

WHS/UConn ECE 1010 - The Gender Research Multi-Modal Project

In the last two months we have been working towards our major research project. We have explored ideas of language and how it both shapes and reveals us; ideas of community, and how communities form and form individuals; and, we have examined perspectives on American popular culture and its impact on consumers. All of these areas of study have focused on the “nurture” side of the nature or nurture argument.

Nature and nurture are furiously debated when it comes to gender roles. The essential question of the gender chapter is “*What is the impact of the gender roles that society creates and enforces?*” This very question lands securely on the side of “nurture;” which makes sense when you understand that there is a difference between the biological construct of sex and the social construct of gender. Sex, male or female, is defined as biological identity, and gender, woman or man, is defined as “behavior that is learned,” socially constructed identity.

This gets us to the subject of the research project:

Essay #13: Major Research Project- How do language, pop culture and/or community (society) define gender? What impact does this definition have?

Students must explore, research, analyze and synthesize sources concerning how gender roles are defined by language, popular culture and/or by community. AND consider why it matters – what is the impact of such social constructs?

This is a huge topic – You will need to narrow it down to a particular question or inquiry into an area of your interest within the subject. **Start with text** from one or more of the four chapters we have read on the subject and allow that textual choice to be the starting point of your inquiry.

Along with the reading we have already done, you will need to do more research guided by your specific inquiry. Primary sources should include film, TV, music, advertisements, art, and/or social media. Secondary sources must include at least five scholarly articles (discovered using the UConn library system).

However, the hardest part of this project is not the research, but the wrestling with language that will be necessary in describing and defining popular definitions of gender. I encourage you to get your hands dirty – explore questions you think you have an answer to, avoid confirmation bias, challenge your thinking with other ideas and data.

Terms that might need definition: sex, gender, woman, feminine, man, masculine, sexuality, gender roles, community (or specified as “your” community, and pop culture (as differentiated between content and delivery systems).

THEN – rather than writing a typical research paper, you are going to do a multi-modal project that uses a radio essay/program format, or a podcast format (both can use the free program Audacity) or a video “in-depth report” format (a la *60 minutes*). You may do this individually, or with a partner. Supporting material is available on the website.