
The Nature and Nurture of Gender

MCC 102-16

Spring 2011

Instructor: Dr. Geoff Turner
S-169
x2609, turnerg@simmons.edu
Office Hours by Appointment

Required Texts: Lippa, R.A. (2005). *Gender, nature, and nurture*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
Aaron, J. E. (2008). *LB brief: Little brown handbook*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
Other readings as assigned

Course Description: MCC 102 is the second half of a two semester, required course for first-year students with two main objectives: improving your critical thinking and writing skills and developing your awareness of the roles race, class, and (especially for us) gender play both personally and societally. As a writing course, the process of writing will be emphasized as much as the product of writing. You should plan on writing multiple drafts of papers because evaluating, revising, and editing one's own work is an integral part of being a good writer (and therefore, thinker). As a gender course, this course should serve to broaden your understanding the similarities as well as differences between males and females and how those similarities and differences are embedded within a broader sociocultural context that treats and portrays men and women differently. As a consequence of achieving the first two goals I expect you to become a critical consumer of claims about both the existence, causes, and consequences of differences between males and females. I also hope that you will learn to use these critical thinking skills in evaluating other materials dealing with other areas, particularly those which end in "ism."

I love to teach and I work very hard at it. I try hard to make the material relevant and interesting, but please do not confuse teaching with entertainment. Our reason for being here is to increase your learning. My reason for stimulating your interest in this material is that you will learn more about something that engages you. It is important for you to recognize that, although I love teaching, I am a professor and not a teacher. I expect that you are already a motivated and skilled learner. Remember, you (and *only* you) are responsible for your own educational success. I do not promise that you will learn anything in this class because I cannot make you learn. Class is like a gym membership: I am providing you with an opportunity (in this case, to learn) - how much is up to you. But if you work as hard at learning as I work at teaching, you will learn a lot in this class.

Course Policies: ¹

Attendance

Attendance is required for this course: both in class and at all MCC-related events. I assume that I am dealing with serious students who plan to be where they are supposed to be every day. In accordance with Simmons's MCC policy, three absences will result in an academic warning. More than five absences results in failure of the course, regardless of the quality of the work completed. Should you miss a class, it is your responsibility to acquire that information by conferring with fellow students.

¹ These policies are subject to change as I deem necessary in order to meet the educational goals of this course. All changes will be announced in class, via Simmons email, and/or on eLearning.

Take a moment now to gather contact information from two other students.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Phone number</u>	<u>Email address</u>
1.			
2.			

In the event of a weather emergency you can find out whether the college is closed by calling the weather line at (617) 521-3INF. In the event that class is canceled (e.g., the college is closed, Dr. Turner is sick, etc.) on a day we have an assignment due, it will be collected at our next meeting.

Class²

The fact that this is a discussion class rather than a lecture offers both opportunities and challenges. The best way for you to learn is to become an active participant in your learning. Here, you have the opportunity to express your thoughts on a regular basis, rather than sitting back and just taking in what I tell you. The challenge is that with no one giving a lecture, the quality of the class depends *at least* as much on what you do as on what I do. For this reason, You are expected to prepare yourself for discussion, questioning and informed debate on these issues. Consequently, I expect everyone to actively participate in the discussion.

Because the focus of our meetings will be discussions of the reading material, I also expect that each of you will come to class prepared. This includes both assignments that are to be turned in and readings pertaining to each day's class. Research has unequivocally demonstrated that reading before class facilitates learning and helps ensure that you get as much as possible from the class material. It will also be obvious to everyone in class that you are unprepared.

Because passive learning is less efficient than active learning, you should be prepared to express your opinions about the material regularly. Discussions are often valuable forums for learning because they provide practice in thinking, articulating thoughts, evaluating evidence, and applying knowledge. If there is something that you do not understand in the reading, you can prevent being called upon to discuss it by raising your hand and asking a question about it in class. I plan to ask you many questions and I certainly encourage you to ask me questions.

The complexity of our society today requires that college graduates have well developed critical thinking skills which require considered thought and a sensitivity to a wide range of views on important issues. These skills will be fostered in this course as we explore several controversial issues. Many of the issues we will confront have no "right" or "wrong" answers, but more or less "considered" opinions.

These important ideas are often provocative, sometimes controversial. This course will cover some material about the nature of what males and females *are* like and what they *should be* like that some might find uncomfortable. Perfect for challenging your unexamined assumptions about gender. Your reactions to class material cannot help but be affected by your feelings, experiences, and convictions about the issues as well as your personal and political philosophies. It is important to be aware of and sensitive to these reactions in yourself and in your classmates. I want to ask each of you to do your part in creating a classroom environment where individuals feel valued and do not have to fear ridicule or embarrassment when they speak. You are expected to be respectful of other students' opinions even when they are directly opposed to your own views. The intellectual vitality of a university depends on a commitment to the free

² Some of this material is adapted from Lloyd (2001, 2006)

exchange of ideas and a respect for intellectual diversity. However, you should not feel like you need to agree with everything that anyone (including me) says in this class. However, you do need to treat everyone with respect and courtesy. Otherwise, the learning environment suffers. In other words, you do not have to restrict *what* you say (as long as it's related to our course), just *how* you say it.

To this end, I'm providing some ground-rules for discussion:

- Refrain from sharing highly personal information.
- If you have spoken once, let someone else speak before you talk again.
- You have the right *not* to share your thoughts, feelings, or beliefs on a particular topic if you prefer, but this cannot be used as an excuse for non-participation.
- Do not identify by name the personal experiences or beliefs revealed by other members of this class to anyone outside of class.
- Own your remarks – phrases like “I think...” and “I believe...” are helpful here.
- Listen to your classmates. Strive to respect others’ points of view and learn from them. Try to understand what individuals believe and why they think this way rather than automatically dismissing perspectives that are different from yours.
- There is no reward and no penalty for having a particular set of beliefs. Let's all work to build an atmosphere that encourages and respects individual contributions.

However, it is important to remember that although a university cannot survive without allowing for an open intellectual discussion of any idea, regardless of how distasteful someone finds it or how uncomfortable it makes someone feel, it does not follow that all ideas are equally good or all positions equally valid.

In a related vein, as we work to improve your writing you will occasionally present your writing publicly. Only honest, constructive feedback is conducive to learning. Please be sensitive to others’ feelings as you evaluate their writing, just as you want them to be sensitive to yours.

Please turn off your cell phones before you come to class. You are being both discourteous and disruptive when your phone rings in the middle of class. Phones and PDAs are also distracting if used to send text messages “silently” because they disturb the people sitting near you. Further, being able to focus on the present is associated with good mental health, while multitasking is linked to higher levels of stress. If you are incapable of disconnecting yourself for 80 minutes, you have a problem that requires professional support. Scientific research has also shown that laptops in class are disruptive to both the user and her neighbors. Please leave them at home.

College Email

I will sometimes communicate with the entire class by sending email that automatically addresses each of you at your college email account. For this reason, you will have to check your college email regularly. I cannot use non-college email addresses (hotmail, AOL, etc.) to send bulk emails to the entire class. If you have a non-college email, then either check both regularly or go to <http://email.simmons.edu> and have your Simmons email forwarded to whatever account you do check regularly. Unfortunately, I get so much junk mail that I have to filter non-Simmons email. Please use your Simmons account to send mail to me or I may not get it.

Late Papers

Work is due in class on the dates specified. Papers and assignments turned in after class (even 5 minutes after class) have 5% deducted per calendar day. Papers more than one week late will not be accepted.

Excuses and Fairness

Except as provided by Simmons College Policy as described in your Student Handbook and Course Catalog, assignments missed or turned in late for any reason (even a really, really good one) will be penalized. The reason for this policy is because I want to be fair to everyone. My job requires the evaluation of your performance in this course, but I cannot evaluate excuses. If I start to make exceptions to the course policies based upon reasons for lack of performance, I am not being fair to all the students. For example,

imagine that the family member of a student experiences the sudden onset of a serious illness. I understand that a sudden serious illness in an immediate family member might result in missed class and a missed assignment or exam. If I were to offer a make-up or accept a late project for credit, I have made a judgment about the seriousness of the illness and the closeness of the family member. Is a heart attack serious enough? Probably. Is flu serious enough? Maybe, it depends upon other support persons available. Is a mother a close enough family member? Probably. Is a second cousin close enough? Maybe, I suppose it depends upon the history of the relationship with the second cousin. Do you see what I mean? I cannot possibly fairly evaluate these things, so I restrict myself to evaluating only your performance in the course.

Additional Help

Please also note that Simmons College provides additional support services for students having difficulty (including difficulty with writing) via the Advising and Academic Support Center. Do not hesitate to avail yourself of their services if warranted.

Accommodations for Disabilities

In accordance with the Americans With Disabilities Act, Simmons College provides equal access for students with disabilities. Students with documented learning disabilities should make contact with someone from Disability Services (located in Suite P304 of the Pottruck Building – x2474) as early in the term as possible. Accommodations can only be provided for students who have officially registered with Disability Services and who present an official Student Academic Accommodation Request (SAAR) form. Students with documented learning disabilities who are entitled some kind of accommodation MUST make an appointment to meet with me to negotiate the form that accommodation will take so that it will fit with the educational goals of the course. Students are not entitled to unilaterally decide the form their accommodations take. Accommodations cannot be made retroactively, so please make every attempt to meet with me within seven days of the start of classes.

Academic Integrity

How would you feel about riding over a long, high bridge with your family and discovering that the engineer who designed it had regularly copied off of his roommate? Would it bother you? Why is it that many jobs require a college degree? What is it these employers are looking for?

Academic integrity is central to the collegiate philosophy of learning. Therefore, academic dishonesty of any form (including plagiarism and cheating) will not be tolerated. Violations of any part of the Honor Code will result in the immediate notification of the honor committee. You each have a copy of Sources published by Simmons College. It is YOUR responsibility to acquire, read, understand, and follow the Simmons College guidelines on academic honesty. If you have any questions concerning this matter, consult your Student Handbook. If you still have questions, please see me before, not after.

Evaluation:

Assignments³

1. In this class you will write 3 college-level, polished papers – the third of which will be a 10-12 page rhetorical paper that approaches an issue from at least two perspectives. You will meet with me individually to go over my feedback for your first two papers and then have the opportunity to revise either or both papers. If your revisions receive higher grades than your initial submission, you will have earned the higher grade. If your revised papers earn a lower grade, the grades will be averaged.
2. You will write 5 one-page reflections on the readings. The weeks you choose are completely up to you.
3. Others to be announced in class.

The individual assignments will be available on eLearning. Regardless of the assignment, only well-proofed, typed, double-spaced, stapled papers printed in black ink will be accepted. These are part of the assignment. As is submitting it on time. If you have failed to meet these criteria, then you haven't completed the assignment. You may submit papers as email attachments as Word, Pages, rtf, or pdf documents (only), provided they are submitted *before* class.

Assignments are weighted as follows:

Papers 60%
Reflections 20%
Participation 20%

Grading

I respect you enough to give you accurate feedback about your performance in this class, even when that feedback won't make you happy. Your grade in this course will be determined solely on basis of the points you earn. Please note that effort does not factor in here. Anywhere. At least not directly. Those who work harder typically earn more points, but working VERY, VERY, VERY hard and not mastering the material will earn a poor grade. Why doesn't effort count? First, I have no way of measuring your effort, so how could I use it to grade you? Second, all of your Simmons credentials (your gpa, your degree, awards, honors, etc.) are based on your accomplishments, not your effort. The outside world assumes that someone with a 3.8 gpa actually *KNOWS* something, not just that she worked hard. How would you feel if you learned, just as you were succumbing to the effects of anesthesia, that your surgeon failed every exam in medical school, but got passing grades his courses because he tried really hard? Would you be scared? I would.

Final grades will be based on the percentage of points earned out of the total:

A : 93-100
A- : 90-92
B+ : 87-89
B : 83-86
B- : 80-82
C+ : 77-79
C : 73-76
C- : 70-72
D+ : 67-69
D : 63-66
D- : 60-62
F : 59 or lower

³ Adapted from Courmier Hayes (2007)

Course Schedule:

You will notice that the following course outline has no dates. This is intentional - each class has its own pace. We will cover as much material as we can, but we will neither go so quickly that the class gets left behind, nor so slowly that the course becomes unnecessarily repetitive. Remember though, that this outline is **TENTATIVE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE**. All changes will be announced in class, on eLearning, and/or via Simmons email. Below is a **partial** list of readings. Other readings will be posted on eLearning or handed out in class.

Week	Topic	Reading
1 & 2	Differences	▪ <i>Gender, Nature, and Nurture</i> . Chapters 1 & 2.
3	Theories of Gender	▪ <i>Gender, Nature, and Nurture</i> . Chapter 3.
4 – 6	Biological Causes	▪ <i>Gender, Nature, and Nurture</i> . Chapter 4.
7 – 9	Social Causes	▪ <i>Gender, Nature, and Nurture</i> . Chapters 5 & 6.
10	Interactions	
11-13	Consequences	▪ <i>Gender, Nature, and Nurture</i> . Chapter 7.

Course FAQs

How can I get in touch with you?

I will try to make communicating with me as easy as possible. Feel free to meet with me in my office – I'm usually there during the day. If you'd like to be sure I'm there, use my web-based sign-up sheet. It has times that I'm available – go to <http://www.appointmentquest.com/provider/2050057724> to sign up for a time. I don't have voicemail, but you can reach me by phone when I'm in the office. You can always leave email messages for me; I answer student emails on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. However, DO NOT ASSUME that because you have left a message for me that I have received it.

Do I have to know **everything** from the class and the books?

Yes. I have already taken all of the stuff you don't need to know out of my notes, and I very carefully chose books with only important information. Why would I knowingly waste time by assigning or going over meaningless material?

Why don't you cover everything from the readings?

Welcome to college. We do five things in this class. First, discuss material to both clarify it and to learn from each other's ideas. Second, we go over difficult material from the readings – that is, material that students have historically found confusing. Third, anything *you* find confusing from the reading, class is the time to ask me to explain it in a different way. Fourth, I will emphasize especially important material. Finally, I will add material that I think is helpful/necessary for you to understand the principles discussed in this course. I assume that you've read before class. Thus, class is not a narrative, like the readings.

Why do you cover stuff that's not in the readings?

See above.

Can I meet with you to ask questions about course content I do not understand or to further discuss topics or issues in psychology?

CERTAINLY, ABSOLUTELY, AND DEFINITELY YES. You can meet with me during my office hours and you can make appointments for other times. You can also ask some questions via email if that is easiest for you.

Why don't you want me to bring you doctors' notes, athletic event schedules, or other excuses for why I'm missing class?

Life happens. There are many things more important than this class and many legitimate reasons to miss it. HOWEVER, because I don't evaluate your reasons for missing class, there would be no point. Plus, it's none of my business. Remember though, missing class is not without consequences, even for the best of reasons. You will find this true after Simmons too. You may have to miss your child's ballet recital for a very good reason. But you still miss the recital (and there won't be a make-up either).

Should I email you to let you know why I am going to miss/have missed class?

NO. See above. In fact, please don't. I get over 100 emails on a normal day, and I have enough trouble getting through them. Sending notes about why you missed class simply takes time away from students who need a response from me.

If I cannot get to my own class, can I sit in on one of the other sections of MCC?

NO. Different class, different book, different material, different instructor. Also, there aren't enough seats for everyone, so it wouldn't be fair either.

If I know I'm going to be absent on a day that one of our papers is due because [insert excuse here]. Can I turn it in early?

Sure. But the absence still counts.

How can I find out what my grade is?

Come to class. I put your grade on everything I return to you. The only way you won't know how you're doing is if you blow off class and don't get your graded assignments.

Do you give many A's in this class?

No, none. But, I don't give any F's either. Or B's, C's, or D's. You will earn a grade and I will record it and send it to the registrar. I neither give nor take grades – they are based solely on your performance.

Can I meet with you to discuss my grade?

Unless I have made a recording error (which does happen occasionally), grades are determined by performance not by discussion with me.

Is there extra credit available in this class?

Nope. Just credit.

Does this course have a web site?

Yes. <http://my.simmons.edu/elearning/>? gets you to the eLearning login page. Enter your Simmons userid and password, then click on the 'MCC' link. You're in! Explore. If you have any trouble, please call x2222 for help.

Do I have to know how to use the internet and email to be successful in this course?

YES. Many announcements, handouts, exercises, and other helpful items are only available on the course web site. Also, I occasionally email information to the whole class. See the policy on email addresses above.

Why don't you respond to the emails I send at 3:15am?

Because I'm asleep then. Although email is a wonderful way for you to send me a message any time you like, I am not available 24/7, nor should you expect me to be. I have a wife, three perfect children, and a dog who need me too. Plus, I eat, sleep, clean, cook, do laundry, etc. just like anyone else. We are fortunate that ***there are no life-and-death issues faced in this course, and therefore, no reason for 24/7 email responses.***

Why don't you respond immediately to the emails I send?

While I check email regularly, I don't check it constantly. I also get so many emails that I can no longer reply to them when I get them – I would do nothing but email. Remember, even though in the heat of the moment it may seem that your problem is *really* urgent, ***there is no such thing as an MCC emergency***, no situation that requires *immediate* attention. If you haven't received a reply from me within 48 hours (72 on a weekend), please assume that I haven't gotten your email and re-send it.

What are some ways to lower my grade?

Missing class is a good one.

Anything else?

YES. Cheating is another quick way.

Golly, are there more?

YES. If you really want to lose, don't turn in the assignments.

How can I do well in this course?⁴

- Attend every class, participate in discussion, and take notes in your own words.
- Read every assigned chapter and take notes in your own words.
- Devote sufficient time to reading, the assignments, and studying.
- Spread out your work – would a professional athlete save a month's worth of workouts for the night before the big game and expect to do well? You shouldn't either.
- Take time to think about the course material and how it pertains to you and your life. Cognitive psychologists call this kind of learning "deep processing" and "elaborative rehearsal." A large body of research has shown that it works better than "rote memorization" or "cramming."

Why is Dr. Turner such a mean professor?

Sometimes students will look at all these course policies and ask themselves why I'm so mean. Really, *mean* is not the correct concept. *Demanding* is a bit nearer the mark. There is a simple answer: The world is demanding and I want to prepare you for the world.

In your professional life after Simmons:

1. Excuses will not replace performance.
2. Reading will sometimes be difficult.
3. Things will have to be done on time.
4. Consistent, not erratic, performance will be rewarded.
5. You will have to have to communicate ideas to others, sometimes to large groups.

I would be shirking my responsibility as your instructor if I did not do my utmost to help you to build these transferable life skills. You may be able to find some other, less demanding section of MCC. This will not deter me in any way whatsoever from offering you the highest quality educational experience that I can provide. That is why I am here.

⁴ Adapted from Dr. J. Reeder