



Psychology of Women
Psychology 308
Fall, 2005

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SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to examine the lives of girls and women, including topics such as gender stereotypes, the development of gender roles, gender comparisons, women and work, love relationships, women's physical and mental health, violence against women, and women in later adulthood. Students who take this course should acquire an understanding of what it means to be female in North America.

As the course instructor, I have several goals for each of you to work toward during the semester:

- An appreciation of the basic information about women's lives, with a particular emphasis on the complexity of the issues;
- An understanding of critical-thinking skills in analyzing professional research and articles in the popular media;
- The ability to design your own psychology research project, to conduct the research, and to write an appropriately professional summary of the research that emphasizes the potential methodological flaws in the research;
- An exploration of your own ideas and attitudes about gender, appreciating that we do not need to be constrained by traditional gender roles; and
- An increased concern for individuals who experience inequities based on social categories other than gender; these categories include age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, social class, and country of residence.

READING MATERIALS

Our textbook for the course will be:

Matlin, M. W. (2004). *The psychology of women* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

[Please be sure to locate the 5th edition, which has a photo of three adult Black women, not the 4th edition, which has a photo of two Latina adolescents.]

Your textbook is one I have written, and you'll need to understand the material in the textbook in order to do well in the course. You will not be able to achieve this understanding from a superficial reading of the chapters. You should master the terminology and concepts in the textbook, because this is a 300-level course. The lectures and class discussion will assume that you are familiar with this information. However, if any part of the textbook is not clear, please let me know and I'll be happy to discuss that topic in class!

** You will also receive two journal articles, which you will read and analyze for class discussion.

OFFICE HOURS

My scheduled office hours are Monday, 3:00-3:50 p.m., Tuesday, 11:30-12:30, and Thursday, 11:30-12:30. An occasional office hour will be rescheduled on days when other commitments arise. If my office hours are not convenient, please check with me and we can schedule an alternate time! My office is in Sturges Room 121C (main floor, right-hand side).

You can also leave a brief message on my voice mail (5214). I will check my messages often during the week. I also check my e-mail frequently (matlin@geneseo.edu). Please include the term "Psychology of Women" in the subject of your e-mail message. Also, proofread the message to make sure that your question is clear; this way, I can quickly provide you with the most helpful response! (Before contacting me, be sure to check the syllabus and project description to make sure that your question is not answered there. Thanks!)

REQUIREMENTS

1. Examinations:

You will have two 75-minute-long exams, as well as a comprehensive final. The format for all tests will be a combination of multiple-choice and essay questions.

Each 75-minute exam will be worth about 50-55 points, and the final exam will be worth about 75 points.

2. Research Paper:

The research paper is described in detail on the second handout, entitled "Psychology of Women Project." Your preview for your independent research project will be due on Monday, October 17. In one page, you should state at least two of your hypotheses and how you plan to locate participants (or media resources) for your study. The preview must be typed, rather than handwritten. I'll provide details later on how to prepare this preview.

The paper itself will be due at the beginning of class on Monday, November 21. (One point will be subtracted for each day that either the paper preview or the paper is late.) The purpose of this paper is to help you understand research techniques, increase your critical-thinking skills, and write professionally. You are not required to see me to discuss the project, but students who see me early typically tend to develop the best projects. You must make two copies of the paper (one for me to keep) before turning in your paper. The last day on which the paper will be accepted is Thursday, December 1, at noon; this final deadline is firm, so please respect it. The paper will be worth 55 points.

3. Journal Articles:

As noted earlier, you will be reading two articles from professional journals. You'll receive a short list of questions about each article, which you must answer (typed, not handwritten). Make two copies of your answers, one to keep and one to hand in. We will discuss each article in small groups on the day the assignment is due. You will not receive a letter grade on this assignment; you are handing it in to demonstrate that you have read the article. One point will be subtracted for every day that each assignment is late.

4. Event Summaries:

Finally, by Monday, December 5, please turn in a typed one-page summary of each of the two programs about women that you attended outside of class. I will specify which programs can be included in this assignment; they will include films, plays, and invited speakers—both in Geneseo and in the Rochester area. Also, please let me know about any potentially relevant programs you have heard about! Then we can share this information with the class. (However, please do not substitute another program unless you check with me beforehand.) This summary will be graded pass-fail, and one point will be subtracted for every

day that the event summaries are late. In order to pass the course, both summaries must be turned in no later than Tuesday, December 13.

Please see me in advance if some component of this event-summary assignment is difficult for you. Also, don't simply announce on the due date that you could not complete it, and do not attend an event unless it has been discussed in class. Please note: One student failed the course six years ago because these event summaries were never turned in; another student failed the course because the summaries had been plagiarized. The purpose of this assignment is to broaden your understanding of the many aspects of women's lives, including areas outside psychology. Most students report that they found the programs very interesting and thought provoking!

GRADING

To determine your grade in the course, I will add up the total number of points you have obtained in the course. The following percentages will be used to determine your grade:

| | | | | |
|---|---|-----------|---|------|
| A | = | 88 | - | 100% |
| B | = | 78 | - | 87% |
| C | = | 68 | - | 77% |
| D | = | 58 | - | 67% |
| E | = | below 58% | | |

Plus and minus grades will be given to students whose grades fall near the boundaries.

VERY IMPORTANT: Every semester, a student approaches me to request that I raise his or her grade (because she or he will be placed on probation, because she or he won't make it into graduate school...or whatever). Please do not ask. I have never raised a student's grade for reasons like these; changing your grade simply would not be fair to the other students in our class.

ATTENDANCE

I do not take attendance in this course. However, about half of the questions on exams are based on information that we discuss in class. Thus, students with high grades in the course tend to be those with perfect attendance.

If you miss a class, be sure to get the notes and assignments from someone in class. If you know you will be absent, arrange to have a friend pick up any material or tests handed out in class.

Make-up examinations will not be allowed unless you are seriously ill or have an extreme personal emergency. In those cases, please contact me before the exam, if possible, but no later than 2 days after the exam.

CLASS SCHEDULE - (Classes meet on Monday evenings)

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Course Content</u> | <u>Reading</u> |
|---|--|----------------|
| August 29 | Introduction | Chapter 1 |
| <i>(No class on September 5- Labor Day)</i> | | |
| September 12 | Gender Stereotypes | Chapter 2 |
| September 19 | Infancy & Childhood | Chapter 3 |
| September 26 | Adolescence | Chapter 4 |
| October 3 | EXAMINATION #1 (includes Chapters 1-4) Cognitive Abilities & Achievement | Chapter 5 |
| <i>(No class on October 10-Fall Break)</i> | | |
| October 17 | Gender Comparisons in Social & Personality Preview Due for Your Research Paper | Chapter 6 |
| October 24 | Women and Work | Chapter 7 |
| October 31 9 | Love Relationships, Sexuality | Chapters 8 & 9 |
| November 7 | EXAMINATION #2 (includes Chapters 5-9) Pregnancy | Chapter 10 |
| November 14 | Physical Health | Chapter 11 |

| | | |
|-------------|---|------------|
| November 21 | Research Paper is Due Psychological Disorders | Chapter 12 |
| November 28 | Violence Against Women | Chapter 13 |
| December 5 | Event Summaries Are Due Older Adulthood | Chapter 14 |
| December 12 | Moving Onward... | Chapter 15 |

FINAL EXAMINATION: This is a comprehensive exam that includes all chapters and all lectures. The Bulletin lists Monday, December 19 at 6:45-9:45 p.m. as the official time for our final exam. I am hopeful that we can change the time to 4:00-7:00 p.m. on December 19, if this would work for everyone...especially considering the likelihood of snow at that time of the year!

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Psychology of Women Research Project

The purpose of this project is to introduce you to research about the Psychology of Women. You are not expected to conduct the ideal, perfectly controlled experiment. Instead, I hope that this exercise will provide you with a first-hand experience of the kinds of issues that researchers need to consider and the variety of ways in which research may be flawed.

The projects generally fall into four categories:

1. Archival analyses, or quantified inspections of magazines, books, and other aspects of media, etc. A typical project here is an analysis of illustrations in elementary-school mathematics textbooks.
2. Questionnaires about interests, activities, and beliefs. A typical project is asking students to judge how married couples should divide their housekeeping responsibilities.
3. Naturalistic observation, or recording of behavior in a natural setting. A typical project is the observation of children's aggressive behavior at a public playground.
4. Experiments, with the controlled manipulation of variables. A typical project would be the one about aggression, described in the preview on p. 2.

In all cases, you must test at least three hypotheses. Each hypothesis typically compares two numbers (e.g., "There will be more illustrations of boys than of girls in this sample of textbooks.").

Preparing the Preview of Your Paper

As specified in the course syllabus, you must turn in the paper topic in advance. This precaution is designed to assure that your topic is appropriate from the standpoint of both research design and ethics. I want to make certain that you have chosen a topic that can inspire a good paper!

It's fine to change topics, but you must provide me with a written copy of your new proposal before you begin the project. Again, this precaution is essential because I'll need to make certain that your new proposal is methodologically and ethically appropriate. For this reason, I will *not* accept your actual paper unless I have approved your preview. (If you turn in a paper—for which I did not approve the preview—you will receive a score of 0 out of 55 on your paper.)

Your paper preview must describe at least two of your hypotheses, and it should provide a reasonably clear description of how you will test these hypotheses. I will distribute more information about the preview in several weeks. Page 2 shows an example of a good preview.

Preview: Do People Judge an Aggressive Woman Differently from an Aggressive Man?

The goal of my project will be to determine whether people judge an aggressive act differently, depending on the gender of the aggressive person. I will be constructing four different vignettes, each describing an individual who is being aggressive. Here is a sample vignette, describing a male being aggressive:

Joe is a 20-year-old college student. He has been having trouble with his car, so he took it in to the repair shop this morning. They promised that they would have his car ready by 3:00 this afternoon. When Joe returns to the shop at 3:00, he is told that it will not be ready until 4:00. At the top of his lungs, he screams, "You've got to be kidding! You promised me it would be ready by now! You can bet I'll never come back here again!"

How appropriate do you think Joe's response was? (circle a number)

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|---|------------------|---|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | |
| | | | | | | |
| not at all appropriate | | | | very appropriate | | |

I plan to test 40 Geneseo students. I'll have four groups of 10 students each:

1. 10 males, each judging four vignettes about males;
2. 10 females, each judging four vignettes about males;
3. 10 males, each judging four vignettes about females (i.e, the same vignette as above, but using a female's name);
4. 10 females, judging vignettes about females.

So far, I have two hypotheses:

1. People will give higher ratings to males than to females; that is, they will judge an aggressive male's actions to be more appropriate than an aggressive female's actions.
2. Male participants will be more likely than female participants to show this kind of biased judgment.

I haven't yet worked out my third hypothesis, but I will be including other rating scales on the response sheet. I think I may include a scale on which participants respond to the question, "How much do you think you would like to have Joe (or a female name) for a friend?" The endpoints would be labeled "not at all" and "very much." I think people will give higher ratings to males than to females.

Ethical Considerations

In class, we will consider ethical issues involved in studying human behavior. Three especially important issues are potential harm, anonymity, and informed consent.

One of the most important concerns is that we must not psychologically harm the individuals we study. For that reason, certain topics will be considered "out of bounds" for this project. These topics are sexuality (e.g., sexual behavior, sexual orientation, abortion, unwanted pregnancy), violence (e.g., rape, battering, sexual harassment, child abuse), and drug issues (e.g., personal experience with alcohol and other drugs). However, you *can* conduct archival analyses on these topics because no people would be tested.

We must also protect the anonymity of all participants. "Anonymity" means that the experimenter cannot identify which people supplied which data. Thus, the participant's name must not appear anywhere on any questionnaire or data sheet. Furthermore, data on individual people should be kept confidential and should not be supplied to anyone. It is important that we respect individuals' rights to privacy. We must not harm humans in the process of learning more about them.

If you conduct an actual experiment that does not include a written response sheet, you must obtain informed consent from each participant; ethical guidelines specify that participants must sign a sheet saying that they are participating without coercion and that they will experience no harm. We cannot require informed consent for naturalistic observation studies (by their very nature). Therefore, we will poll the class to determine whether any questionable naturalistic-observation studies do indeed seem harmful. The details of this procedure will be described in class. (Informed consent is not relevant for archival analyses. Informed consent is also not relevant for questionnaires; our local ethics review board says that informed consent is automatically granted via the act of filling out a questionnaire.)

The Write-up for Your Project

You must prepare two complete copies of your paper prior to submitting the paper. Keep one copy and turn the other copy in to me. This will also be

important if your paper is lost. (In Fall, 2004, a student failed to make a copy of her paper. It was lost, and her computer crashed, so she had to write it over again.) After I've turned back your graded paper, you will give me either an unmarked copy or a photocopy of your graded paper. Keep the original paper—with my notations—to use as a guideline for your future writing.

The project must be written in standard APA style. Details are available in a book on reserve called *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001, 5th edition). The sample paper shown on pages 306-316 is especially helpful.

Try to follow the general APA format. I will not reduce your grade for some of the finer points in APA style, but you should, for example, have the information in the correct parts of your paper. Here are the sections:

1. Introduction. This will require library research. I will mention some journals you might wish to examine, but PsycINFO will be your best resource. At the beginning of the introduction, discuss the general topic that you will be studying. Next, describe the findings that the previous research has shown (You'll need at least two citations from the previous research for this part of your paper. I will not accept citations from textbooks, the Internet, or summaries of dissertations in *Dissertations Abstracts International*.) At the end of the introduction, state your three hypotheses. So that I can easily determine the purpose of your study, please number them (e.g., "Hypothesis 1"). As we will discuss in class, each hypothesis should be stated in terms of a comparison, like the two hypotheses in the sample preview on page 2 of this handout.
2. Method. In this section, tell precisely what you did in the study. Describe the people you tested or the archival material you examined. Include a copy of the questionnaire, if you used one. Be as precise and detailed as possible. Details about research methods are crucial, so that you can identify potential sources of bias in your study. (In fact, your paper cannot receive an A or A- without extensive details in this section.)
3. Results. Summarize your findings, giving either averages or the number of items in each category. A table or a graph may be useful. You will be expected to perform statistical analyses in this section. For example, you may wish to demonstrate that the difference between two means is significant, or that there are significantly more males represented in advertisements than females. We will have a separate handout on statistics later, when you have a more complete idea about the nature of your data. You will be expected to perform at least three statistical comparisons in this section (e.g., three chi-square analyses).

4. Discussion. For Psychology 308, this is the most important section of your paper. Briefly review your results, and discuss the implications of your study. Provide specific examples (e.g. quotations from people's responses on your questionnaires) that can illustrate your major points. You may also wish to include some exceptions (e.g., an impressively nonsexist advertisement). Discuss in detail any criticism of your research methods. Are there biases (as described in your textbook) that can illustrate your major points? Can the results be interpreted in terms of any hypotheses *other* than the one you were testing? How would the results have been different if you had used a different subject population? Use Table 1.1 from your textbook to stimulate your thinking about biases. Also consider what issues you would examine if you were to pursue the research further. In addition, discuss why your study was important—what implications does it have for people's lives? **The discussion section is the most important part of your paper, and it will therefore be the most important determinant of your grade on this project.**
5. Abstract. (Write this last, but put this page at the beginning of the paper, right after the title page.) In one paragraph—about half a page—summarize what you did in the study and what you conclude.
6. Appendix. Your appendix should include your calculations for any chi-square tests or a copy of a printout of any other statistical analysis. Your calculations can be handwritten. Also, include examples if you are investigating the print media, and include a copy of the questionnaire if you are doing a survey.

I will take writing style and spelling into consideration when grading your paper. This is not an English class, but good writing style is an important attribute of a competent psychologist. Look at the Psychology Department's "Writing Guidelines for Psychology Papers" before you begin to write, and check them again before you proofread the paper. You can also locate some top-notch papers from previous semesters by looking at the Electronic Reserve (Password = Psyc308). **IMPORTANT:** Hand-write the phrase "I have reviewed the Psychology Department's Writing Guidelines" on the title page of your paper, so that I know you have studied these guidelines appropriately.

The length should run between 8-11 pages (not including the title page, tables or appendix—please, no longer than 11 pages). Please number your pages and use a standard font and margins. Be sure to include all possible relevant information—everything you think a reader should know about the study.

Although I will not require you to see me before you begin your study, I would like to encourage you to do so. I can make suggestions on how to formulate an idea for your study, and we can discuss how to examine the topic you are interested in. Together, we can find a project you'll find intriguing. It's

important to find a topic that inspires you, because you will spend many hours with this project!