

## Gender Studies 238: Men and Masculinities

Professor Melissa M. Wilcox  
MW 2:30-3:50, Olin 220  
Whitman College  
Fall 2011

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Office hours: Tu 9:00-10:30, Th 10:30-12:00  
(If you can't make these times, see me for an appointment)

### Course summary:

From A-Rod to Arnold, Obama to O'Reilly, masculinity is presented and represented in a variety of ways in the contemporary U.S. Across cultures and historical periods, this variety becomes even greater. This class focuses on the task of analyzing hegemonic and counter-hegemonic masculinities. Students will undertake a critical, interdisciplinary examination of the social construction of men and masculinities in multiple cultural and historical contexts.

### Required texts:

- Kimmel, Michael S. and Michael A. Messner, eds. *Men's Lives*. Eighth edition only. Boston, Mass.: Pearson, Allyn and Bacon, 2010.
- Gutmann, Matthew. *Fixing Men: Sex, Birth Control, and AIDS in Mexico*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Gaudio, Rudolf Pell. *Allah Made Us: Sexual Outlaws in an Islamic African City*. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.

Occasionally, additional reading assignments will be posted on CLEo. All course materials will also be on reserve in Penrose.

### Course requirements:

Final grades in the course will be determined as follows:

Cartoon project.....	15%
Film analysis.....	15%
Interview assignments (3 @ 10% each).....	30%
Final project.....	20 %
Blog entries.....	20%

Remember to keep all papers I return to you so that you can track your own grade in the course.

*Cartoon project:* For this project, you get to watch cartoons! Watch one cartoon show (usually a half-hour) that is intended for children. If possible, watch it on TV so that you see the ads as well. Then write a two-to-three-page paper addressing the following questions (not necessarily in this order): What models of maleness and masculinity do you see in the cartoon show? What

models are in the ads? What overall message do you believe children receive from this show and the ads that accompany it about what it means to be a boy, or a masculine girl? Do you think that watching such shows affects children's gender development? Why or why not?

*Film analysis:* Choose a film that interests you in terms of its models of manhood and/or masculinity. You can choose recent films such as *Company Men* or *Captain America*, older films such as *Rain Man* or *Boyz n the Hood*, films with masculine female characters like *Fried Green Tomatoes*, or even classic films like *Gone with the Wind* or the racist film *Birth of a Nation*, if that's where your interest lies. Watch the film (you may need to watch it more than once) and evaluate the ways in which masculinity is portrayed. Then write a 4-5 page paper analyzing masculinity in the film you've chosen.

*Interview assignments:* In preparation for your final project, you will need to conduct six individual interviews: three with people whom you consider male and three with people whom you consider masculine (of course, these categories often overlap). Ideally, everyone you interview should be from the same culture: Whitman, for instance, or a particular fraternity, or a particular ethnicity (note that this is different from race) or religion or sexual orientation – or even your family. In your interviews, explore with each person what it means to him/her to be male or masculine, and what that person's experiences have been as a male or masculine person. Each time an interview assignment is due, you will be expected to write about one male person and one masculine person. Write 2-3 pages summarizing what you learned from the two interviews. You may give your interviewees pseudonyms, if you feel it is appropriate.

*Final project:* Your final project will bring all six of your interviews together into a research paper on the meanings of maleness and masculinity in the culture you've studied. Of course, with a sample size of six you won't be offering the definitive statement on that culture, but you can treat your research as a kind of "pilot study." Write a 7-8 page paper discussing and analyzing the various experiences of your interviewees. Please make use of texts we've studied in your analysis; outside sources are also permitted but are not required.

*Blog entries:* Once a week (we'll split the class to determine whether you're on Mondays or Wednesdays), you will be required to make a 1-paragraph entry on the class blog (accessed through CLEo) about some aspect of the day's reading. These entries begin in week 2. All blog entries are due before the start of class.

## Course policies:

*Students with disabilities:* If you have a disability and need my help in making this course fully accessible to you, please feel free to contact me, either in person or through the Academic Resource Center (527-5213). I'll be happy to help in whatever way I can.

*Inclusive language:* Inclusive language is the use of accurate and unbiased gender terminology, and it is required in this course. It's important for a number of reasons. For one thing, language shapes how people think. When religious studies was considered to be the study of the beliefs of *man*, for instance, people (usually male scholars) tended to study male writers, male believers, male religious leaders, and so on simply because it didn't occur to them to study women as well. As a result, they had a less accurate understanding of religion than we have today. "Humanity" and "humans" are gender-inclusive terms; "man" and "men" are not.

Non-inclusive language also can be misleading, inaccurate, or vague. Traditional formal English, for example, requires that you use the singular pronoun "he" as a generic pronoun. Thus, you might say that "when a new member is initiated into the secret society, he must undergo several hours of ordeals." People who read that sentence are left wondering whether "he" includes women or whether this secret society is for men only. The solution? When you use singular generic terms (like "one," "anyone," "a person," etc.), use the combined pronoun "she or he." Or, for a less awkward sentence, simply use a plural noun ("people," "initiates," "members," etc.), because English has a non-gendered plural pronoun ("they").

*"Late fees":* Late thought papers will receive half credit. Without prior arrangements, there will be no make-ups for current event presentations or final project presentations. Final projects will lose 5 percentage points for each day (including weekends) they are late.

*Academic dishonesty:* Honesty is an integral part of academic learning; any form of cheating expresses gross disrespect for the efforts of your teacher, the hard work of your classmates, and your own privilege in having access to a quality education. I will not hesitate to report and pursue incidents of suspected academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and copying others' assignments. **The maximum penalty for academic dishonesty is permanent expulsion from Whitman.**

**This class is an educational safe zone. It welcomes and respects the viewpoints of students of all sexual orientations and genders as well as all races, ethnicities, religions, and abilities. All members of this learning community are expected to treat each other with respect and dignity, and to listen especially carefully to the voices of cultural and social minorities.**

## Course Schedule

### **Week 1: Introduction to Gender Studies**

Wednesday, 8/31: Perspectives on gender  
No reading.

### **Week 2: Beginnings**

Monday, 9/5: Introducing masculinities  
Read: Syllabus; Kimmel and Messner, Part 1  
Wednesday, 9/7: From boys to men  
Read: Kimmel and Messner, Ch's 6, 8-10

➔ **Cartoon project due in your CLEo drop box by 2:30; bring a copy (hard or electronic) to class for discussion**

### **Week 3: College and work life**

Monday, 9/12: College men  
Read: Kimmel and Messner, Part 3  
Wednesday, 9/14: Masculinity at work  
Read: Kimmel and Messner, Ch's 17-19

### **Week 4: Health and relationships**

Monday, 9/19: Men's health  
Read: Kimmel and Messner, Ch's 20-23  
Wednesday, 9/21: Relationships  
Read: Kimmel and Messner, Ch's 27, 28

### **Week 5: Sex and the family**

Monday, 9/26: Sexualities  
Read: Kimmel and Messner, Part 7  
Wednesday, 9/28: Families  
Read: Kimmel and Messner, Part 8  
➔ **First interview assignment due in your CLEo drop box by 2:30**

### **Week 6: Violence and popular culture**

Monday, 10/3: Popular culture  
Read: Kimmel and Messner, Ch's 38, 39, 41  
Wednesday, 10/5: Violence  
Read: Kimmel and Messner, Part 10  
Film: *The Bro Code* (Dir. Thomas Keith, 2011, 58 min.)

### **Week 7: Looking ahead**

*Monday, 10/10: Fall break - No reading.*  
Wednesday, 10/12: Masculinities and the future  
Read: Kimmel and Messner, Part 11  
➔ **Film analysis due in your CLEo drop box by 2:30**

### **Week 8: Men, sex, and AIDS in Mexico**

Monday, 10/17: Men's sexuality in Oaxaca  
Read: Gutmann, Ch's 1, 2  
Wednesday, 10/19: Men and AIDS  
Read: Gutmann, Ch's 3, 4

**Week 9: Family planning and traditional healing**

Monday, 10/24: Men and family planning

Read: Gutmann, Ch's 5, 6

Wednesday, 10/26: Men and sexual healing

Read: Gutmann, Ch's 7, 8

➔ **Second interview assignment due in your CLEo drop box by 2:30**

**Week 10: 'Yan Daudu I**

Monday, 10/31: 'Yan Daudu

Read: Gaudio, Ch's 1, 2

Wednesday, 11/2: Gender Studies research roundtable on gender and violence

Read: Papers distributed on CLEo

*Thursday, 11/3 at 7:30 p.m. – Extra credit opportunity! Attend the research roundtable and write a 1-page paper summarizing it, responding to it, and relating it to our class.*

*Paper due Wednesday, 11/9.*

**Week 11: 'Yan Daudu II**

Monday, 11/7: Secrets and revelations

Read: Gaudio, Ch's 3, 4

Wednesday, 11/9: Religion and film

Read: Gaudio, Ch's 5, 6

**Week 12: Male femininity, female masculinity**

Monday, 11/14: Final thoughts

Read: Gaudio, Ch. 7, Epilogue

Wednesday, 11/16: Female masculinity

Read: Halberstam, pp. 1-59

➔ **Third interview assignment due in your CLEo drop box by 2:30**

**NOVEMBER 19-27: THANKSGIVING BREAK!**

**Week 13: Lived masculinity**

Monday, 11/28: Historical genders

Read: Halberstam, pp. 59-110

Wednesday, 11/30: Butches and FTMs

Read: Halberstam, Ch's 4, 5

Possible film: *Shinjuku Boys* (dir. Kim Longinotto and Jano Williams, 1996, 53 min.)

**Week 14: Performed masculinity (is there a difference?)**

Monday, 12/5: Female masculinity in film

Read: Halberstam, Ch. 6

Wednesday, 12/7: Masculinity and performance

Read: Halberstam, Chs. 7, 8

**Finals week:**

➔ **Final project papers due in your CLEo drop box by 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, 12/14.**