
SPR 470 - Gender Perspectives in Social Work Practice

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Spring semester 2016

Three main goals of the course

1) Gain broader knowledge about feminist and gender theory, and how they influence social policy and social work

- 'gender sensitive social work' rather than a specific approach
 - context for understanding social problems and social work practice
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Three main goals of the course

2) Employ the theory to social work practice

- Related to postmodernism, critical thinking, critical social work, empowerment, social change
 - Not only about gender /intersectionality
 - Not only about women, but also men
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Three main goals of the course

2) Employ the theory to social work practice

- Not only about clients, but also social workers, social work organizations, education system, society
 - Social work with specific target groups, but also reflecting one's own position
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Three main goals of the course

3) Improve writing skills of short academic papers

Structure of the course

- lectures and seminars
 - assignments (no right answers, your thoughts but based on reading!)
 - lectures and seminars are compulsory
 - one absence allowed / 'meaningful task'
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Requirements and Grading

- recommended x compulsory reading
 - assignments
 - active participation
 - final paper + seminar
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Lecture on Gender Theory

**SPR 470 - Gender Perspectives in Social
Work Practice**

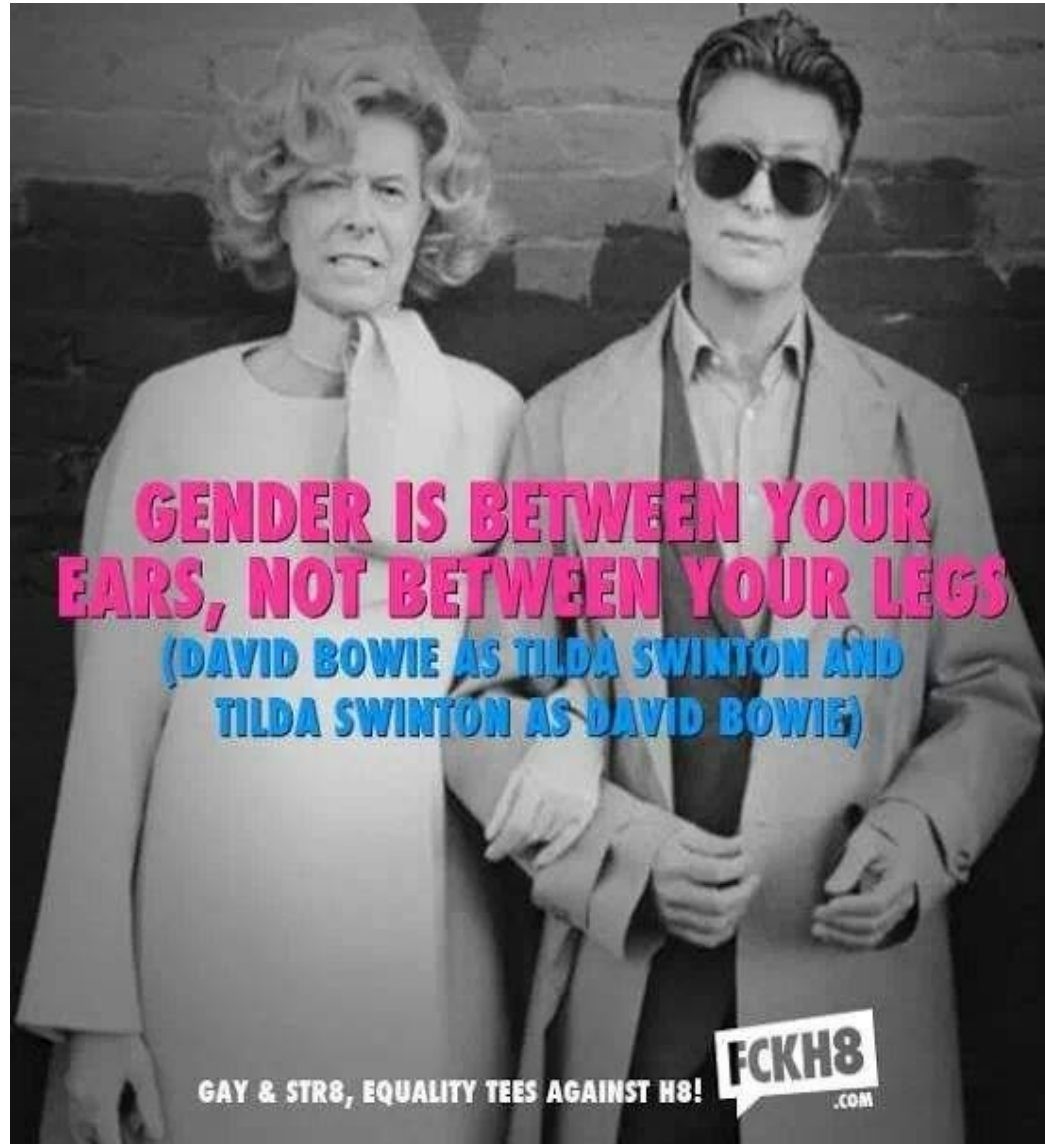
March 2nd, 2016

Outline

- **Feminist Theories**
 - **Intersectionality**
 - **Feminist Influence on Social Policy**
 - **Feminist Influence on Social Work**
 - **1st Assignment and Seminar**
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Why Gender?

- **Sex - biological category**
 - **Gender – social category**
 - **Differences not only biological but also socially constructed**
 - **Everyone has a gender**
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**GENDER IS BETWEEN YOUR
EARS, NOT BETWEEN YOUR LEGS**

**(DAVID BOWIE AS TILDA SWINTON AND
TILDA SWINTON AS DAVID BOWIE)**

GAY & STR8, EQUALITY TEES AGAINST H8!

FCKH8
.COM

Feminist Theories

- Liberal feminism
- Radical feminism
- Socialist feminism
- African American feminism

Differences based on what is seen as a source of oppression and how to prevent it.

Liberal Feminism

- **women gaining access to the same opportunities as men** (education, work, political representation etc.)
 - **equal opportunities**
 - **changes e.g. by legislation, lobbying, quotas**
 - **heterosexual nuclear family as a norm**
 - e.g.: B. Friedan, J.S.Mill
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Radical Feminism

- late 1960s, early 1970
 - women are oppressed by patriarchal system
 - criticism of heteronormativity
 - contrary to queer theory essentialist
 - e.g.: A. Dworkin, C. MacKinnon
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Socialist Feminism

- social justice for women only through abolition of both patriarchy and capitalism
 - women dependent on men
paid labour + doing the ,second shift‘ at home
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African American Feminism

- women of colour experience domination which is not addressed by liberal, radical, nor socialist feminism
 - attention to gender, class and race
 - e.g.: Ch. Mohanty, b. hooks
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Postmodern Feminism

- language, power, discourse, deconstruction, ...
 - opposition to ‚grand narratives‘
 - calls in to question the category of male and female (to question is not to deny!)
 - not all women are oppressed and not all men are oppressors
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Postmodern Feminism

Queer theory:

- X the male-female binary
 - X traditional sex roles, identities and orientations
 - performativity, 'doing gender'
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Postfeminism

- sex as empowering
 - rejection of passive/victim image of femininity
 - women as powerful agents
 - post-feminist not anti-feminist
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Men and Feminism

- men's movement, men's and masculinity studies
 - e.g.: parents' rights, domestic violence, prostitution
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Intersectionality

- gender + class, age, race, ethnicity, dis/ability, sexual orientation, education, ...
 - X sexism, homophobia, heteronormativity, ageism, ableism, racism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, xenophobia, ...
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Intersectionality

- intersection of oppression as well as privilege
 - ethnicity, class, gender are not minority issues
 - positions are changing in time and space
 - tool for positioning / standpoint
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Feminist Influence on Social Policy

- social policy has great influence on gender relations in the society
 - who will take care of us
 - what choices we have as mothers and fathers
 - balance between family life, work life, career
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Esping-Andersen:

‘Three worlds of welfare capitalism’ (1990)

■ Welfare Systems:

- Liberal

- Social Democratic

- Conservative/Corporative

■ based on level of ‘decomodification’

■ workers ‘commodified’ = they must sell their labour on the market to survive

Feminist Critique

- the goal for western feminist has been to ,commodify‘ women
 - neglects the unpaid labour at home
 - level of ,defamilization‘
 - ,famialization‘ = family is responsible for all household tasks
 - male bread winner model
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Feminist Influence on Social Work

Gender Lenses:

- clients are not ,gender neutral‘
 - women more often living in poverty
 - men more often criminal offenders
 - most of the social workers are women
 - ...
 - new issues: domestic violence, heteronormativity, prostitution, sexual abuse, etc.
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Feminist Influence on Social Work

- **equality is not sameness**
 - **need to recognize that women and men are different, but not essentially different**
 - **reflect the specific needs in services**
(e.g. women only groups, but not only female workers)
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Feminist Influence on Social Work

Postmodern Feminism:

- **Crisis of Knowledge**

(How do we know what we know?)

- **Crisis of Identity**

(power / lost innocence of helping)

1st Seminar and Assignment

Compulsory Reading:

Renzetti, Claire, Daniel Curran. 1989. *Women, Men, and Society: the Sociology of Gender*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- Chapter 1 Studying Gender: An Overview (pp. 1-12).
- Chapter 13 Restructuring Sex/Gender Systems (pp. 326-350).

Rossiter, Amy 2000. 'The postmodern feminist condition: new conditions for social work' (pp. 24-38) In Fawcett, Barbara (ed.). *Practice and Research in Social Work. Postmodern Feminist Perspectives*, London: Routledge.

1st Seminar and Assignment

- Write questions about what was not clear for you, what you do not understand, or what would you like to know more about.
 - Write complex questions.
 - 2 to each chapter = 6 in the total.
 - Upload your assignment to the Homework vault no later than on Monday 7th March.
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