

GENDER AREA EXAM, October 2017, Student #1

Committee: Elizabeth McClintock, Abi Ocobock, Sarah Mustillo

DAY ONE: Foundations, Theory, Methods

Theory and Foundations: Answer either question one or question two, and pick one of questions two, three, or four (2 questions total; about 2 hours total)

You may choose one of the following two questions (answer one of them):

1. Within any time and culture, gender is a central axis of difference and of inequality. Across cultures and eras, gender is ubiquitous and male advantage over women is nearly ubiquitous. What explains the universality of gender and the near-universality of male dominance?
2. Across time and culture, sex, gender, and sexuality are generally, albeit imperfectly, aligned. Even in societies that accept multiple gender identities, there are two predominant genders, aligned with biological sex and associated with heterosexuality. What is the relationship between sex, gender, and sexuality? Why are they usually congruent but never perfectly so?

You may choose one of the following three questions (answer one of them):

3. Although the various theoretical perspectives on gender can be seen as competing perspectives, they can also be seen as complementary. How do social structural, social constructionist, postmodern, and biosocial perspectives contradict and/or complement each other?
4. Joan Acker describes sociological understandings of gender as evolving from “from sex roles to gendered institutions” (Acker, 1992). What does she mean by this? What is the current sociological understanding of gender and to what extent does this understanding remain controversial and in flux?
5. How have theoretical perspectives on gender evolved over time? How has this influenced research on gender? What do you envision as the future trajectory of gender theory/theories, and how might this influence research?

Methods: Answer two of the following three questions (2 questions total; about 2 hours total)

1. As Sandra Harding notes, traditional social science theories have been applied “in ways that make it difficult to understand women’s participation in social life, or to understand men’s activities as gendered (vs. as representing ‘the human’).” [Harding. 1988. *Feminism and*

Methodology, p.3]. What is meant by this critique and why is it not enough to simply “add women” to these existing social theories? *Your answer should not rely solely on Harding.*

2. How have the concepts of “feminist method,” a “feminist methodology,” and/or a “feminist epistemology” shaped research on gender and on the intersections of gender with race, class, and sexuality? How might these concepts be useful to you in your own work? *Your answer should differentiate between these terms.*

3. In her essay, “The Master’s Tools Will never Dismantle the Master’s House,” what does Audre Lorde mean by this metaphor? In what ways does she extend the feminist critique of science as androcentric and falsely “objective”?

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DAY TWO: Masculinities; Sexualities

Masculinities: Answer question one, and then either question two or question three (2 hours total)

You must answer question one:

1. Discuss the centrality of psychoanalysis in the masculinities literature. Is psychoanalysis equally important in gender theories that focus on women/femininities or queer sexuality? Why or why not? What are the implications for theorizing masculinities?

You may choose between question two and question three (answer one of them):

2. What is hegemonic masculinity and what are its origins? How do certain actors, actions, interactions, and characteristics become understood as masculine? How can alternative theoretical perspectives (e.g., structural, social constructionist, etc.) provide insight into the process by which (inter)actions come to be labeled as (non)masculine?

3. Many theorists have noted that men as a group seem to face challenges in defining and performing masculinity in modernity. How do different theorists account for this “crisis” of masculinity? Discuss points of tension and agreement in their ideas and consider how future research should explore this issue.

Sexualities: Answer two of the following three questions (2 questions total; about 2 hours total)

1. Scholars have argued that sexuality and sex are undertheorized in sociological literature. Do you agree? *If you agree*, explain why you think sexuality and sex are undertheorized and discuss how this should be rectified. *If you do not agree*, explain why you think sexuality and sex are adequately theorized and critique claims that they are undertheorized.

2. Chrys Ingraham has used the phrase “heterosexual imaginary” to describe the structured but hidden function of heterosexuality in Western culture. How have theorists challenged the assumed “naturalness” of heterosexuality?

3. How do different theorists understand sex, “sex work” and its relationship to gender division/domination?

GENDER AREA EXAM, October 2017, Student #2

Committee: Elizabeth McClintock, Abi Ocobock, Sarah Mustillo

DAY ONE: Foundations, Theory, Methods

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You may choose one of the following two questions (answer one of them):

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You may choose one of the following three questions (answer one of them):

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DAY TWO: Family and Relationships; Divorce

Family and Relationships: Answer any two of the following three questions (2 questions total; about 2 hours total)

1. What are the ways in which marriage is “gendered”? How is marriage beneficial and/or detrimental to women in the United States and how does the experience vary by social position?
2. Coontz proposes that in Western nations marriage has developed through different stages (for example, companionate marriage). Summarize Coontz’s argument and the types of marriage she describes. Do you find her argument compelling? Why or why not?
3. Describe the current state and future of marriage in the United States. You should include perspectives of prominent scholars in the field, such as Andrew Cherlin, Stephanie Coontz, and Judith Stacey.

Divorce: Answer question one, and then either question two or question three (2 hours total)

You must answer question one:

1. What are the major theoretical perspectives used to account for couples’ decisions to divorce? How well is each of these perspectives supported by empirical evidence?

You may choose between questions two, three, and four (answer one of them):

2. Patterns of union formation, including divorce rates, vary cross-nationally. Pick three countries or regions (for example, China, Sweden, and the U.S., or Asian, Europe, and the U.S.) and discuss how demographic risk factors and other predictors of divorce vary across these locations.
3. What are the main competing theoretical perspectives linking cohabitation and divorce? How well is each of these perspectives supported by empirical evidence? Be sure to include recent perspectives and empirical results.
4. Much of the sociological literature assumes that a trajectory of relationship deterioration, resulting in high levels of discord and low marital satisfaction, drives the decision to exit a

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marriage. However, recently, some scholars have pointed out that many couples do not experience high levels of discord and marital unhappiness prior to divorce. Explain this puzzle.