

GRADUATE SEMINAR: ANTHROPOLOGY AND GENDER  
 ANTH 6317, Sect. #22831  
 Spring Semester 2015  
 Thursday evenings, 5:30-8:20 PM, McEl 104  
 Professor S. Rasmussen, McEl 244, srasmussen@uh.edu

This course, a seminar emphasizing “round-table”-style discussion with background material intermittently provided by the professor, will review cross-cultural studies of gender constructs and relationships through both classic and contemporary paradigms, with emphasis on changing theoretical and ethnographic problems in anthropology, as well as some interdisciplinary works. Emphasis will be upon the location and organization of gender in diverse communities, as well as in anthropological discourse itself. The goal is three-fold: to explore the roots of contemporary gender controversies and debates; review the uses and consequences of knowledge about social, cultural, and political constructions of gender and sexuality and relations between the sexes across diverse cultures and societies; and assess whether and how far gender-related questions and categories have changed, and their implications for anthropology, in terms of the mutual, “cross-cutting” influence—and dissonance—between anthropology and feminism. The beginning of the course briefly reviews the roots of feminist and post-feminist varieties of thought most relevant to anthropology of gender; and subsequent sections emphasize recent and current issues and topics, primarily from post-structural and post-modern perspectives. Topics include pioneering and reformulated theories of: why women and men often have dissimilar economic and symbolic roles and experiences, gendered experiences of the body, differential prestige, power, and autonomy; whether there are any universal patterns in women’s and men’s roles; critiques of essentialist studies of “women” and their deconstruction; interrelationships among gender, sexuality, power, authority, and forms of stratification; gender in culturally expressive systems, for example, ritual and healing; the positioning of gender and relations between the sexes in cultural encounters, “global” processes and socio-cultural transformations; and critiques of anthropological, and more generally scientific, discourse on women, as well as critiques of some “western” feminist discourse.

NOTE: Undergraduates may also enroll in this course.

Grades will be based upon a total of **three complementary and interrelated written assignments**:

- a bibliographic essay (a review of important selected literature on a general topic of the student’s interest, guidelines provided by professor) .
- an abstract (proposal) for the final term-paper, and
- a final term-paper, emerging from this abstract/proposal

Readings: **eight books**, (some of which we shall read in their entirety, others from which we shall read selected portions), all available at the UH bookstore:

- Civilizing Women: British Crusades in Colonial Sudan, by Janice Boddy, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2007;
- Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective, by Brettell, Caroline and Sargent, Carolyn, eds., Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Prentice Hall, (latest edition);
- The Gender and Sexuality Reader, by DiLeonardo, Michaela and Lancaster, Roger, eds., NY: Routledge, 1997
- Feminism Without Borders, by Chandra Mohanty, Durham: Duke University Press 2003;
- Life and Death on Mount Everest, by Sherry Ortner, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1999;
- Working the Night Shift, by Reena Patel, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010;
- Those Who Touch: Tuareg Medicine Women in Anthropological Perspective, by Susan Rasmussen, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press 2006; and
- Other Modernities: Gender in China after Socialism, by Lisa Rofel, Berkeley: University of California Press 1999;

...and in addition, a very few articles and chapters on library reserve (hard-copy behind desk and where possible, also on “e-reserve”).