of the period. If you come late or leave early **you will be considered absent**. For every missed class, ten points will be taken off your grade. Absences due to illness or unexpected emergencies will be excused at my discretion only.

### **Group Presentation Assignment**

In groups, students will create a 1-hour presentation. Presentations will synthesize, apply, extend, and reflect on the material due that week. Presentations must include outside sources on the topic and demonstrate a competency in research capabilities.

### **Textual Analysis Paper**

In order to fully understand the impact media has on constructing the ways in which we understand gender and sexuality, each student will embark on a textual analysis paper. Textual analyses will focus on one film, to be chosen from the “Movie Options” list. Textual analysis will be turned in via Canvas on 10/26 and in class that day, students will each give 3-4 minute presentations about their papers.

### **Activism Project**

A key assignment in HU363 is an activism project. In order to fully understand the complicated nature of gender and sexuality within our culture, students need to get involved with the politics of gender and/or sexuality. Activism comes in many forms, all of which may be suitable for this course. Activism should create change; anything that opens your mind to new ways of thinking and can be shared with others can be considered activism. Activist projects must relate to gender and/or sexuality and in some way work towards the betterment of humankind. A minimum of **20** activism hours is expected during the semester.

<b>Group Presentation Assignment*</b>
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All students will participate in a 45-minute to one-hour group “presentation.” Group sessions should help illustrate, clarify, and extend the theories and issues presented in the required readings. Your general goal is to inform your audience about your assigned topic and chapter (masculinity, femininity, sexuality, or trans/intersex); however, you should not simply restate information from the readings or class lectures/discussions. Instead, you should incorporate new examples, visual aids, and activities to review and emphasize the important information.

The topics are quite broad, so your first goal is to determine an idea/concept that you would like to be the focus of your presentation. This idea must be submitted to me in writing (email is fine) no later than one-week prior to the date on which you present. Foci may come from politics, popular culture, news media, and so forth.

Included in the presentation is a 20-minute class discussion. To help do this the group will prepare five discussion questions based on the material in the presentation and the class readings. Your goal is to lead the discussion in a way that brings about the active involvement of the rest of the class. Do not shy away from controversy, as this sometimes invites participation.

You may lead your discussion forum in any way you choose. Specifically, you must have an introduction to the presentation, involve your audience (more so than asking: “Any questions?” at the end), have a conclusion, incorporate visual aids, and every group member must participate.

Finally, each group will prepare a two-page (maximum) handout summarizing the key ideas and vocabulary of **each** reading for that module. As well, the handout should include 3 multiple choice or true/false questions based on each reading. Groups will need to distribute handouts to all members of the class. If you would like me to photocopy the handout, it must be emailed to me no later than 5PM the day before your group presents. You should think of this handout as a study guide for your peers that illustrates the key arguments of each of the readings, outlines vocabulary, and poses questions.

Your grade for this assignment is based on the following:

1. Was the forum thorough in covering the topic in question?
2. Was the forum organized effectively?
3. Did the forum actively involve the audience and bring about a quality discussion?
4. Was the forum delivered effectively?
5. Did the forum bring about new understandings of your issue?

The points for this assignment are as follows:

Group Presentation Grade	125 points
Handout	75 points

\* Activity adapted from Dr. Emily Ryalls

<b>Textual Analysis Paper &amp; Presentation**</b>
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Directions for the paper:

After viewing one of the films listed for this assignment, you will perform a qualitative textual analysis (See “Cultural Studies, Mutliculturalism, and Media Culture” by Douglas Kellner for further discussion of textual analysis). Consider the ways in which the film conveys ideologies of femininity or masculinity. There is no ‘correct’ way to analyze a film. It is your goal as a critic to make an argument. The argument you wish to make must be explained in the thesis statement of the paper’s introduction. Papers without a clear thesis statement will NOT receive a grade above a C.

In order to support YOUR argument, weave in (at least) two (2) quotes/citations from the textbook to support your argument. Also, you must include 2 credible outside, sources; from each outside source, you must include one quote/citation. You may not use the Kellner piece for support. Remember, you are using the quotes to support your argument, not to summarize the author’s argument or to compare your text to the argument made by the author. You must use in-text citation and include a reference page, following APA format. Your papers should be four to five pages long (including reference page) with normal margins and font. Papers without in-text citation OR a reference page will receive an F. Please see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> for instructions on using APA.

You should assume a universal reader for this paper. In other words, do not address me directly in your paper. Nor should you assume that the reader of this paper has read the readings you are citing or seen the film you are analyzing. Take nothing for granted!

Organize your papers as follows:

1. Introduction – Grab the attention of your reader and introduce the text and concept you will be analyzing. The introduction must include a clear thesis and preview statement. The thesis states in a single, concise statement what argument you will make. The preview lays out how you will make that argument. What will each body paragraph be about?
2. Analysis – Create one body paragraph for each supporting argument you wish to make. Include as many specific examples from the text as possible. Each paragraph must include a topic sentence in which you introduce the argument you will make, as well as a concluding sentence that ties the examples you have provided back to the argument you are making. Don’t leave the heavy lifting for your reader!
3. Conclusion –Summarize the paper. Restate your thesis statement and briefly review the supporting arguments. Finish with an overarching statement about what your analysis says about society as a whole. In other words: “So what?”

In Class Presentation:

On Monday, October 26, you will present your Textual Analysis paper. These presentations will be similar to informative speeches and a way to prepare for future scholarly conferences. Each student will have 4-6 minutes to discuss her/his research. This is a structured, formal presentation. Please include visual aids if appropriate (for example, a clip from the film you analyze). You may also provide handouts or anything else that would help the class to understand the work you have done. Presentations in which the presenter simply reads her/his paper aloud will not receive a passing grade and presentations with no clear format or structure or outline will not receive a passing grade.

### **Options for Film Analysis:**

*Monster's Ball*

*Good Will Hunting*

*Girl Fight*

*Amistad*

*The Boondock Saints*

*The Hunger Games*

*Election*

*The Company Men*

*Cinderella Man*

*Hoop Dreams*

*Forrest Gump*

*Men in Black*

*Superbad*

*Jawbreaker*

*Citizen Ruth*

*Terminator 2*

*Cinderella*

*Fight Club*

*Ghost World*

*The Outsiders*

*Thirteen*

\*\* Activity adapted from Dr. Emily Ryalls

**Activism Project**
**Activism Project – Minimum 20 hours**
**Discussion Board:**

During the first 3 weeks of class, students are required to participate in an ongoing discussion about activism on campus and within our local community. This discussion will be the basis for the development of groups and final projects/papers. Students are expected to contribute to the discussion on a regular basis during the three-week period.

- For the first part of the discussion, each student must suggest 5 projects. From the initial list, groups will emerge as people find common interests.
- If you do not offer 5 projects or if you fail to be an active participant in the discussion, you will receive a 0 for this assignment.

**Activism Project Plan** must include a detailed description of activism project – including, but not limited to:

- Site
- Contact Person
- Plan for accumulation of hours
- Rational for project
  - Why the project matters
  - What you hope to accomplish
  - Why you want to do the work

**Activism Update 1 & 2** must:

- Show that work has been done and progress is being made – Hours accumulated, etc.
- Reflect any changes to the project

**Project Portfolio**

Minimum Requirements:

- Detailed log of hours
  - Account for what you did during each hour
  - Dates for the hours accrued
    - Show/tell me clearly what you did during your time. If you leave me wondering about where the time went, then I wonder if you earned your grade.
- Narrative summary of project (2-3 pages per person)
  - Purpose
  - Goals
  - Rationale
  - Relation to course concepts
  - Stories from the field
  - Accounts of experiences
  - Your “take aways” from the project:
    - How did the work make the classroom information come to life?

- How did the work offer a different way of learning than in the classroom?
- What did you learn from the work you couldn't learn from the classroom?

Other possible stuff to include (i.e. how to earn an A not a C):

- Photos from your work/job cite. Videos of the work (if relevant)
- Quotes/testimonials from the people you worked with
- Incorporation of course material – quotes and ideas directly from the texts we have read and discussed in class

## Gender Portfolio

### Weekly Entries

Throughout this semester, students will develop a gender portfolio. The portfolio will be a collection of artifacts and critical commentaries of artifacts related to gender that illustrate theories and concepts covered in class. The artifacts may be descriptions of scenes from movies or TV shows, songs, poems, articles from magazines or newspapers, websites, toys, excerpts from books, advertisements, greeting cards, photographs, paintings, comic strips, descriptions of personal experiences, and the like.

For each of the modules, students must collect three artifacts that illustrate, challenge, reiterate, exemplify, or discount the concepts discussed in the chapter's reading.

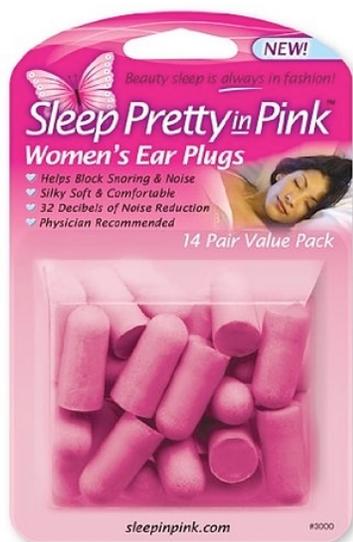
At the end of the semester, students will organize and display the items in a creative way in an online portfolio. Portfolios will have a minimum of 27 artifact entries.

Each week, students will summarize and analyze the artifacts collected. For each artifact, think about and submit a document that addresses the following:

- How is gender presented or represented in the artifact?
- What is the definition of gender the artifacts implicitly or explicitly holds?
- Does the artifact retell, revise, or rework the gender binary?

To be clear, the Gender Binary assumes female and male to be two distinct and opposite forms of femininity and masculinity. This binary is displayed and demonstrated in many ways, as suggested in each chapter. For this assignment, you must find artifacts that represent the discussion of the gender binary per the chapter topic.

Example artifact and analysis:



The example of earplugs for men and women works to retell and reinscribe the gender binary. Something as mundane as an earplug does not need to be gendered male or female – the shape of our ears do not differ as a result of our gender and the shape of the earplugs is the same for men and women. The only difference is packaging. Hot pink tells women their earplugs are feminine and a skull and crossbones tells men their earplugs are masculine. The definition of male, via earplugs, is hard and angry; the definition of female, via earplugs, is silky, soft and pretty. The language specifically defines male and female with the words “pretty in pink” and “skull screws.” As such, gender is presented to reaffirm the social norm that men are tough and women are soft.

### **Final Portfolio**

The final portfolio will include 5-7 page narrative assessment of the portfolio’s contents. The narrative assessment of the portfolio will connect theories from the course to the artifacts offered in both a cumulative way as well as specific connections. As such, the portfolio will offer both an overview of gender, sexuality and key theories as they relate to the portfolio as a whole and also detailed analysis of key artifacts. Students may weave personal experiences and stories into the overall narrative. Students must incorporate clear citations/quotes from the textbook. Think about the following questions:

- What was the motivation for including the artifact?
- How have the artifacts changed throughout the semester?
- How have you changed throughout the semester and how is that reflected in the artifacts?
- What was your process in choosing artifacts?
- How do the artifacts showcase your definition of gender?
- How do the artifacts contradict your ideas about gender?