WMST 2500: Gender and Society

Class Time:
Professor: Dr. Susan Dewey
Office Location and Hours:
Email: sdewey3@uwyo.edu

Course Description: This course examines the social construction of gender using interdisciplinary methods of analysis. Generally students will find that the readings and assignments emphasize the importance of denaturalizing the gender stereotypes and norms that impact people's lives. Intersections between gender, race, class, age, and sexual orientation are examined within their cultural contexts. By reading and discussing a wide array of feminist texts, this course will prepare students for advanced work in Gender & Women's Studies. This course fulfills the Communication 2 (COM2) requirement of the 2015 University Studies Program. Students will develop skills in written, oral, and digital communication as appropriate to specific disciplines and courses at the introductory, intermediate, and advanced level. By the end of the semester, students will have completed assignments that will give them the opportunity to master the following seven outcomes:

1. develop and communicate written, oral, and digital messages through a variety of assignments that include discipline-based or interdisciplinary purposes, forms, and audiences;
2. find, analyze, evaluate, and document information using a variety of sources;
3. understand the different purposes of written, oral, and digital messages and employ appropriate organizational strategies, including developing thesis statements and main ideas;
4. make effective use of multiple drafts, revisions, progressive assignments, computer technology, peer and instructor comments, and collaboration in the achievement of a final work of communication;
5. observe the accepted conventions including spelling, grammar, organizational structure, punctuation, delivery, and documentation in oral, written, and digital messages;
6. deliver prepared presentations in a natural, confident, and conversational manner, and display nonverbal communication that is consistent with and supportive of the oral message;
7. interact effectively with audience members, engage opposing viewpoints constructively, and demonstrate active listening skills.

Disability Statement: If you have a physical, learning, or psychological disability and require accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible. You must register with and provide documentation of your disability to University Disability Support Services (UDSS) in SEO, Room 330 Knight Hall. 766-6189, TTY: 766-3073.

Statement on Academic Honesty: Academic honesty is expected, and dishonesty will not be tolerated and can lead to expulsion from the College and the University. The University Regulation, 802 rev 2 discusses academic dishonesty in detail at: http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/legal/Uniregs/ur802.htm. Students are strongly advised to read these regulations as well as the College of Arts and Sciences procedure guidelines available at: http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/a&s/Appeals_Dishonesty/guidelines_Dishonesty.htm.

Required Text: All assigned readings are posted on our course's WyoCourse website by date and author last name. You will not need to purchase any materials to participate in this class.
Course Objectives

1. To critically discuss the social construction of gender using the vocabularies and major tenets of feminist theories and methods as tools to examine and critique ideological assumptions underlying social institutions and systems of representation, including but not limited to assumptions regarding gender, race, class, nationality, disability, age, and sexual orientation.

2. To critically examine particular styles of inquiry regarding the study of gender while demonstrating an ability to analyze gender as a culturally and historically constructed category that impacts individuals’ abilities to express agency.

Course Requirements

Each assignment specifically links our course content to at least one of the seven COM 2 learning outcomes listed in the course description and as noted below in parentheses. I will calculate your final grade on a 100-point scale using the following six criteria:

1. **Annotated bibliography**, comprising at least seven peer-reviewed sources related to a single theme or issue that will form the basis of subsequent assignments. Students must master library databases to locate the most appropriate sources, determined by relevance to the subject matter and expertise conveyed by chosen authors (Outcomes 2, 3; digital). Students will use this digitally compiled research to write an annotated bibliography that follows a set of widely accepted conventions for this format (Outcomes 3, 5; written). Students will mobilize sources used in the annotated bibliography in subsequent graphic and policy brief assignments that require effective presentation of an evidence-based argument (Outcomes 5, 6, 7; oral). This assignment is due on Friday, 9/28 and will comprise 25% of the final grade using the following evaluation standards:

   - Clear statement of argument based on evidence presented in the annotated bibliography, 4 points
   - A minimum of seven annotated bibliographic entries derived from peer-reviewed sources that specify the author's argument, method, evidence presented, conclusion, and the unique contribution that the source makes to the annotated bibliography, 21 points (3 points for each correctly completed annotated bibliographic entry)

2. **Visual, written, and oral presentation of an evidence-based argument**, comprising a digitally compiled presentation of an argument derived from sources in the annotated bibliography. Students must use a digitally prepared format, such as a graph, interactive visual document, or visual (non-text) presentation format to present an argument clearly developed using sources gathered in the annotated bibliography (Outcomes 2, 3, 5; digital). Students will prepare a one page written explanation that interprets the graphic presentation and provides evidence, derived from the annotated bibliography, in support of the argument it conveys (Outcomes 3, 4, 5; written). Students will deliver a short presentation that employs both the graphic presentation and the effective delivery of analysis presented in the one page written explanation (Outcomes 6, 7; oral). This assignment will be completed during Weeks 6 and 7 (October 1-October 10, with the second and third bulleted items due October 10) and comprise 20% of the final grade using the following evaluation standards:

   - Ten minute oral presentation designed to convince the audience of the merits of the evidence-based argument proposed, 10 points
   - Visual materials accompanying the oral presentation that carefully and strategically display evidence to support the argument made, 5 points
• One page written explanation that clearly states the argument, evidence used to support it, and interprets the visual material provided in the presentation, 5 points

3. **Presentation peer review notes**, comprising handwritten or typed notes on ten (out of 12 total) student presentation days and featuring a clear statement of each presenter’s argument, supporting evidence, and application of assigned readings to comments on delivery. This assignment will be completed during Weeks 6, 7, 10, and 11 (October 1-October 10 and October 29-November 9), with peer review notes due the class after each set of presentations, and comprise 10% of the final grade using the following evaluation standards:

  • Statement of evidence-based argument in one to two sentences
  • Clearly written two sentence synopsis of the assigned reading’s evidence-based argument and its relevance to each presentation, 1 point total for bulleted items listed here (for a total of 10 points for all peer review notes)

4. **Written composition and oral presentation of a policy brief**, comprising a one page document, concise email, and 10-15 minute presentation. Students will write a one page document that relies on evidence generated in the annotated bibliography as well as a refined, policy-centered argument developed following critical feedback from the professor and peers following presentations (Outcomes 2, 3, 4, 5; written). Students will draft a detailed but concise email, containing relevant information regarding the policy brief, with the goal of generating social change related to the issue under study (Outcomes 3, 5; digital). Each student will deliver a short presentation designed to persuade the audience of the merits of the argument and the feasibility of the pathway to social change described in the proposal contained in the student’s policy brief (Outcomes 6, 7; oral). This assignment will comprise 20% of the final grade and be completed during Weeks 10 and 11 (October 29-November 9, with the second and third bulleted items due November 9) using the following evaluation standards:

  • Ten to fifteen minute oral presentation designed to convince the audience of the merits and feasibility of the proposed social change plan, 10 points
  • Four page policy brief that presents a convincing evidence-based argument for feasible social change related to the area of study, 7 points
  • Concise email to a decision-maker that convincingly advocates a feasible plan for social change, 3 points

5. **Draft short paper**, comprising five double-spaced pages (not including reference list), in which students will critically evaluate at least two other policy and/or problem-solving approaches in addition to their policy brief proposed. Students will present the results of their ongoing work in research paper format (Outcomes 2, 5; written). Students will actively discuss their work in class during small-group workshops to help them develop their evidence-based arguments as well as their organizational skills (Outcomes 3, 6, 7; oral). Students will present the results of their semester-long work from December 3-December 10 with bulleted points two and three below due Friday, November 30, with all three items comprising 15% of the final grade using the following evaluation standards:

  • Oral presentation of second and third bulleted points below, 5 points
  • Effective presentation of at least two different clear, evidence-based arguments for a particular policy or other solution to a problem or issue discussed (in addition to the one proposed in the policy brief, for a total of three), 5 points
• Convincing argument as to why one of these approaches is the best and most feasible solution to the problem or issue discussed, 5 points

6. **Revised short paper**, of six to eight double-spaced pages (not including reference list) and a one page resubmission statement in which the student details how s/he has responded to constructive criticism offered by peers and the professor. Students will incorporate comments from peers and the professor to revise their draft paper into a polished work (Outcomes 4, 5; written). The paper will include an appendix containing a version of the visual presentation developed earlier in the semester and revised following constructive criticism from the professor and peers (Outcome 4; digital). **This assignment will be due Monday, December 17 and comprise 10% of the final grade using the following evaluation standards:**

- One page resubmission statement, 4 points
- Revised visual presentation, 3 points
- Revised version of the draft short paper that meaningfully incorporates feedback, 3 points

Three extra credit points are possible by completing the essay due October 29. Instructions follow in the Week 9 section of the syllabus.

**Attendance:** I will take attendance at the beginning of each class and after three unexcused absences you will receive a deduction of two points from your final grade for every subsequent unexcused absence. Attendance is mandatory in order to facilitate a consistent class dynamic and as a model for professional life after graduation; please remember that the approximately 45 hours we will spend together in class this semester equals only one week of full-time work for the average professional although many people work much longer hours.

**Schedule of Classes**

**Week One: Introduction to our class and our goals for the semester**

*Wednesday, August 29: Review of the syllabus and introduction to our class*

*Friday, August 31: Determining a research question relevant to Gender Studies*


**Week Two: Identifying arguments and counter-arguments**

*Labor Day- No class on Monday 9/3*

*Wednesday, September 5: Structuring a line of inquiry*


*Friday, September 7: Identifying arguments and counter-arguments*


**Week Three: Locating evidence to investigate a topic**
Monday, September 10: Locating evidence and developing an argument


Wednesday, September 12: Navigating the library’s databases

Come to class having reviewed the links available at the following UW library websites and practiced locating peer-reviewed information in your area of research interest:

2. Gender & Women’s Studies library guide: http://libguides.uwyo.edu/genderandwmst
3. Review the following journal’s websites to get a sense of each journal’s scope and content with a view to engaging more thoroughly with these high impact sources in your research project. How are they different? What academic fields seem to be strongly represented? Why would a researcher choose one of these journals above all others to present her results?

- Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society: http://signsjournal.org/home/
- Psychology of Women Quarterly: http://journals.sagepub.com/home/pwq
- Gender & Society: http://journals.sagepub.com/home/pwq
- Women’s Studies Quarterly: https://www.feministpress.org/wsq/
- Feminist Theory: http://journals.sagepub.com/home/fty
- Genders: https://www.colorado.edu/genders/

Friday, September 14: In-class location and evaluation of evidence

In lieu of a reading assignment, please spend some time thinking carefully about your choice of topic, which should be a subject that can hold your interest for the semester while developing your critical reading, thinking, and public speaking skills. Come to class prepared to discuss and refine this interest into a manageable research question.

Week Four: Synthesizing information into annotated bibliographic format

Monday, September 17


Wednesday, September 19

1. To learn the basic concepts that inform gender mainstreaming, watch this two minute video: undpgendermadeeasy.org

Friday, September 21: Practice condensing and synthesizing information in annotated bibliographic format in small groups using the assigned sample article and report.


Week Five: Effectively presenting information

Monday, September 24


   Wednesday, September 26


Friday, September 28: Share evidence-based argument developed in the process of compiling the annotated bibliography

Due: Annotated bibliography

**Week Six: Graphic/visual presentations of evidence-based arguments developed from annotated bibliographic exercise**

Monday, October 1


Wednesday, October 3:

   Due: Peer review notes from 10/1


Friday, October 5:

   Due: Peer review notes from 10/3


**Week Seven: Graphic/visual presentations of evidence-based arguments developed from annotated bibliographic exercise**

Monday, October 8

   Due: Peer review notes from 10/5


Wednesday, October 10

   Due: Peer review notes from 10/8


Friday, October 12

   Due: Peer review notes from 10/10

**Week Eight: Policy-oriented persuasive writing**

Monday, October 15


2. Review the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals at un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals

Wednesday, October 17

   Due: Peer review notes from 10/12


Friday, October 19

Week Nine: Writing to influence public opinion  
Monday, October 22: How cultural norms and public opinion influence policy  


Dr. Dewey will be presenting with the Department of Corrections at the International Corrections and Prison Association in Montreal, Canada on Wednesday-Friday this week. Please use the 100 minutes you would normally spend in these two classes to read the following pieces and write a two page critical reflection on the changes to public opinion required for U.S. women to receive the right to vote, something which is taken for granted today. In your reflection, pay close attention to the anti-suffrage argument offered in *The Atlantic* and how suffragists modeled the Declaration of Sentiments on the U.S. Declaration of Independence. Why do you think that pro-suffrage activists made this choice in the face of pervasive opposition to women’s voting rights? In your opinion, why was this an effective strategy?


Week Ten: Policy brief presentations  
Monday, October 29  

Wednesday, October 31  
Due: Peer review notes from 10/29  

Friday, November 2  
Due: Peer review notes from 10/31

Week Eleven: Policy brief presentations  
Monday, November 5  
Due: Peer review notes from 11/2  

Wednesday, November 7  
Due: Peer review notes from 11/5  

Friday, November 9  
Due: Peer review notes from 11/7  

Week Twelve: Writing effectively: Examples of first person and omniscient voice in research writing  
Monday, November 12  
Due: Peer review notes from 11/9  
Wednesday, November 14

Friday, November 16

**Week Thirteen: Using constructive criticism to prepare for final presentations**
Monday, November 19: Open workshop to prepare for final presentations; please bring materials you plan to use in preparing for your final presentation
Thanksgiving break: no class on Wednesday November 21 or Friday November 23

**Week Fourteen: Final Presentations of Draft Short Papers**
Monday, November 26: Final presentations of draft short papers

Wednesday, November 28: Final presentations of draft short papers

Friday, November 30: Final presentations of draft short papers
Due: Draft short paper

**Week Fifteen and 12/10: Final Presentations of Draft Short Papers**
Monday, December 3: Final presentations of draft short papers

Wednesday, December 5: Final presentations of draft short papers

Friday, December 7: Final presentations of draft short papers
Monday, December 10: Final presentations of draft short papers
Due: Revised short paper and resubmission statement due Monday, December 17
Week One: Introduction to Our Class and Our Goals for the Semester

Welcome to Our Class!

Students who take classes or who pursue a major or minor in the Gender & Women’s Studies Program in the University of Wyoming’s School of Culture, Gender and Social Justice have numerous opportunities for intellectual growth and professional preparation. Please visit the Program website for more information about our work, at: http://www.uwyo.edu/gwst/. As noted on the website,

“Gender and Women's Studies (GWST) is a dynamic field of inquiry that offers students the opportunity to explore issues of gender and sexuality. As a student in our program, you will develop a set of valuable critical thinking and analytical skills that will give you a solid academic foundation as well as prepare you for a career that values skills such as critical thinking, oral and written communication, research and problem solving, and client advocacy. Our graduates have succeeded in medical and law school, as well as excelled in careers in health, human rights, business, politics, and administration of community service agencies.

We offer a major and minor for undergraduates and a graduate minor in Gender and Women's Studies and an undergraduate and graduate minor in Queer Studies. We have several opportunities for students, including internships, travel abroad, and graduation with Honors. Many of our students (as well as faculty) are active leaders on campus and in the community. Come join us!”

Our course has two central objectives in examining the social construction of gender using interdisciplinary methods of analysis. Our first objective is to discuss the social construction of gender using the vocabularies and major tenets of feminist theories and methods as tools to examine and critique ideological assumptions underlying social institutions and systems of representation, including but not limited to assumptions regarding gender, race, class, nationality, disability, age, and sexual orientation. Our second objective is to critically examine particular styles of inquiry regarding the study of gender while demonstrating an ability to analyze gender as a culturally and historically constructed category that impacts individuals’ abilities to express agency.

Our course is organized in an iterative skill-building manner with each week focused on the acquisition, implementation, and/or presentation of a particular Communication 2 (COM2) requirement. This organization is designed to help you master all seven COM2 learning outcomes through our six assignments, each of which builds on the acquisition of skills acquired throughout the semester. We will achieve these goals by engaging with assigned readings by authors whose research, activism, and intellectual contributions to society have shaped the field of Gender & Women’s Studies as we know it today.
To help you navigate our exciting introduction to this field of inquiry, each week has a companion packet labeled “Review Materials” with the corresponding week number. These review materials contain a wealth of information relevant to each week’s subject matter.

Information featured in each set of Review Materials is divided into four subheadings that I encourage you to review after completing the assigned readings.

1. Readings for this Week: This section lists the assigned readings you should engage with before coming to class by visiting the WyoCourse site, where you can download them to read on a screen or print. Please consider developing your ability to engage with and synthesize information as you read assigned texts by writing critical reading notes using the instructions provided below under the header “Instructions for Compiling Critical Reading Notes.”

2. Context and Relevance: Interdisciplinary research and analysis is a key feature of Gender & Women’s Studies and assigned readings in our class accordingly come from a wide variety of academic fields and perspectives. Enduringly influential ideas never emerge in a vacuum, and this section of the review materials for each week accordingly provides a concise introduction to some of the major issues authors are contending with and responding to in their work. Reading this section of the review materials will help you to understand why I have assigned each author and how each author’s work is relevant to class because of their perspectives, contributions to knowledge.

3. Reading Questions: This section provides three to five questions that pertain to all readings assigned for the week. I designed these reading questions as a starting point to help foster your critical engagement with assigned readings. Engaging in critical reading, using the instructions provided below under the header “Instructions for Compiling Critical Reading Notes,” will provide you with additional questions to raise or in class.

4. Additional Resources: This section of the review materials features online, open access links to a variety of primary and otherwise authoritative sources related to each week’s theme, which may include some or all of the following: organizational websites, speeches by assigned authors, and videos of speeches or significant events.

Instructions for Compiling Critical Reading Notes

It is especially important in this era of “information overload” that we learn to critically engage with and evaluate primary sources in order to be well-informed about the world.

Critical reading is a big part of understanding argument. Although some of the material you read will be very persuasive, do not fall under the spell of the printed word as authority. Very few of your professors think of the texts they assign as the last word on the subject. Remember that the author of every text has an agenda, something that s/he wants you to believe. This is fine—everything is written from someone’s perspective—but you should remain attuned to this fact as you read. Part of your goal as a reader should be to put the author’s ideas in your own words; then you can stop thinking of these ideas as facts and start envisioning them as arguments. When you read, ask yourself questions like, “what is this author trying to prove?”
“what is the author assuming I agree or disagree with?” “do I agree with the author?” “does the author adequately defend her argument?” “what kind of proof does she use?” “is there something she leaves out that you would put in?” As you become more accustomed to reading critically, you will start to see the sometimes hidden agendas of other writers, and you can use this skill to improve your own ability to craft effective arguments. Critical reading notes will help you develop confidence in class conversations and prevent you from overloading yourself with information and spending too much time sifting through information as you work on your assignments. The following methods will enable you to read your sources with understanding and take good notes.

Pre-Reading: A well-written piece usually makes a single main point and supports that point with a discussion of a series of subtopics related to it. Before you begin writing notes, scan the complete piece of writing to determine the main point, subtopics discussed, and how the author discusses each of the subtopics. An effective method of scanning is to read the first several paragraphs of a section and then read the first (topic) sentence of each remaining paragraph. When you get to the concluding paragraph, read all of it. If your source is a book, the table of contents may help guide you to information that can help you to determine the argument and evidence used to support it. At this stage, you may consider taking the following steps:

- Preliminary examination: study the length, title, and preview the introduction and conclusion of the reading
- Classification: categorize the subject in one simple sentence
- Seeing the skeleton: jot down a brief outline of the reading and think about how parts of the outline relate to the whole, then define the basic problem the author discusses and create a few questions about the reading prior to engaging with it

Critical Reading: After scanning the entire piece, write your understanding of the author’s argument, in your own words. It is a good idea at this point to read the section in the text that contains the author’s first subtopic. The length of this segment will vary, but in the average book or substantial academic article, it will usually feature for one to five pages; after reading this, scan the section again to make sure that you understand the most significant points in it. Next, write your understanding of the subtopics in that section; of course, you also need to do this in your own words. Paraphrasing will help you to better understand the author’s ideas rather than just mechanically copying them. When you take notes, be as concise as possible, omitting unnecessary details and digressions. Write complete sentences as much as possible and use abbreviation sparingly. If you consider that the author’s words are necessary to clarify a point, copy them exactly and put them in quotation marks, recording the page number(s) in the text or article that corresponds to your notes. In addition, make sure that you have all bibliographical information recorded for each source. At this stage, you may consider taking the following steps:

- State the author’s purpose in one simple sentence
- State the author’s argument, thesis, claim, or question (there may be one major claim with several sub-claims)
- Identify the counter-argument
• Describe three pieces of evidence the author used that most persuaded you to see the issue analyzed from the author’s perspective

Post-Reading and Reading Notes: This is the stage that concludes the process of critical reading by creating a conclusion to all previous work. Always try to review the piece after note-taking to make sure your notes are accurate and complete. When you post-read, you may do the following things:

• Review & double-check: review the notes you took while reading to ensure that you have answered all the questions and responded to the prompts during pre-reading and critical reading. Attempt to resolve any unanswered questions before completing this task
• Summarize: Restate the reading’s main argument and the conclusion in a single sentence. As advertising agents sometimes say, “if you can’t write down the idea on the back of a business card, you probably don’t have a clear idea.” In other words, if you find yourself unable to summarize the author’s argument in a single sentence, go back and reread the chapter
• Assess your reaction: what convinced you and what did not? Why? How did you respond to the chapter as a whole? Why?
• Explain, in your own words, how the author reached her conclusion. Explain why you found it convincing or not. Explain how this argument (and the work more generally) matches or does not match what other writers have to say on the same topic.

Readings for this Week

Available on WyoCourse as:

1. 2500Syllabus

Context and Relevance

The social movement for gender equality known as feminism is usually described as having four waves, each of which is connected to a particular generation and features a predominant set of rights-based and ideological concerns. The first wave, which took place from the mid-late nineteenth century until women obtained the right to vote in 1920, was primarily concerned with equal legal rights for women. The second wave, emerging after World War II until the late 1970s, advocated for equal socioeconomic rights. The third wave, beginning in the early 1980s and lasting until the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, was concerned with expanding feminist activism to include considerations of a range of race, gender, and class identities. Fourth wave feminism is the contemporary movement for gender equality that, while still in development, encompasses increased breadth and a strong online presence.
While the waves are a convenient form of historical shorthand, it is important to remember that all four waves feature tremendous diversity of thought and practice. Our readings for this week by Boxer and Feitz emphasize what is gained and what is lost in using the wave metaphor while providing a concise introduction to the state of Gender & Women’s Studies as a field of inquiry and activism. Reading these two pieces together should help you to envision academic research as a conversation between scholars and their ideas, especially as you engage with these works using the critical reading notes method provided.

Historian Marilyn Boxer’s “Women’s Studies as Women’s History” links the institutionalization of Gender & Women’s Studies as an academic field of study to the waves of feminism. She notes that gender barriers to entry into certain fields of study and professions can include silent as well as overt forms. When women began to obtain admission to universities, they often had to pursue a “special curriculum” due to the pervasive belief that women were intellectually inferior to men. Equal access to education expanded greatly following the general expansion of higher education to serve the post-World War II generation aided by the GI Bill, which provided funds to attend college in exchange for military service. Boxer argues that because U.S. education is very student-driven, this diversified group of students attending a greatly expanded system of higher education was successful in demanding curricula related to their concerns and greater flexibility in terms of degree requirements.

Gender & Women’s Studies as a field of study was sparked by a revolutionary generation of young people in the 1960s and 1970s and continues to incorporate both research and activism in its work. Students led the push for Gender & Women’s Studies’ incorporation into universities and, as these programs grew, they began to open up new possibilities for collaboration across fields and increased recruitment of women into fields previously off-limits to them. Boxer argues that using the wave metaphor to historically contextualize the women’s studies movement in generational terms is powerful because it emphasizes the challenges that faced feminists in particular time periods.

Gender & Women’s Studies scholar Lindsay Feitz also explores the wave metaphor in her article by describing intergenerational ideological rifts in ways of thinking about feminism. Fourth wave feminism builds on the successes of the previous three waves and encompasses many more struggles for equality than its predecessors. Yet Feitz notes that her students often bring a number of assumptions into the Gender & Women’s Studies classroom, such as the belief that gender inequality no longer exists. She reflects on how her students lack historical knowledge regarding the exclusion from higher education of women and people of color, noting that the socio-legal endorsement of segregation is still a part of living memory. Universities often appear to be inclusive environments, Feitz notes, yet the demands of tenure, promotion, and other requirements often continue to disadvantage women and people of color.

Third wave feminists have criticized Gender & Women’s Studies as overly focused on white, middle-class women’s concerns and began to greatly expand the field’s inclusivity in the 1980s. Today, in the fourth wave, Gender & Women’s Studies continues to promote inclusivity and broaden the scope of the overarching goal of creating a fairer and more just world for all. Feitz argues that mutually respectful intergenerational dialogue is an essential component of continued progress toward gender equality, and cautions against dismissing previous generations’ considerable and hard-won successes.
**Reading Questions**

1. Marilyn Boxer describes the socioeconomic and political dynamics that informed the initial incorporation of Gender & Women’s Studies into many institutions of higher education. What stood out to you as you learned about the power that students have to shape university curricula?

2. Researching gender is always a political act because it engages with deeply entrenched ideological systems. How did reading Boxer’s work on the historical growth of Gender & Women’s Studies as a field help you to see the ways in which rights-based movements face resistance in their efforts to achieve equality? How does this, in turn, help you to reflect on contemporary movements for social change?

3. As you read Marilyn Boxer’s article, were you surprised to learn of the politics surrounding research in the area of gender? Biology, medicine, and many other fields of academic study also historically faced such resistance from a host of institutional and cultural actors. What challenges, according to Boxer, remain ahead of Gender & Women’s Studies as a field of research and activism?

4. Lindsay Feitz describes how the Gender & Women’s Studies program at the University of Kansas was founded after students barricaded themselves in a university building to protest its absence. What prevents or discourages students from organizing to get their demands met today?

5. Lindsay Feitz describes intergenerational conflicts between feminists. Are these conflicts unique to Gender & Women’s Studies, or do they reflect forces at work in other areas of professional and social life?

**Additional Resources**

1. Link to Marilyn Boxer’s professional website: [http://online.sfsu.edu/mboxer/](http://online.sfsu.edu/mboxer/)

2. Link to Lindsay Feitz’s professional website: [https://www.du.edu/ahss/gwst/faculty/](https://www.du.edu/ahss/gwst/faculty/)
Introduction to Our Class

Week One

Introduction to Our Class and Our Goals for the Semester

Week One
How can I succeed in 1080?

- Dedicate at least two hours to each reading
- Make an appointment to see me if anything is unclear
- Read assignment prompts very carefully
- Keep track of points earned using syllabus guidelines
- Compose weekly critical reading notes

Our goals

- Improve critical thinking and reading skills
- Develop the ability to conduct interdisciplinary analysis
- Become familiar with the vocabulary and major tenets of feminist theories and methods
- Gain a basic understanding of gender as a culturally and historically constructed category
Key Concepts in “The Waves”

- First wave: equal legal rights
- Second wave: equal socioeconomic rights
- Third wave: intersectionality and identities
- Fourth wave: increased breadth and online activism

Getting started with critical reading

- Remember that every author has an agenda
- Agendas are something the author wants you to believe
- Every text comes from a perspective
- All “facts” can be supported with “evidence”
Questions to ask

- What is the author trying to prove?
- With what ideas does the author assume I agree?
- Does the author adequately support the argument?
- What kind of evidence does the author use to do so?
- Is there something the author leaves out?
- How would including that information substantiate the argument?

Pre-reading

- Preliminary examination: Length, title, introduction, conclusion
- Classification: Describe the subject in one simple sentence
- Seeing the skeleton: Briefly outline the chapter to map the article’s trajectory
- Define the argument: Define the basic problem the author discusses and identify a few related questions
Reading critically

- State the author’s purpose in one simple sentence
- State the author’s argument, thesis, claim, or question
- Identify the counter-argument
- Note three pieces of evidence the author used to persuade you to see things from the author’s perspective

Post-reading & reading notes

- Review and double check: Have you answered all the questions and responded to the notes and queries you recorded during pre-reading and critical reading?
- Summarize: Restate the author’s argument in a single sentence
- Assess your reaction: What convinced you and what did not?
- Explain, in your own words, how the author reached a particular conclusion
Formatting CRN

- Write the author, title, place of publication, publisher, and year of publication at the top of the page for each source
- Make notes in the middle of the page, leaving wide margins
- In the right-hand margin, record the page numbers from the source that corresponds to your notes

Writing CRN

- State the author's main argument in your own words
- Concisely state 2-3 key pieces of evidence the author used to support the argument
- Review the text again after writing your CRN to ensure your notes are accurate and complete
Marilyn Boxer describes the socioeconomic and political dynamics that informed the initial incorporation of Gender & Women’s Studies into many institutions of higher education. What stood out to you as you learned about the power that students have to shape university curricula?

Researching gender is always a political act because it engages with deeply entrenched ideological systems. How did reading Boxer’s work on the historical growth of Gender & Women’s Studies as a field help you to see the ways in which rights-based movements face resistance in their efforts to achieve equality? How does this, in turn, help you to reflect on contemporary movements for social change?

As you read Marilyn Boxer’s article, were you surprised to learn of the politics surrounding research in the area of gender? Biology, medicine, and many other fields of academic study also historically faced such resistance from a host of institutional and cultural actors. What challenges, according to Boxer, remain ahead of Gender & Women’s Studies as a field of research and activism?

Lindsay Feitz describes how the Gender & Women’s Studies program at the University of Kansas was founded after students barricaded themselves in a university building to protest. What prevents or discourages students from organizing to get their demands met today?

Lindsay Feitz describes intergenerational conflicts between feminists. Are these conflicts unique to Gender & Women’s Studies, or do they reflect forces at work in other areas of professional and social life?
Week Two:
Identifying Arguments and Counter-Arguments

Readings for this Week

Available on WyoCourse as:


Context and Relevance

The ability to identify arguments and counter-arguments is an essential step in critical reading. As you transition from a consumer of knowledge to a producer of knowledge, it will be especially important for you to consider how professional researchers structure a line of inquiry in carrying out the research that leads to the presentation of an evidence-based argument in published form. This week we read three pieces to assist you in improving your ability to identify and construct arguments and counter-arguments. The first, by political scientist Niels Spierings, introduces the use of comparative research methods in Gender & Women’s Studies. The second and third articles, by psychologist Melissa Farley and social work scholar Theresa Anasti, present opposing arguments about prostitution as a social issue.

Critical engagement with these three articles will help you to identify ways to effectively structure an evidence-based argument derived from research. As you build your skills in this area, it is important to adhere to academic writing standards that transcend disciplines. Writing well at an academic level is a skill that anyone can master through practice. Remember that your ideas are only as strong as their written and/or oral presentation, and so mastering the ability to clearly and concisely convey information will help you to perform at a higher level in all of your classes as well as in your future career. Please refer to the PowerPoint slides that accompany the Week Two course materials for guidance on how to improve your academic writing skills.

Political scientist Niels Spierings’ article is an introduction to a special issue of the journal *Politics & Gender*. Researchers often unite work on a particular topic in this format, which devotes an entire issue of an academic journal to a specialized subject. Such special issues are mini-books that provide a highly focused, concise review of the state of contemporary thinking in an area from a variety of perspectives and can accordingly provide you with a thorough review of a topic in which you hope to expand your knowledge. Throughout your time in
college, you should aim to learn something about how different academic disciplines uniquely approach the design of research and how interdisciplinary work can unite these otherwise separate fields of study. Reading Spierings’ concise introduction on methods will help you to get started with reading across fields and using the work you read to identify new sources that will enrich your understanding of your chosen research topic. The word “method” comes from the Greek hodos, meaning path. Research methods are the tools that researchers use as they follow a particular path in gathering data to analyze, with results used to formulate an argument. Spierings is writing from the perspective of political science, an academic field that focuses on the study of power and politics, in considering how to effectively utilize more inclusive methods.

Psychologist Melissa Farley has devoted her career to research on the violence and other forms of oppression facing women in prostitution and the sex industry. She argues that prostitution is gender inequality in the most extreme form because it subjects women to dehumanizing forms of harassment and suffering. In “#MeToo Must Include Prostitution”, Farley makes connections between the harmful psychological impacts of workplace sexual harassment experienced by women in the workforce and the numerous forms of harassment that women in prostitution routinely experience. She clearly and concisely states her argument on the second page: “The supremacist logic of the man who has more power than a woman, whether he is her boss, doctor, lawyer, teacher, president — is the same as the sex buyer: ‘I pay you so I own you so I can do anything I want to you.’” Free choice and consent do not exist in unequal relationships, and the belief that they do is at best a “narcissistic delusion” according to Farley.

In “Radical Professionals? Sex Worker Rights Activists and Collaboration with Human Service Nonprofits”, social work scholar Theresa Anasti presents a case study analysis of how the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) advocates for the rights and decriminalization of people in sex work while working together with organizations that may not necessarily support this goal. Reading this standard-length academic article in conjunction with two shorter pieces (by Farley and Spierings) is helpful to new researchers because it demonstrates that research is a conversation between scholars. Consider, for instance, how much information Anasti provides before describing her research findings on page 422, and how she uses organization theory to frame her study results. Anasti argues that in the United States sex workers are paradoxically labeled both victims and criminals, which makes activist organizing very difficult and limits sex workers’ abilities to speak for themselves. Nevertheless, she concludes that “underground” activist groups must engage with institutional systems because remaining entirely outside the system severely limits or even prohibits their ability to change it.

**Reading Questions**

1. Spierings concisely summarizes the key questions that underlie research methods in the contemporary study of gender and politics. According to Spierings, what critiques have feminists made of existing research methods, and what alternatives have they provided to prevailing methods?

2. Farley and Anasti both present compelling evidence in support of their respective arguments, which you read this week as examples of argument and counter-argument. How does reading these two pieces help to illuminate particular points on which they authors agree and disagree?
3. Consent is one of the most contentious points of debate among researchers who study the sex industry, with one side arguing that consent is impossible in the unequal conditions endemic to prostitution and the other arguing that women in prostitution exercise agency by selling sex. What evidence do Farley and Anasti present with respect to their different views on issue of consent? Which argument do you find most compelling and why?

4. Consider the amount of information offered in Anasti’s abstract. What questions does this information raise about what might follow in the article? What hints does the author provide regarding her perspective on the issues she discusses in the article, based on her language choice, representation of the issues, and presentation of argument?

5. Anasti analyzes the transition from “underground” to sanctioned service provision by SWOP, a sex worker rights organization. What are the benefits and drawbacks of this process as Anasti presents it? How would Farley respond to the assessment presented in this article?

6. Anasti used interviews as her main research method and conducted 49 interviews, a relatively standard number for a qualitative study. Consider what researchers must accomplish prior to conducting even a single interview: master the literature in a given area to ascertain gaps, design a study to fill a worthwhile aspect of those gaps, obtain Institutional Review Board approval to carry out the work, recruit study participants, conduct the interviews, analyze them, and report results. This time-consuming process is completely different from the more superficial reporting of journalists, yet the latter often receive much more attention among the general public. What could academics do to change this status quo, so that meticulously researched work gains widespread attention?

7. How do the research methods impact the results presented in work we have read so far? If Anasti had mailed out surveys to organizations, for instance, how would her results have differed from the in-depth interview approach she took in her study? Why is it important to consider methods as part of practicing critical reading?

8. Journals in some academic fields require that articles include a section titled “Limitations” in which the author(s) discuss the possible flaws in the study. Why is this useful? Does it seem counter-intuitive for a researcher trying to make an evidence-based argument to admit having limitations? How does reading this section carefully and critically help you to envision each piece of academic research we read as part of a much larger conversation?

**Additional Resources**

1. Melissa Farley’s professional website: [http://prostitutionresearch.com](http://prostitutionresearch.com)

3. Teresa Anasti’s professional website: https://oakland.edu/socan/top-links/faculty/anasti

4. Sex Workers Outreach Project, a pro-sex worker rights group: http://www.new.swopusa.org

Identifying arguments & counter-arguments

Week Two
Academic writing

- Is part of a conversation among researchers
- Requires mastery of standard style
- Is a skill that anyone can acquire
- Translates to many different forms of oral and written communication

Utilize resources

- Pay attention to how authors of assigned readings write
- Reflect their style as much as possible
- Visit office hours or schedule appointments to practice building professional relationships
- Read published work by professors who teach in your major
- Visit The Writing Center
Write for the audience

- Be class specific
- Remember that each assignment can only be evaluated using criteria specified in the syllabus
- “Grade” your own work by carefully reviewing the polished final version in conjunction with syllabus requirements
- You will continue to write for specific audiences throughout your career

Practice critical reading with each assigned reading

- Critical reading is time-consuming but gets easier and faster with practice
- All assigned readings contain an argument supported by multiple forms of evidence
- Most are the product of years-long research projects
- Practicing critical reading with each piece will gradually transform you into a “natural” critical reader
Clear & concise

- Academic writers all have unique voices
- Yet adhere to a set of standards accepted in all fields (as well as discipline-specific standards)
- Being able to write in a clear, concise manner is an essential component of success

Writing vs. speaking

- New academic writers often write ideas as if they are speaking about them
- Avoid “stream of consciousness” writing by outlining prior to beginning the paper
- All points presented should support the argument and conclusions presented
- Leave out sentences that:
  - Do not pertain to arguments or evidence presented
  - Do not make sense when read in isolation
  - “Tell” the reader; remember to “show” the reader through presentation of evidence rather than “telling” them what to believe
  - Use passive voice (always include attribution)
Presentation of argument

- Neutral tone
  - No *ad populum* (emotionalized) statements
  - No *ad hominem* (personal) attacks
- Academic language
  - Avoid *we/us/you* statements
  - Model your writing on your reading
  - Use professional titles to contextualize the work (“Psychologist Melissa Farley argues...” “Social work scholar Theresa Anasti argues...”)
- Use present tense when referring to academic work (“Smith argues that...”)
- Avoid absolutes and generalizations

Argument

- Place your argument near the beginning of the work
- Arguments take a clear position that can be refuted with evidence presented by a counter-argument
  - Prostitution is a form of violence against women
  - Prostitution is work like any other
- Arguments are not descriptive or statements of fact that cannot be refuted
  - There are many opposing views on prostitution
  - Prostitution occurs worldwide
Your argument is the spine of any assignment
Argument guides all aspects of your work
State your argument
Inform the audience how you will defend your claim
Provide evidence
Present counter-argument(s) to convince the audience of why your argument is correct
Conclude

Never rely on “editing as you go”
Read your entire paper out loud in hard copy form to identify errors
- Mark any spots that are difficult to read out loud
- Notice natural breaks (breathing) vs. punctuation
Use a dictionary when searching for synonyms instead of a thesaurus (consider etymology)
Know what mistakes you commonly make
- Make a list, using professors’ comments on previous work
- Check for those mistakes when you proofread
- Measure improvement by decline in these mistakes
Sources

- Make an appointment with a reference librarian
- Know which sources are acceptable:
  - Peer-reviewed journal articles (visit the website)
  - University presses
  - Ask your professor
- And which sources are not:
  - Websites that anyone can edit (Wikipedia)
  - Journalism

Quotes

- Only use particularly powerful or evocative quotes
- Paraphrasing effectively shows mastery of critical reading
- Keep quotes short and infrequent (one substantive quote per page)
- End the sentence after the citation “…(source 2018).”
- Indent quotes over 40 words
Citations

- If it’s not your idea, cite it; if in doubt, cite it
- Keep your sources organized to ensure proper citation and inclusion of all sources
- Choose one citation style and use it consistently (Chicago, APA, MLA)
- Cite as you go to avoid misattribution or losing a source

Argument and counter-argument

- Transition from consumer to producer of knowledge
- Structuring a line of inquiry
- Three pieces to improve ability to identify argument and counter-argument
  - Political scientist Niels Spierings on methods
  - Psychologist Melissa Farley
  - Social work scholar Theresa Anasti
Methods

- From Greek *hodos*, meaning path
- Tools used to gather data
- Feminist research uses inclusive methods (Spierings)
- Prioritizes authority of lived experience (Anasti)

Reading across fields

- Special issues as “mini-books”
- Understanding how different disciplines approach the study of a given topic
- How interdisciplinary work unites approaches from multiple disciplines
- Acknowledging limits to approaches and expectations across fields
Prostitution is the most extreme form of gender inequality
No possibility of consent within extreme inequality
Draws connections between prostitution and #MeToo
Harmful psychological impacts of harassment
Advocates for including voices/experiences of women in prostitution into #MeToo

“The supremacist logic of the man who has more power than a woman, whether he is her boss, doctor, lawyer, teacher, president— is the same as the sex buyer: ‘I pay you so I own you so I can do anything I want to you.’”
Choice/free will in prostitution is a “narcissistic delusion”
Anasti, “Radical Professionals?”

- Case study method
- Consider the title choice
- Information in abstract
- Skeleton of the article
  - Introduction
  - Literature review
  - Methods
  - Findings
  - Limitations
  - Conclusions
  - Works Cited

Anasti, “Radical Professionals?”

- Victim/criminal label
- Difficulties of activist organizing
- “Underground” activists must engage with institutional systems
- Remaining outside the system prohibits/limits abilities to change it
Spierings concisely summarizes the key questions that underlie research methods in the contemporary study of gender and politics. What critiques have feminists made of existing research methods, and what alternatives have they provided to prevailing methods?

Farley and Anasti both present compelling evidence in support of their respective arguments, which you read this week as examples of argument and counter-argument. How does reading these two pieces help to illuminate particular points on which they authors agree and disagree?

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How do the methods impact the results presented in work we have read so far? If Anasti had mailed out surveys to organizations, for instance, how would her results have differed from the in-depth interview approach she took in her study? Why is it important to consider methods as part of practicing critical reading?

Journals in some academic fields require that articles include a section titled “Limitations” in which the author(s) discuss the possible flaws in the study. Why is this useful? Does it seem counter-intuitive for a researcher trying to make an evidence-based argument to admit having limitations? How does reading this section carefully and critically help you to envision each piece of academic research we read as part of a much larger conversation?
Melissa Farley’s professional website:
http://prostitutionresearch.com

Niels Spierings’ professional website:
https://www.ru.nl/english/people/spierings-c/

Teresa Anasti’s professional website:
https://oakland.edu/socan/top-links/faculty/anasti

Sex Workers Outreach Project, a pro-sex worker rights group Anasti studied: http://www.new.swopusa.org

#MeToo’s website: https://metoomvmt.org/
Week Three:
Locating Evidence to Investigate a Topic

Readings for this Week

Available on WyoCourse as:


Context and Relevance

Researchers locate evidence to investigate a specific research question and formulate a carefully considered argument based on their analysis of their findings through a process called research design. This process involves development of a research area of interest, a literature review, and selection of methods for data collection and analysis. I designed our class to reflect aspects of the research process in our iterative assignments, each of which builds on lessons learned in the last to improve your skills as a researcher. Our first assignment, due Friday, September 28, is an annotated bibliography in which you will select a minimum of seven peer-reviewed sources that complement one another and provide sufficient evidence in support of the argument you develop after conducting a literature review. Each annotated bibliographic entry will contain clear statements of the author’s argument, method, evidence presented, conclusion, and the unique contribution that the selected source makes to the annotated bibliography.

The first step in the research process is identifying an area of interest that is relevant to Gender & Women’s Studies, an interdisciplinary field of research concerned with the identities and inequalities that variously inform issues related to gender and sexualities. Scholars conduct feminist research in fields as diverse as biology, history, and anthropology in ways that combine critical attention to gender and sexuality with established parameters for research in their own field. For example, anthropologists who study gender generally spend extensive periods of time mastering the languages and cultural knowledge necessary to immerse themselves in a social group for a year or more while they take detailed fieldnotes based on their observations of everyday life as it pertains to a gender-related issue. Biomedical researchers who study gender may do so through the lens of their field by analyzing, for example, gender-based health inequalities, the use of science to particular political ends, or the underrepresentation of women in many fields of biomedical science. A feminist historian will likely spend extensive periods of time in an archive analyzing original documents to examine questions related to gender and sexuality in particular historical contexts. This interdisciplinary approach is part of what makes Gender & Women’s Studies such a dynamic field of inquiry.

Gender & Women’s Studies scholars, like their peers in many other fields, carry out research using three main types of research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The
The word **qualitative** stems from the Latin **qualis**, meaning “of what kind” and the root word of **quantitative** is the Latin **quantitas**, meaning “having magnitude or spatial extent.” Qualitative research foregrounds participants’ experiences and voices among a group of research participants, who may range in number from one (in the case of life histories) to several hundred (in the case of participant observation). Qualitative research can include interviews, participant observation, focus groups, life histories, and other forms of face-to-face interaction in the research design. Quantitative research focuses on the scope and frequency of a particular issue, and may include surveys or statistical analyses of large-scale data sets that can include thousands of people the researcher will never meet in person. Mixed methods research combines both qualitative and quantitative methods to highlight nuanced and multi-faceted aspects of a given issue under study. In my own long-term research with women involved in street prostitution, I have utilized both quantitative and qualitative data and found that these different approaches highlight very different aspects of the women’s lives.

You can begin identifying an area of interest to explore throughout the semester by asking yourself a few important questions. First, how will your chosen topic allow you to engage with multiple perspectives and sources of evidence to develop an argument? Second, what aspects of your chosen topic are most important for you to emphasize to your audience? Third, how does your chosen topic relate to other issues of importance that make it worth studying? Researchers sometimes begin this process by drawing a concept map, which visually represents the connections between different aspects of the topic under study and ensures that the topic is sufficiently broad to allow for scholarly engagement but also sufficiently narrow to facilitate formulation of an argument. We will practice developing concept maps in class using volunteers. Areas of interest are unrestricted in our class as long as they pertain to gender, but may include subjects such as reproductive health, gender-based violence, access to/parity in education, feminized labor, women and politics, queer theory, and girl studies. Examples of what these areas of study might involve are detailed on the slides that accompany this week’s course materials.

After identifying an area of interest, the next step in research design is a literature review, which in our class will result in an annotated bibliography due to the clarity and conciseness required by this particular format. A literature review is a critical examination of peer-reviewed publications related to the subject you wish to study that summarizes, evaluates, and demonstrates relationships between existing work. Professional researchers and practitioners use literature reviews to concisely unite a large amount of information in one place, and document gaps in existing knowledge as a means to highlight areas for future research. A literature review should inform the reader about consensus perspectives (“the facts”), major debates, and prevailing approaches to study of the chosen topic. We will review the best ways to locate information in the library databases together in class and practice synthesizing information into annotated bibliographic format next week. These exercises will help you to develop strategies to show the relationship between the work of different researchers and move from a general area of inquiry to a specific research question as you formulate your annotated bibliography.

To put your developing skills into practice, this week we will use evidence presented in the UN Women annotated bibliography and priorities presented in the AusAid report to develop...
arguments about what could improve market traders’ working conditions. Doing so will demonstrate how professionals translate research into action through evidence-based policy.

UN Women is the United Nations organization focused specifically on the advancement of gender equality and the rights of women and girls. The UN Women report “Pacific Markets and Market Vendors” organizes all available research studies on women market traders in the Pacific Islands into easy-to-read points grouped under four main headings followed by annotated bibliographic entries referred to in the numbered list. Hundreds of sources have been distilled and organized into four headers: nature and extent of market trade in the Pacific, social context of market trade in the Pacific, challenges faced by Pacific Island market traders, and recommendations for improving markets. This document, which I compiled and wrote for UN Women during my research with women market traders in Fiji, is an excellent example of how to use research to promote transformative social change and improved well-being for all. Work like this, of which the United Nations website features many examples, is an example of how the binary between “Ivory Tower” research and practical implementation does not have to exist.

AusAid is the branch of the Government of Australia that promotes development and diplomacy through the disbursement of aid to particular projects throughout the world. AusAid funded UN Women’s Markets for Change project, which in turn drew on evidence presented in the UN Women report we read this week. Juxtaposing these documents allows you to see the different ways information is mobilized to a particular political end. The report distills a major program initiative by AusAid to advance gender equality in the Pacific Islands into six headings: background, review, findings on program relevance, findings on program effectiveness, findings on program efficiency, and issues, ways forward, and recommendations. These headings map out a clear organizational approach in the six areas comprising the report and help to show how research can be put into practice in meaningful ways to make evidence-informed choices. The report builds on lessons learned in earlier phases of the project to shape later phases, with the goal of ensuring evidence-based programming. Consider page five’s graphic representation of evidence, which summarizes nearly three pages of information into a neat graphic.

Reviewing reports in formats such as those we are reading this week helps you to practice critical reading’s goal of “seeing the structure” and “jotting down the skeleton” and following this format can help you to ensure clear organization as you outline your own ideas or assessment of others’ work. Likewise, the relevance questions listed on page seven of the AusAid report are a model for us to consider as you develop your own research questions. Generally researchers begin with a broad scope of their inquiry—think of an upside down triangle—and then flip that inverted triangle through a careful literature review in order to develop a much more specific, pointed question that then expands, with collection and analysis of data, to offer meaningful conclusions.

Reading Questions

1. Review the following journal’s websites to get a sense of each journal’s scope and content with a view to engaging more thoroughly with these high impact sources in your research project. How are they different? What academic fields seem to be strongly represented? Why would a researcher choose one of these journals above all others to present her results?
2. We read two very different ways of presenting research this week that, in turn, differ significantly from previously assigned readings. Which written presentation style did you find the most convincing and why? How have your impressions of these different written presentation styles impacted your thinking about how you might use aspects of these styles in your own writing?

3. A major critique of donor aid is that it creates a culture of dependency that can lead to failure or lack of continuity when funding goes away. Throughout the report we see concern that “ownership of the program” funded by AusAid has not sufficiently occurred. Put yourself in the position of an AusAid worker. Why are initiatives like the ones undertaken by UN Women and AusAid important, particularly in terms of systematically measuring success? Now consider the same question from the perspective of a worker at a small Pacific Island women’s rights organization. What challenges do you face in meeting the benchmarks noted in this report? What might you think of the measurements of success offered in this report?

4. Why is it important for governments, including donor governments, to commit to work that aims to include women meaningfully as equal partners in all spheres of socioeconomic and political life? What happens in the absence of such work?

5. An old saying often applied to development efforts notes, “whoever pays chooses the music and everyone else has to dance.” Based on what you read in this report, is it possible for the relatively rich country of Australia to be an equal partner with much poorer Pacific Island nations in inclusive and meaningful ways?

6. Mastering the ability to critically read primary source documents is just as important as mastering the ability to read academic research reports. Some of you will write reports like these for state or local government, nonprofit organizations, or other purposes in your careers. Both documents we read this week synthesize tremendous amounts of information in an easy-to-read format. Somewhat paradoxically, these concise documents require a tremendous amount of work and discretion by their authors in terms of selecting information. What have we learned about the importance of mastering this skill by using selection strategies such as the use of footnotes, links, and condensed information?

Additional Resources

- **Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society**: http://signsjournal.org/home/
- **Psychology of Women Quarterly**: http://journals.sagepub.com/home/pwq
- **Gender & Society**: http://journals.sagepub.com/home/gas
- **Sex Roles: A Journal of Research**: https://www.springer.com/psychology/journal/11199
- **Women’s Studies Quarterly**: https://www.feministpress.org/wsq/
- **Feminist Theory**: http://journals.sagepub.com/home/fty
- **Genders**: https://www.colorado.edu/genders/
2. Gender & Women’s Studies library guide: http://libguides.uwyo.edu/genderandwmst
3. UN Women’s website: http://www.unwomen.org/en
Annotated bibliography

- Clear description of research design
- Seven peer-reviewed sources
  - Argument
  - Method
  - Evidence
  - Clear statement of contribution selected sources make to annotated bibliography

Interdisciplinarity

- Works in conjunction with disciplinary norms
- Anthropology
- Biomedical research
- History
- Dynamic field of inquiry results
Qualitative Research
- Latin *qualis*, “of what kind”
- Foregrounds participants’ experiences and voices
- Particularities of smaller samples
- Interviews, focus groups, participant observation

Quantitative Research
- Latin *quantitas*, “having magnitude or spatial extent”
- Focus on scope and frequency in large samples
- Likert (1-5) scale surveys, statistical analyses of large-scale data sets
Mixed Methods

- Combines both qualitative & quantitative methods
- Highlights multiple aspects of an issue
- Increased nuance & multi-facettedness
- Example: Combining case file data with long-term participant observation & interviews

Examples and themes in gender & sexuality research

- Reproductive health
- Gender-based violence
- Access to/parity in education
- Gender in the workplace
- Gender & politics
- Queer theories
- Girls Studies
Reproductive health

- Beyond a “developmentalist” approach
- Parity in healthcare access
- Gender inclusivity
- Culturally sensitive reproductive rights discourse

HIV/AIDS

- Structural conditions that increase vulnerability
- Social construction of “at-risk” populations
- Interpersonal power dynamics
- Sociocultural context of “risk” and transmission
Gender-based violence

- Connections to physical & mental health
- Domestic/private nature of gender-based violence
- Totalizing impacts of structural & interpersonal violence
- Difficulty of obtaining accurate quantitative data due to dynamics of reporting

Access to/parity in education

- Enduring disparities and inequities
- “Hidden” disparities
- Intersectional sources of disparities
- Differential access to education
- Barriers to graduation
Gender in the workplace

- Women's overrepresentation in lower paid, lower status, and less secure/less stable jobs
- Falsity of informal/formal sector and full-time/part-time dichotomy
- Social forces that create “choices”
- Workplace structures
- Gendered labor migration

Gender and politics

- “Women’s issues”?
- Politics of presence
- Intersectionality’s role: race, class, and gender
- Impact of international instruments
- Lack of disaggregated data collection
Queer theories

- Problematizes categorization of gender and sexual identities
- Recognizes that many varied components comprise identity
- Affirms complexity of human behavior
- Argues that dominant perceptions of normative sexuality stems from cultural/historical context rather than biology/nature

Girls Studies

- Female youth as a unique demographic group
- Counter-point to adult-centered perspectives
- Highly relevant in countries with a high percentage of youth
- Socialization processes, body image, impact of media
Literature review

- Critical examination of peer-reviewed sources
- Concisely summarizes a large amount of information in one place
- Evaluates the work
- Demonstrates relationships between existing work

AusAid

- Distills a major program initiative on gender equality in the Pacific Islands
- Map clear organizational structure
- Graphic representation of evidence
- Excellent practice for critical reading
Review the following journal’s websites to get a sense of each journal’s scope and content with a view to engaging more thoroughly with these high impact sources in your research project. How are they different? What academic fields seem to be strongly represented? Why would a researcher choose one of these journals above all others to present her results?

- Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society: http://signsjournal.org/home/
- Psychology of Women Quarterly: http://journals.sagepub.com/home/pwq
- Gender & Society: http://journals.sagepub.com/home/gas
- Women’s Studies Quarterly: https://www.feministpress.org/wsq/
- Feminist Theory: http://journals.sagepub.com/home/fty
- Genders: https://www.colorado.edu/genders/

We read two very different ways of presenting research this week that, in turn, differ significantly from previously assigned readings. Which written presentation style did you find the most convincing and why? How have your impressions of these different written presentation styles impacted your thinking about how you might use aspects of these styles in your own writing?

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Why is it important for governments, including donor governments, to commit to work that aims to include women meaningfully as equal partners in all spheres of socioeconomic and political life? What happens in the absence of such work?
An old saying often applied to development efforts notes, “whoever pays chooses the music and everyone else has to dance.” Based on what you read in this report, is it possible for the relatively rich country of Australia to be an equal partner with much poorer Pacific Island nations in inclusive and meaningful ways?

Mastering the ability to critically read primary source documents is just as important as mastering the ability to read academic research reports. Some of you will write reports like these for state or local government, nonprofit organizations, or other purposes in your careers. Both documents we read this week synthesize tremendous amounts of information in an easy-to-read format. Somewhat paradoxically, these concise documents require a tremendous amount of work and discretion by their authors in terms of selecting information. What have we learned about the importance of mastering this skill by using selection strategies such as the use of footnotes, links, and condensed information?

Additional resources

- “Where Do I Start?”
  [http://libguides.uwyo.edu/starthere](http://libguides.uwyo.edu/starthere)
- Gender & Women’s Studies library guide:
  [http://libguides.uwyo.edu/genderandwmst](http://libguides.uwyo.edu/genderandwmst)
- UN Women’s website: [http://www.unwomen.org/en](http://www.unwomen.org/en)
- United Nations document search system:
Week Four:
Synthesizing Information into Annotated Bibliographic Format

Readings for this Week

Available on WyoCourse as:


Context and Relevance

As you move toward completing the annotated bibliography due on Friday, September 28, it is useful to practice synthesizing information into this format. Consider the approach taken by each of the four assigned readings this week and how the authors mobilize different types of evidence and presentation styles to convince a particular type of audience. Beginning on October 1 you will begin submitting handwritten or typed notes on ten (out of twelve total) student presentation days. Your notes will feature, for each student presentation, a statement of evidence-based argument in one or two sentences along with a clearly written two sentence synopsis of the assigned reading’s evidence-based argument and its relevance to each student presentation.

The peer review exercise is designed to help you build your skills in providing constructive critical feedback, a task you will need to complete many times in your professional life with colleagues, those under your supervision, and even with supervisors. Constructive critical feedback should provide clear examples of areas for improvement using accepted parameters which, in the case of our class, is the assignment guidelines clearly outlined in the syllabus. In other settings these parameters may include a job description, policy, or some other shared guiding principles to which both the person receiving the constructive critical feedback and the person providing it have access. This way the recipient of the constructive critical feedback is much more inclined to understand that the feedback is not subjective to the individual providing it. Try to focus on the behavior that needs improvement, rather than the person, and aim for a few points that the recipient of the feedback can target for improvement. For instance, you might try, “Speaking very quickly, avoiding audience eye contact, and gesturing rapidly made you appear very nervous during your presentation. Try including some of the evidence-based tips for improving your performance mentioned in the articles we are reading during the
presentation weeks.” Including specific tips for improvement derived from the assigned readings during the student presentation weeks is a required part of the peer review assignment that will help you to sync the acquisition and application of skills in this area.

Community-based researcher Chris Barcelos and medical anthropologist Aline Gubrium open their co-authored article “Bodies that Tell” by specifying the gap in the literature on pregnant and parenting teens that their work fills. Their article’s introduction not only specifies the cultural relevance of the topic but also provides insights into how researchers choose their subjects of study as part of a process that carefully considers ideas that have not yet been explored in a field of study and that also present potential for novel insights. The authors used digital storytelling, as part of their “Hear Our Stories” project, to facilitate young pregnant and parenting Latinas’ accounts of their own lives, with a particular focus on how they tell their own stories in the context of negative familial and cultural messages about youthful pregnancy. The section “Bringing Bodies In” details the research design the authors used to carefully select methods, theory, and a literature review in conceptualizing the project as well as the methods they used to analyze the data.

Barcelos and Gubrium identify three themes in their analysis of the digital storytelling projects that form the basis of their analysis on pages 912-924: (re)presenting the self, knowing bodies, and embodied trauma. Each theme has its own subheading in which the authors unpack the analysis of each theme by describing the digital storytelling project itself and providing numerous examples of how the participants expressed themselves in their digital storytelling in a way related to the relevant theme. The authors conclude by presenting the idea of “bodies-as-process” which “recognizes that pregnant and parenting young women are neither fully constrained by discourses of pathology, risk, and abjection nor fully capable of resisting these discourses” (p. 924).

Political scientist Gülay Caglar’s research question in her article “Gender Mainstreaming” focuses on why this concept, while widely understood, has not resulted in gender equality. She engages with literature on this subject to consider two predominant ways of measuring gender equality: equality of opportunity and equality of outcome, and the transformation of institutionalized practices and norms that reproduce bias. Gender, Caglar notes, is all-too-often used as a synonym for women, resulting in cookie cutter instruments designed to integrate women rather than transforming the structures that exclude them. Caglar describes ways in which meaning-making occurs with respect to gender mainstreaming, raising the big question of what happens to an ideology once powerful institutional actors adopt it. She notes,

Gender mainstreaming seeks to change institutional structures, policy instruments, and priorities from a gender equality perspective. It does so by creating the conditions for institutional learning…The idea is to enable bureaucrats to reorganize institutional procedures and to redefine policy values in ways to achieve gender equality (p. 340).

Caglar argues that scholars of gender mainstreaming must critically examine how institutions arrive at particular ideological stances, whether through research, assumptions, or other means, in order to understand how gender mainstreaming is implemented. On page 341 she presents the concepts of rules of identity that govern the performance of gender in institutions, and rules
of entitlements, in which privilege dictates access to institutional resources. Caglar concludes, on page 342, by presenting a series of thoughtful questions for scholars interested in gender mainstreaming to pursue in their research:

What kinds of knowledge underlie understandings of gender equality? How do these kinds of knowledge become sedimented in institutions, and to what extent? How does gender expertise shape processes of knowledge generation within organizations? And to what extent does gender expertise contribute to a transformative understanding of gender mainstreaming?

The Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research is an institute at the University of Gothenburg tasked by the Government of Sweden with promoting gender research in college and university settings. This short report offers a practical guide to implementing gender mainstreaming that, especially when read in conjunction with Caglar’s work, poses real solutions to solving the ongoing problem of gender inequality through policy. Using the metaphor of links on a chain, the authors argue that gender equality must feature as a comprehensive goal throughout any policy document rather than being an afterthought (as in, “it would be nice if…”). The report describes an orderly system in which regulatory documents play a central role in providing clear guidance to policymakers. This is important, authors of our readings for this week would argue, because the alternative is individual discretionary decision-making regarding the incorporation of gender mainstreaming.

The Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research’s report provides a set of questions to help assess whether a given objective is being met toward the goal of achieving gender equality. The ability to assess whether a given objective is being met is a basic requirement of most professional jobs. Mastering this skill early in your career by ascertaining the right questions to ask will prepare you to become an effective member of a team and valuable to the organization as a whole. As you read work in your area of interest with a view toward developing policy, which we will do later this semester, ask yourself how the problems identified in your reading can realistically be solved. Who will do so, and what do they need to do? Asking specific questions like those presented in this report will aid you greatly in your efforts.

The World Bank is an international financial institution that provides loans, grants, and credit designed to improve infrastructure and services provision throughout most of the world. This report, called a guidance note because it is designed to provide readers with instruction on how to carry out their work, describes poverty and social impact analysis, a research method that assesses how policy reforms impact different groups in society. The guidance note emphasizes the need to include gender in such analyses in order to make them more effective. On page three in Box 2, the authors provide examples from Nepal, Chile, and Congo of gender analysis that informed policy formulation beginning with a research question, data collection, and particular policy outcome. Women and men, the authors argue, are not members of uniform categories and do not face a set of uniform impacts from policy; hence it is important to consider other identity factors in addition to gender.

The World Bank guidance note provides a clear structure that you may consider using as a model to improve your organizational skills in writing as a means to avoid the stream-of-consciousness flow that is common among new researchers and novice academic writers. As
you improve your critical reading skills, you will eventually begin to see this kind of skeletal structure in every academic article that you read lying beneath the connective tissue of narrative. For example, the authors present the concept of “transmission channels” on page 7, the means through which women and men become variously impacted by policy reform, followed by grey subheadings that clearly demarcate the various transmission channels for policy reforms to reach men and women through employment, prices, access to goods and services, assets, and transfers and taxes. They urge researchers to consider these issues in light of gendered intrahousehold bargaining power and balances of power more generally. This report is based on mixed methods and emphasizes the importance of considering individuals’ accounts of the structural inequalities they face as well as larger scale data sets disaggregated by gender. Yet the authors observe that gender is often the first element to drop out of studies despite its centrality in everyday life.

Readings for this week all focus on representation. Barcelos and Gubrium are concerned with how young women’s self-representations in digital storytelling embrace, contest, or otherwise engage with dominant narratives about their pregnancies and parenting. Articles by Caglar and the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research emphasize the problems with, as well as practical alternatives to, ongoing gender disparities in institutions. The World Bank report offers instruction for researchers on integrating gender into poverty and social impact analysis as a means to ensure that policy reforms benefit individuals irrespective of gender. Taken together, these readings emphasize the powerful ways in which feminist research can make disparities visible with a view to recommending status quo alternatives.

**Reading Questions**

1. Barcelos and Gubrium’s article featured in *Signs*, one of the top Gender & Women’s Studies journals, and is accordingly of very high quality and has passed through several rounds of anonymous peer review in which experts in the field read and commented on the work. How does your improved knowledge about the arduous process of designing, implementing, and reporting research results make you read this piece differently than you would have earlier?

2. After carefully considering various aspects of the research process discussed thus far in class, what most surprised you about this article or others like it? What aspects of research seem the most challenging, and which seem the most rewarding? Is it participant recruitment, when potential participants may be too busy or uninterested in the research, identifying a journal for publication knowing that it very well may be rejected months later, or something else? Why do you think that researchers pursue their work in the face of so many challenges?

3. Caglar argues that gender mainstreaming’s lack of conceptual clarity results in a problem: “gender mainstreaming can mean all things to all people” (p. 337). What other examples can you think of regarding terms that are similarly, as Caglar puts it, “elastic” or “hollow”? Are there potential advantages to such flexibility in definitions, despite the disadvantages Caglar clearly points out?
4. Critics of gender mainstreaming argue that what Caglar describes as an “integrative approach” (p. 338-339) amounts to little more than an “add women and stir” approach to forms of exclusion that are too complex to be solved through simple adjustments. Given the critique that gender mainstreaming rarely results in changes to the status quo, why does it continue to face such strong resistance?

5. Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research lists Sweden’s four national gender equality objectives, all of which seem like obvious points to which any reasonable person would agree, such as the need to end violence against women. Yet violence against women remains a worldwide reality. What socioeconomic and cultural forces continue to enable it, and how does gender mainstreaming potentially solve this problem?

6. The World Bank guidance note emphasizes how having a clear set of questions can meaningfully guide policy reform targeted at achieving gender equality. How does reading the list of questions offered on page seven help you to reflect on the kinds of questions you should ask in your own research? Do they help provide examples of questions that are sufficiently narrow in focus to provide a clear answer, but not so narrow so as to exclude possible alternatives?

7. This week we read pieces produced by the World Bank, the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research, an academic article on gender mainstreaming, and a research article on pregnant and parenting young women, most of whom were living in poverty. How would gender mainstreaming change the life situations of some or all of the teenagers and young women you read about in Barcelos and Gubrium’s piece? How does applying some elements of analysis we learned about this week to their situations provide insights into the challenges they face and potential alternatives to these?

**Additional Resources**


3. Chris Barcelos’ professional website: https://gws.wisc.edu/staff/barcelos-chris/


5. Aline Gubrium’s professional website: https://www.umass.edu/sphhs/person/faculty/aline-c-gubrium
Synthesizing Information into Annotated Bibliographic Format

Week 4

- Annotated bibliographic format concisely conveys significant amounts of information
- Consider each piece’s approach
  - Mobilization of particular types of evidence
  - Presentation style
  - Audience

Practicing synthesis
Peer review

- Builds skills in providing constructive criticism
- Colleagues, supervised workers, supervisors
- Use clear guidelines
  - Our syllabus
  - Job description, policy, or other guiding principle
  - Helps recipient and critic share understandings of expectations for improvement
  - Ensures the feedback is not subjective

Providing constructive critical feedback

- Focus on the behavior that needs improvement, not the person
- Include specific tips for improvement derived from assigned readings
- Evidence-based practices for effective public speaking
- Careful consideration of constructive criticism helps the critic become a stronger thinker, more collegial peer, and improved worker
Thinking critically about representation

- Barcelos & Gubrium on young women’s self-representations
- Caglar & Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research on problems with, and practical alternatives through gender mainstreaming to, gender inequality
- World Bank on need to integrate gender into poverty and social impact analysis
- All emphasize the powerful ways in which gender studies research can reveal disparities and recommend status quo alternatives

Barcelos & Gubrium, “Bodies That Tell”

- Specifies gap in the literature it seeks to fill
- Emphasizes cultural relevance of the topic
- Provides insight into how researchers choose subjects of study
- Digital storytelling “Hear Our Stories”
- Community-based research with young parenting and pregnant Latinas
“Bodies That Tell”

- How young women give accounts of their own lives
- Context of negative familial and cultural messages about youthful pregnancy
- Implications for other areas of study, based on lit. review?

- Identification of three themes in analysis
  - (re)presenting the self
  - knowing bodies
  - embodied trauma.

- Bodies as process: “recognizes that pregnant and parenting young women are neither fully constrained by discourses of pathology, risk, and abjection nor fully capable of resisting these discourses” (p. 924).
Caglar, “Gender Mainstreaming”

- Asks why gender mainstreaming is widely recognized
- Yet has not resulted in widespread gender equality
- Predominant ways of measuring gender equality
  - Equality of opportunity and outcome
  - Transformation of exclusionary social structures

Gender mainstreaming seeks to change institutional structures, policy instruments, and priorities from a gender equality perspective. It does so by creating the conditions for institutional learning...The idea is to enable bureaucrats to reorganize institutional procedures and to redefine policy values in ways to achieve gender equality (Caglar, p. 340).
Scholars must critically examine how institutions arrive at particular ideological stances

- Rule of identity
- Rule of entitlements

What kinds of knowledge underlie understandings of gender equality? How do these kinds of knowledge become sedimented in institutions, and to what extent? How does gender expertise shape processes of knowledge generation within organizations? And to what extent does gender expertise contribute to a transformative understanding of gender mainstreaming? (Caglar, p. 342)
Importance of asking the right questions

- Report provides clear questions to assess whether a given objective is being met
- Who will do the work and what will they need to do?
- Provides an introduction to the work we will do in creating our policy briefs later in the semester
- Moving from consumers of knowledge to producers of knowledge

World Bank, "Guidance Note"

- International financial institution
- Provides loans, grants, & credit designed to improve infrastructure and services provision throughout most of the world
- Guidance note
  - Designed to provide readers with clear instructions to improve their work
  - Guidance rather than directives
Poverty and Social Impact Analysis

- Common research method among practitioners
- Assesses how policy reforms impact different groups in society
- Emphasizes how including gender in such analyses makes them more effective
- Women and men experience different impacts of policy implementation across and between identities

Transmission channels

- Considers intrahousehold bargaining power
- Factors in gendered balance of power in households
- Means by which women and men are variously impacted by policy reform
  - Employment
  - Prices
  - Access to goods and services
  - Transfers and taxes
Barcelos and Gubrium’s article featured in *Signs*, one of the top Gender & Women’s Studies journals, and is accordingly of very high quality and has passed through several rounds of anonymous peer review in which experts in the field read and commented on the work. How does your improved knowledge about the arduous process of designing, implementing, and reporting research results make you read this piece differently than you would have earlier?

After carefully considering various aspects of the research process discussed thus far in class, what most surprised you about this article or others like it? What aspects of research seem the most challenging, and which seem the most rewarding? Is it participant recruitment, when potential participants may be too busy or uninterested in the research, identifying a journal for publication knowing that it very well may be rejected months later, or something else? Why do you think that researchers pursue their work in the face of so many challenges?

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Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research lists Sweden’s four national gender equality objectives, all of which seem like obvious points to which any reasonable person would agree, such as the need to end violence against women. Yet violence against women remains a worldwide reality. What socioeconomic and cultural forces continue to enable it, and how does gender mainstreaming potentially solve this problem?
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- Website of the World Bank: https://www.worldbank.org
- Website of the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research: https://www.genus.se/en/about-us/
- Chris Barcelos’ professional website: https://gws.wisc.edu/staff/barcelos-chris/
- Aline Gubrium’s professional website: https://www.umass.edu/sphhs/person/faculty/aline-c-gubrium
Week Five:
Effectively Presenting Information

Readings for this Week

Available on WyoCourse as:


Context and Relevance

This week you will continue preparing to present an evidence-based argument derived from your annotated bibliography and provide constructive critical feedback through peer reviews of other students’ presentations in weeks six and seven. To this end, you read three pieces written in different styles this week with the goal of choosing an effective presentation style. Each piece takes a different tone, style of presentation, and form of audience engagement. Consider all of these approaches in conjunction with work you have read before as you continue to formulate your presentation.

Effectively presenting information requires a clear set of goals, connecting with the audience, and establishing expertise in a way that the audience will be convinced by the argument you convey to them. Your goals in presenting to the audience are clearly outlined in our class syllabus, but such clear parameters will not be the case for most of the other presentations you will make in your career. Generally, you should establish four goals prior to developing a presentation in addition to any parameters you have been provided with, such as those clearly outlined in our course syllabus. First, establish the argument you want the audience to accept. Second, determine what evidence you will need to present in order to convince the audience of your argument. Third, consider how you can make it easier for the audience to absorb your evidence-based argument through careful selection of graphs, images, and other non-text information presented visually. Fourth, determine your audience’s knowledge level about a given topic so that you will provide adequate information about a topic without boring or inadequately contextualizing information for the audience.

Conveying complex information to a general audience in a concise, effective, and memorable manner requires a great deal of preparation and practice. Establishing your goals for presenting to the audience is just the first step in effectively presenting information. As you continue to improve your presentation skills, you should strive to achieve visual, oral, and stylistic
synchronicity with your audience, so that everyone in the room cannot focus on anything but your presentation. Balancing audience engagement at the intellectual, analytical, and interpersonal levels is one way to attract this focus. Engage the audience intellectually by presenting evidence that not only supports your argument but also refutes the strongest counter-argument. Visually depicting graphic or other images that represent data used in support of your argument engages the audience in the analytical process you followed in your research while also providing the audience with a set of tools they can use to evaluate the merits of your work. Carefully modulate your tone of voice, the speed with which you speak, and your non-verbal communication skills to focus the audience’s attention on your message, rather than on trying to follow or otherwise pay attention to your argument.

Visual aids work well to keep the audience’s attention and are a required aspect of your presentation. Humans process images much faster than text, and images also increase the audience’s emotional engagement with your presentation. Audiences pay close attention to how the presenter relays the information and are easily influenced by body posture, eye contact, tone, and enthusiasm. Think, for example, of the professors whose teaching style you most enjoy. Is it those who speak in a monotone voice, frequently reading from the screen or notes, or those who speak with great passion about their subject matter? Do not make the audience work hard to pay attention to you by speaking in a monotone voice, reading from notes, and otherwise indicating to them that you would much rather be somewhere else. Try to envision the audience as a friendly collaborator in improving your presentation skills, rather than a judgmental adversary. This kind of positive thinking can go a long way toward building your confidence in your presentation skills.

Be judicious in your selection of images, graphic representations of data, or other media that engage with or reinforce your argument. Consider your presentation goals as you select these materials by paying particular attention to what they can realistically accomplish, as the onus remains on the presenter to effectively communicate the message. Graphs allow for efficient depiction of large amounts of data but it is up to the presenter to interpret them for the audience, so make sure that you understand exactly what is depicted in each graph. A presenter who does not adequately understand how to interpret material presented will lose credibility with the audience and is accordingly better off leaving it out. Very brief videos and other media can be persuasive by stirring audience emotion and “humanizing” an issue, but be highly selective to ensure that your selection will actually accomplish your goals.

Even a novice researcher can establish expertise with an audience through careful preparation. Preparation, expertise, and confidence often go together in public speaking, and those new to presenting in an academic or other professional setting often lack these second and third elements. Yet preparation is something you can control, as is the reality that expertise comes in many forms. Some speakers can establish expertise through their academic research and credentials alone, such as by informing the audience of the number of books they have written on a topic or other relevant professional experience. Yet life experience is also powerful. Someone who has served a ten year prison sentence, for instance, has a very different kind of expertise than an academic who has studied prison for the same length of time. Some audiences may be much more interested in hearing the former prisoner’s perspectives, which come from direct life experience, than the researcher’s observations. Preparing extensively for your presentation and ensuring excellence in all aspects—visual, oral, and written—will build your
confidence in your ability to present it, as you will know that you have done everything you can to succeed.

Continuing to practice critical reading in our assigned texts will directly assist you with building your evidence-based argumentation skills as well as developing presentation skills. As you read, consider how the authors presented their argument and evidence used to support it. How did they describe the problem? If they used images or graphic representations of evidence, how did they do so? What were some of the most memorable ways that they conveyed information? Noting your responses to these questions will help you to develop your own unique presentation style that makes you feel comfortable and confident in relaying information.

Journalist Laura Heaton’s article begins with a strong opening sentence followed by numerous examples of how thematic trends tend to dominate public narratives on humanitarian emergencies. She argues that new ways of framing these issues eventually replace old ones, yet all tend to focus on one particular area of a problem to the exclusion of all others. The result is a self-fulfilling prophecy in which a problem is defined in a particular way by powerful actors who set the parameters for donor aid and other forms of support, leading to a narrowly focused set of approaches that are partially or even wholly ineffectives. Heaton uses the case study of Luvungi, DRC, where international mass media asserted that militants systematically committed mass rape. Community elders, Heaton notes, supported this dominant narrative to avoid ostracizing women sexually assaulted by militants and because it garnered financial support for their communities.

Heaton observes that sexual violence is a real and pervasive problem in the DRC yet she questions the pre-conceived notions about Africa that led international media to disproportionately focus on one type of abuse to the exclusion of many others taking place on a much larger scale. Funding priorities, accordingly, focused on women who had been raped, to the extent that women who required medical treatment supported by particular donor agencies were misclassified as survivors of rape in order to receive treatment for fistula, which most commonly resulted from childbirth rather than rape. This focus on sexual assault led some women’s advocates to worry that armed groups would commit even more acts of sexual violence in order to be “taken seriously” (p. 636). A Congolese police commissioner Heaton interviewed argued that the lack of education and general disempowerment of women and girls supports violence against women. Heaton concurs, noting on page 639 that “more consideration needs to be devoted to potential adverse effects directly produced by interventions — particularly those driven by the emotional reaction, focusing on victims, and not a broader political analysis of why such disturbing atrocities occur in the first place.”

Journalist Aryn Baker’s article “The Secret War Crime” uses the dominant narrative that Heaton critiques by focusing on sexual assault in conflict zones in South Sudan and DRC. She opens her story with an account of one woman’s experience of sexual violence, which one of the women she interviews describes as “a living death” (p. 2). The article, which featured in the popular media outlet Time Magazine, featured extremely graphic accounts of sexual violence yet almost no mention of other aspects of the women’s lives, leaving the reader with the impression that sexual assault is their defining feature. As you reflect on this piece, consider how you might have read it differently (and perhaps less critically) before reading Heaton’s piece.
UNHCR’s “Women on the Run” report, the third piece you read this week on issues facing women in conflict zones, focuses on the experiences of women refugees fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. It describes the multiple forms of structural, community, and interpersonal violence facing women and presents many different types of evidence, including quantitative data, personal narratives, interview excerpts, graphs, and images. 93% of the women had passed the “credible or reasonable fear” interviews that constitute the first step in seeking asylum in the US, and a near-majority fled their homes because of armed groups that threatened them and their families with various forms of violence. As you read the UNHCR report, note how effectively the graphic representations depict a large amount of information, especially in terms of how these violent or otherwise traumatic events impact women. These graphic representations are particularly powerful when read together with women’s accounts of fleeing life-threatening violence, taking extreme risks as they flee in fear for their and their loved ones’ lives, and being incarcerated for crossing a national border without documents. Taken together, this presentation strategy demonstrates the totalizing impacts of violence in the lives of the women featured in this report.

**Reading Questions**

1. Which of the three assigned readings for this week do you think uses the most effective presentation style? How do the various pieces make claims to facts, appeal to emotion, statistical evidence, personal stories, or pursue other strategies designed to convince audiences of the merits of the argument presented? Which were most persuasive, and how might we use these persuasive styles in our own work?

2. Every peer-reviewed publication features a different format. In journalist Laura Heaton’s piece, the author’s short biography features immediately after the title. How does reading this information before engaging with the article change our perspectives on it? How does this information position Heaton as an expert in some areas but not others?

3. Heaton presents a compelling case about the power of mass media to shape and even distort the truth. On page 635, for example, she notes the pressure that DRC courts felt to convict those accused of rape, even when little evidence was presented. What questions do her findings raise about the role of media in world events? How do juxtaposing the very different portrayals of conflict-related sexual violence featured in pieces by Heaton and Baker help you to critically reflect on the news media you encounter on a daily basis?

4. How does Aryn Baker’s article replicate the dominant narratives Heaton critiques in her article? How does it resist them? For instance, one of Baker’s interviewees notes that “silence must end” surrounding violence against women, who she encourages to turn “their pain into power.” Yet Heaton suggests that mass media and other dominant narratives that focus on sexual assault to the exclusion of other problems do more harm than good. How would Baker likely respond to this critique?

5. Consider the many types of evidence presented in the UNHCR report and how they work together to present a comprehensive and holistic portrait of the issues discussed.
On page five, for instance, Norma describes the extremely difficult decision she made to leave El Salvador alone. How does reading her personal story both complicate and complement the quantitative data featured elsewhere in the report?

6. Women interviewed for the UNHCR report were living in US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities. How might the location of the interviews have impacted the results? How, for instance, might interviews with women who had not yet left their home countries, or who had successfully resettled in the US or elsewhere, have offered different information? What do you think encouraged the women to share their stories so bravely given their fear of retribution by armed groups, abusive partners, or both?

**Additional Resources**

1. Laura Heaton’s professional website: https://www.laura-heaton.com/about/

2. UNHCR’s website: http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/

3. The Global Fund for Women’s website shares many personal accounts of women’s experiences in conflict zones alongside research in this area: https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/women-and-the-refugee-crisis/#.W2muYi2ZNE4
Goals for this week

- Continue preparing an evidence-based argument derived from your annotated bibliography
- Prepare to present results in weeks 6 and 7
- Prepare to provide constructive critical feedback/peer review in weeks 6 and 7
- Consider effective presentation styles to incorporate

Establish a clear set of presentation goals

- Establish the argument you want to make
- Determine what evidence you need to present in order to convince the audience of your argument
- Consider how you can make it easier for the audience to understand your argument
  - Careful selection of graphs, images, other visual info
- Determine your audience’s level of knowledge
  - Provide adequate contextual information
Concisely conveying complex information

- Establishing goals is just the first step
- Goal is visual, oral, & stylistic synchronicity
- Focus on the message
- Audience as a friendly collaborator

Intellectual, analytical & interpersonal engagement

- Intellectual
  - Evidence supports argument; refutes counter-argument
- Analytical
  - Visual/graphic representations of data
- Interpersonal
  - Modulate tone, speed, & non-verbal communication
Visual aids

- Help keep the audience’s attention
- Humans process images faster than text
- Be judicious & selective
- Ensure you understand graphic representations fully
- Strategically choose these aids as part of a holistic presentation of your argument

Establish expertise

- Preparation=expertise=confidence
- Professional credentials of researchers cited
- Life experiences of those cited
- Confidence results from preparation
Putting critical reading into practice with assigned readings

- How did they describe the problem?
- If they used images or graphic representations of evidence, how did they do so?
- What were some of the most memorable ways that they conveyed information?
- Noting your responses to these questions will help you to develop your own unique presentation style that makes you feel comfortable and confident in relaying information.

Heaton, “The Risks of Instrumentalizing …”

- Framing an issue by focusing on one aspect of it to the exclusion of all others creates a self-fulfilling prophecy
- Narrow definitions = narrow approaches
- International media focus on one dimension of conflict facing women
- “More consideration needs to be devoted to potential adverse effects directly produced by interventions—particularly those driven by the emotional reaction, focusing on victims, and not a broader political analysis of why such disturbing atrocities occur in the first place.” (p. 639)
Baker, “The Secret War Crime”

- Provides a counterpoint to Heaton’s article
- Uses the dominant narrative Heaton critiques
- Extremely graphic accounts of sexual violence
- Little context given for other aspects of the women’s lives

UNHCR, “Women on the Run”

- Women fleeing violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, & Mexico
- Multiple forms of structural, community, and interpersonal violence facing the women
- Consider multiple forms of evidence presented
Which of the three assigned readings for this week do you think uses the most effective presentation style? How do the various pieces make claims to facts, appeal to emotion, statistical evidence, personal stories, or pursue other strategies designed to convince audiences of the merits of the argument presented? Which were most persuasive, and how might we use these persuasive styles in our own work?

Every peer-reviewed publication features a different format. In journalist Laura Heaton’s piece, the author’s short biography features immediately after the title. How does reading this information before engaging with the article change our perspectives on it? How does this information position Heaton as an expert in some areas but not others?

Heaton presents a compelling case about the power of mass media to shape and even distort the truth. On page 635, for example, she notes the pressure that DRC courts felt to convict those accused of rape, even when little evidence was presented. What questions do her findings raise about the role of media in world events? How do juxtaposing the very different portrayals of conflict-related sexual violence featured in pieces by Heaton and Baker help you to critically reflect on the news media you encounter on a daily basis?

How does Aryn Baker’s article replicate the dominant narratives Heaton critiques in her article? How does it resist them? For instance, one of Baker’s interviewees notes that “silence must end” surrounding violence against women, who she encourages to turn “their pain into power.” Yet Heaton suggests that mass media and other dominant narratives that focus on sexual assault to the exclusion of other problems do more harm than good. How would Baker likely respond to this critique?

Consider the many types of evidence presented in the UNHCR report and how they work together to present a comprehensive and holistic portrait of the issues discussed. On page five, for instance, Norma describes the extremely difficult decision she made to leave El Salvador alone. How does reading her personal story both complicate and complement the quantitative data featured elsewhere in the report?

Women interviewed for the UNHCR were living in US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities. How might the location of the interviews have impacted the results? How, for instance, might interviews with women who had not yet left their home countries, or who had successfully resettled in the US or elsewhere, have offered different information? What do you think encouraged the women to share their stories so bravely given their fear of retribution by armed groups, abusive partners, or both?
Additional resources

- Laura Heaton's professional website: https://www.laura-heaton.com/about/
- The Global Fund for Women's website shares many personal accounts of women’s experiences in conflict zones alongside research in this area: https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/women-and-the-refugee-crisis/#.W2muYi2ZNE4
Weeks Six and Seven:
Graphic/Visual Presentations of Evidence-Based Arguments Developed from Annotated Bibliographic Exercise

Readings for this Week

Available on WyoCourse as:


Context and Relevance

During weeks six and seven you will complete two assignments worth a total of 30% of your final grade. The first assignment involves the visual, written, and oral presentation of an evidence-based argument and the second assignment comprises ten sets of presentation peer review notes. Instructions for completing both assignments are detailed on the second and third pages of the syllabus. Each of the five reading assigned during this period serve a double function. First, reading them will teach you evidence-based approaches to effective public speaking that you can implement directly into your presentation. Second, assigned readings will provide you with information that you can use to provide your peers with constructive critical feedback designed to foster improvement in areas unique to them. Critically reflecting on your own areas for improvement with respect to public speaking in conjunction with the readings and providing peer review will provide a multi-faceted approach to improving your skills.

Spieler and Miltenberger focus their article on the four elements of habit reversal, a technique that psychologists use to reduce or eliminate unwanted habits. They describe four components to habit reversal: awareness training, competing response practice, habit control motivation, and generalization training. Our class is an excellent opportunity for you to become aware of
and work to improve deficiencies in public speaking in a supportive small group setting. Controlling how you present yourself—and information you hope to demonstrate mastery over—to an audience is one of the most essential skills you can attain in college. Now that you are well-versed in how to critically read an academic article after spending five weeks engaging with the dynamics of the research process, reflect on how you can use research to improve your public speaking skills as a means to build confidence and target unwanted behaviors or patterns you want to eliminate. Spieler and Miltenberger studied three common nervous habits among new public speakers, including filled pauses (“uh” or similar utterances), tongue clicks, and inappropriate use of the word “like.” They collected data from their research participants by filming them as they presented.

Consider following the researchers’ method in the study as you prepare to present and continue to improve throughout the semester by having a friend use a cell phone to record your presentation. Consider watching it together and offering constructive criticism on the resulting video. The researchers found that awareness training—making research participants aware of their nervous habit—significantly reduced instances of the habit and improved self-confidence. In other words, this strategy produced real results that you can easily replicate with a friend. Recognizing the distracting nervous habit is the first step to overcoming it. Many of the nervous habits described in this article are as much the product of life in a noisy society as they are the result of inexperience. In dominant US culture, silence is not a normal part of conversation and nervousness can prompt speakers to fill up the silence with chatter or nonsensical sounds, such as the nervous habits such as “um”, “like”, “you know”, or inappropriate laughter.

Remember that you want the audience to leave your presentation impressed by the power of your evidence-based argument, not the fact that you stumbled over words or otherwise distracted the audience. For those who are nervous about speaking publicly, try to envision yourself as secondary to the well-prepared presentation that you have compiled. Remember that the audience is much more interested in your message than in you as a person, which should help to diminish some of the concerns that accompany speaking in public for many people.

Like Spieler and Miltenberger, Mancuso and Miltenberger also evaluated the effectiveness of strategies to reduce distracting sounds while speaking in public. Both articles use scientific methods to measure the effectiveness of the strategies reported, drawing on data from the same study reported in the article by Spieler and Miltenberger. A single article or book usually cannot contain all the results of a given study because academic publishing requires that the author demonstrate how research findings are in dialogue with existing work. Hence a single research study might produce five or more peer-reviewed articles and/or a book-length work. This is why research for your annotated bibliography likely pointed you to several publications by the same author on related topics.

Mancuso and Miltenberger focus specifically on using habit reversal to decrease filled pauses while speaking in public given that frequently used filled pauses have negative social and professional consequences including audience assessment of a speaker as incompetent or unintelligent. Habit reversal resulted in a reduction in filled pauses for all participants as well as increased confidence. As you prepare for your presentation, consider following the instructions for engaging in habit reversal training outlined on page 190 with a friend to reduce or eliminate unwanted fillers or other nervous habits.
Ferreira Marinho and colleagues note, as do most of the authors we will read in weeks six and seven, that fear of public speaking can inhibit a person’s ability to be successful in life. Tackling problems with presenting in our class is an excellent use of time and energy that will result in potentially lifelong positive consequences. Ferreira Marinho studied the result of a survey completed by 1,135 undergraduates studying a variety of majors at a university in Brazil to determine the prevalence of public speaking-related fears and determine whether correlations existed between this fear and particular demographic variables. Women reported lower confidence in their public speaking abilities as well as greater fear of speaking in public.

As you read these assigned works while preparing to review your peers’ graphic and visual presentations of evidence-based arguments, consider the importance of how information is distilled and displayed in tabular or graphic format. Reviewing this visual information in conjunction with the narrative analysis enriches your understanding of both. You may find yourself consulting each article’s methods sections to ensure that you understand the meaning of terms and forms of data analysis that may be new to you. Do not let this deter you from fully engaging with each article, as all the information you need to interpret assigned readings is contained in the articles themselves. Being able to read confidently and critically across a wide range of academic fields of study and written presentation formats is an essential skill for all well-rounded individuals and interdisciplinary scholars to acquire.

Social psychologist Victoria Brescoll notes that interpersonal communication is one of the most important skills because the frequency and way in which an individual speaks up in groups directly shapes the construction of status and power hierarchies. To understand how this process takes place with respect to gender, Brescoll examines gender and volubility, which she defines as the total amount of time spent talking. Brescoll defines power as control over resources and the capacity to influence and control the behavior of others, and tests her three hypotheses (outlined on pages 624-626) by measuring the total amount of time each US Senator spent talking on the Senate floor during two congressional sessions, and conducting two online studies. The first online exercise examined the impact of gender and power on decision-making and volubility, and the second measured evaluations of male and female CEOs’ volubility.

As we have seen throughout the semester, different academic fields approach their inquiries into the human or natural world in unique ways. Brescoll used data from congressional sessions and the results of two online studies to support her argument that talking and listening are both gendered behaviors. She concludes that “power does not appear to have an equivalent effect on men and women’s behavior…from the vantage of women’s ability to achieve success within an organization…existing power hierarchies may be quite difficult for women to navigate” (p. 637-638). Brescoll found that women face greater potential for negative repercussions, which she terms “backlash” when they are more voluble, even when they are in positions of power. The same effect, Brescoll found, does not apply to men. This finding, while disheartening, emphasizes how being cognizant of the significant role gender plays in all aspects of social life can help you to evaluate your own and others’ work more thoughtfully.

Pearson and colleagues also explored differences in evaluation, taking as their focus the factors that can impact students’ public speaking grades. The researchers investigated four factors that may have contributed to grade variance among 709 college students in thirteen sections of a
public speaking class: student motivation, willingness to communicate, first generation college student status, and gender. They found that women received higher public speaking grades than men, which they attribute to gender role socialization that emphasizes the importance of communication for women. Researchers have a responsibility to accurately report results, but sometimes research risks reinforcing stereotypes even when researchers have made every effort to conduct the study in a rigorous manner. In this piece, we can see the potential for those who are not practicing critical reading to extrapolate beyond the study through the use of generalizations, such as “women are better communicators” or “women pay attention more than men.”

This example by Pearson and colleagues, along with its potential for extrapolation, emphasizes how you must remain mindful of other writers’ attempts to mischaracterize results based on study findings. As you listen to your peers present their work, be mindful of the potential for such generalizations and guard against them in your own work by staying close to the original reporting of results. Practicing your critical reading skills will allow you to do this well. The ability to present an evidence-based argument derived from critical reading and thinking will become even more important in weeks eight through eleven when the focus of our class will shift to using the arguments developed to formulate policy.

Reading Questions

1. Mancuso and Miltenberger had research participants, all of whom were female, rate their public speaking ability at the beginning of the research intervention. All rated their abilities as average to below average. How might the results have been different if the research participants had rated their public speaking skills as good? Based on what we have learned this semester, how might gender play a role in public speaking confidence?

2. Earlier this semester we discussed how the term methods comes from the Greek ὑδωρ, meaning “path.” Consider the methods described in each of the assigned readings for this week and how the “path” each took resulted in particular set of results. How, for instance, are the experimental methods used by Spieler & Miltenberger and Mancuso & Miltenberger likely to produce different results from the survey methods used by Marinho and colleagues?

3. Marinho and colleagues surveyed undergraduates across a wide variety of majors and found no difference between fear of public speaking. In other words, Theater majors were just as nervous about speaking in public as math majors. Was this surprising to you?

4. Think carefully about how easy it is for mass media, politicians, or members of the general public to mischaracterize research results. Do you attribute the frequency with which this occurs to lack of critical reading skills, willful misrepresentation, the failure of researchers to make their work accessible, or something else? These kinds of questions will become particularly important to consider as you transition into formulating policy based on the work you have completed in the last seven weeks.
**Additional Resources**

1. Social psychologist Victoria Brescoll’s professional website:  
   https://som.yale.edu/faculty/victoria-l-brescoll

2. Psychologist Raymond Miltenberger’s professional website:  
   http://cfs.cbcs.usf.edu/faculty-staff/detail.cfm?id=784

3. Consider watching short presentations by a variety of leaders at: https://www.ted.com
Week Eight: 
Policy-Oriented Persuasive Writing 

Readings for this Week

Available on WyoCourse as:


4. Review the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals at un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals


Context and Relevance

Now that we have passed the midway point in the semester it is useful for us to reflect on the way forward. Our class follows an iterative structure designed to help you improve your critical thinking skills throughout the semester. Accordingly, you will spend the rest of the semester building on the work you have already completed to compile a policy brief that presents a convincing evidence-based argument for feasible social change related to the area of study, followed by presentations of this work and peer review. The next step, a draft short paper, will present the results of your ongoing work in research paper format by presenting at least two different evidence-based arguments for a particular policy or other solution to a problem or issue discussed. Your final assignment will be a revised short paper that incorporates comments from peers and the professor, accompanied by a resubmission statement describing changes you made.

A policy brief uses persuasive writing to distill the results of research into a format that encourages a particular audience to take a particular action in a specific area. Policy briefs are always written for an audience, which may include international organizations, members of national government, state legislators, media, or nonprofit organizations, to name just a few possibilities. When choosing the intended recipient of the policy brief, be sure to target a policy actor who actually has the ability to instigate the change you recommend. Likewise, be sure to write in a way that your recommendation will be taken seriously. Writing a policy brief on the legalization of drugs to a state legislator who vehemently opposes this approach, for example, will likely be a wasted effort on your part.

Writing a policy brief will allow you to translate the results of your annotated bibliography into a “real world” setting by making research relevant as a policy tool. Policy briefs are written for
busy people who confront a wide range of issues and perspectives on a daily basis and must accordingly be concise and clear. Your policy brief, which should be no more than four pages in length, should include a title, an introduction to the problem/issue, concise synopsis of related research findings, and your policy recommendation. Policy briefs often feature carefully designed layouts that attract the eye, which are much more likely to garner attention than a paragraph after paragraph of text. Consider the IISD policy brief and Womankind’s advocacy guides as models for how you might design your policy brief to be visually appealing to the reader.

Begin conceptualizing your policy brief by clearly and concisely defining the scope of the problem or issue it will address. Ask yourself four questions toward this end goal of defining scope. First, what is the problem that policy must address? Second, who are the people most impacted by this problem? Third, what is the prevailing policy approach to this problem? Fourth, why have previous attempts to solve the problem failed in ways that your approach will succeed?

Next, take a policy stance on the problem. Ask yourself four questions toward this end. First, what policy stance could feasibly address the problem? Second, what are the practical aspects of this solution that make it feasible? Third, how long will it take to implement and how many people will it impact? Fourth, who/which institutions will be responsible for implementation? Consider possible impacts of the policy stance. What strong, objective evidence suggests this is the most feasible approach? Which groups will benefit and which will be disadvantaged? Why is the proposed plan the most viable option?

You will also want to anticipate counter-arguments to your policy stance since these will sharpen your policy brief’s analytical focus while also enhancing your ability to respond to questions. Be honest with yourself, as researchers whose work we have read are in the “Limitations” sections of articles. What are the plan’s weaknesses? Can you adequately defend your plan against contradictory stances? How will you “sell” this plan to the public, such as through building consensus, garnering support, or persuading critics of the merits of your approach?

Policy briefs are more likely to convince the audience if they argue that a proposed change will benefit society, rather than just one segment of it. Policy briefs should clearly demonstrate how they will work in the “real world” rather than in idealistic settings that may not be achievable; for example, any reasonable person would support the goal of ending poverty but individuals disagree considerably about the best means to do so. Convincing the audience that the proposed change will benefit a majority is a highly effective strategy for writing a policy brief, and can be accomplished by engaging with widely shared ideals such as fairness, justice, efficiency, public health, and other desirable goals. Clearly demonstrate how the plan will lead to desired results.

You can frame your policy argument in any number of ways but may find it useful to consider one of the four most commonly used types: social administration arguments, normative arguments, institutional competence arguments, and economic arguments. A version of these four types of arguments is outlined by law professor Ellie Margolis in her article titled “Teaching Students to Make Effective Policy Arguments in Appellate Briefs”; this can be useful to review although I have adapted these ideas here for the purposes of our class and its policy
brief assignment (see https://info.legalsolutions.thomsonreuters.com/pdf/perspec/2001-winter/winter-2001-5.pdf). Reflecting on how these different types of arguments approach the task of advocating for a particular policy can help you to focus your policy brief through full consideration of different perspectives and potential counter-arguments.

Social administration arguments focus on how a policy will impact the workings of key social institutions with the goal of increasing fairness in society. These arguments range from firm to flexible in terms of the amount of discretionary latitude that their implementation will allow, and, like all policy arguments, endeavor to avoid the potential for unintended damaging results through “slippery slope” extensions of the argument. Normative arguments rest on the premise that a particular policy promotes shared values in society, although these types of arguments can also refute other approaches on the grounds that they do not reflect shared values. These types of arguments are made vis-à-vis generally accepted standards, sometimes by appealing to notions of morality. Normative arguments also make claims to social utility by focusing on the benefits to society as a whole and the greater good associated with a particular policy. Corrective arguments, a related line of reasoning, focus on fairness and repairing inequities.

Institutional competence arguments specify which social institution will implement the policy based on their abilities to do so. These arguments often account for the reality that institutions are staffed by individuals who must exercise discretion in the course of their everyday work activities with others. Institutional competence arguments also emphasize how well a proposed policy fits within existing institutional frameworks. Economic arguments contend that a policy would improve efficiency, promote a particular economic strategy, and/or more efficiently allocate resources. These types of arguments often include a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed policy.

This semester we have read information presented in a wide variety of formats. Political scientist Theodore Lowi’s “Law vs. Public Policy” is a published version of a keynote speech the author gave at Cornell University. Keynote speeches are invited lectures by an expert and often are written to set the tone at the beginning of a conference or other professional event. Sometimes, as is the case with Lowi’s piece we read this week, these keynotes are so thought-provoking that they are later published in modified form in a journal. Lowi describes how the term public policy originated in English and does not conceptually translate well to other language. He observes that public policy is a relatively new concept dating to the nineteenth century United States. According to Lowi, public policy first meaningfully emerged in the U.S. in the twentieth century, when increased expansion of government power facilitated the incorporation of policy as an interpretation of and supplement to the law.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) is a think tank that conducts research about and advocates for issues related to environmental sustainability. The IISD policy brief we read this week focused on the UN Sustainable Development Goal of gender equality (SDG 5) by emphasizing how work toward attaining this goal enhances all others. This policy brief is an excellent example of successful, concise reporting of research results from a collaboration between UN member states. While it contains an enormous amount of information, it does not overwhelm the reader or appear unfocused. The author presents a strong opening argument that gender equality enables all the other sustainable development goals and clearly outlines the fourfold structure of the policy brief. Policy briefs, particularly
those produced by international organizations and nonprofits, often use acronyms to conserve space because they must be extremely judicious with word choice and length. The IISD policy brief concisely conveys the results from analysis of data gathered all over the world and, whenever possible, provides the reader with links to relevant primary or secondary sources. This is a great strategy to compensate for the no-citation format of a policy brief and the need to include sufficient information produced by experts. It concludes, as all policy briefs should, with clear recommendations for actions.

Womankind is a UK-based organization that supports global efforts to end violence against women and girls, improve women’s economic status, and promote women’s full and equal participation in politics. The advocacy guide we read emphasizes how grassroots women’s advocacy groups worldwide can put SDG 5 into practice through gender mainstreaming and the attainment of other practical steps. The guide is clearly organized into four sections designed to help women’s advocacy groups understand the SDGs, their relevance, implement goals outlined in the SDGs, and link to international partners and processes. All over the world, the ethos of human rights is powerful because it provides a common language and set of shared goals for advocacy groups to draw upon, especially in instances where such language and goals are missing. International allegiances around human rights are essential for sharing ideas, developing and implementing innovative strategies, and effectively translating international policy instruments like the SDGs into practice. National professional organizations achieve similar effects as they unite people with shared goals from across the country to share information and expertise.

The SDGs and their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), also provide a measuring stick for local, national, and regional actors to determine how they are progressing toward the goals enshrined in these documents. Associated documents also provide a set of tools to measure, record, and otherwise engage with enhancement of the SDGs. Womankind’s advocacy guide provides an excellent example of how local organizations can successfully implement this language and ethos. Like a policy brief, it emphasizes how means of implementation are important because otherwise goals/ideals remain abstract at best. Policy is important to understand and study because without it there are no guidelines for how to put a law, ideal, or ethos into practice “on the ground.” The advocacy guide distinguishes between decision-makers and influencers in identifying advocacy targets. As you assemble the three components associated with your policy brief, ensure that you have identified the most relevant target. Reviewing some of the steps outlined in the advocacy guide will assist you with making the best choice.

Reading Questions

1. Throughout the semester we have encountered numerous examples of how language both reflects and constructs reality. Lowi argues that public policy is a uniquely U.S. concept that reflects dominant cultural perspectives on democracy. What aspects of Lowi’s five point discussion on linkages between law and policy most convince you of this point?

2. The IISD policy brief emphasizes the importance of gender equality to the attainment of all the SDGs. In the “Gaps and Challenges” section, the authors note that data
disaggregated by gender and age are not always available for analysis. What socioeconomic forces prevent the collection of such data, given its potential to highlight important differences between and among particular demographics?

3. As you read Womankind’s advocacy guide, consider the factors that might make a municipal or national government resistant to the goals outlined in SDG 5. Can some of the strategies outlined in the advocacy guide potentially assist women’s advocacy groups with overcoming this resistance? Which of these strategies seem likely to be most effective?

Additional Resources

1. Political scientist Theodore Lowi’s obituary, which details his contributions to his field of study: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/us/theodore-lowi-dead.html

2. Online resources related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

3. Womankind’s website: https://www.womankind.org.uk
Written composition & oral presentation of a policy brief

- 10-15 minute oral presentation designed to convince the audience of the merits & feasibility of the proposed social change (10 pts)
- 4 page policy brief that presents a convincing evidence-based argument for feasible social change related to the area of study (7 pts)
- Concise email to a decision-maker that convincingly advocates a feasible plan for social change (3pts)

Draft short paper

- Effective presentation of at least 2 different evidence-based arguments for a particular policy or other solution to a problem/issue discussed (5 pts)
- Convincing argument as to why one of these approaches is the best & most feasible solution to the problem/issue discussed (5 pts)
- Oral presentation of points above (5 pts)
Revised short paper

- One page resubmission statement (4 pts)
- Revised visual presentation (3 pts)
- Revised version of the draft short paper that meaningfully incorporates constructive criticism (3 pts)

Persuasive writing in policy brief format

- Convinces the audience of a particular perspective
- Effectively conveys evidence in support of an argument
- Distills a large amount of complex information into an easily understandable format
What is a policy brief?

- One of the most commonly used policy-making tools
- Clear, concise evidence-based argument for specific action
- Convinces the intended audience to take the recommended action

Translates research into the ‘real world’

- Makes research relevant as a policy tool
- Written for busy people confronting numerous perspectives
- Must be clear and concise
Components

- No more than four pages in length
- Title
- Introduction to the problem
- Concise synopsis of related research findings
- Feasible policy recommendation

Getting started: The problem

Ask yourself...

- What is the problem that policy must address?
- Who are the people most impacted by the problem?
- What is the prevailing policy approach to the problem?
- Why have previous attempts to solve the problem failed, and why will yours succeed?
Take a policy stance
Ask yourself...

- What policy stance could feasibly address the problem?
- What are the practical aspects of this solution that make it feasible?
- How long will it take to implement and how many people will it impact?
- Who/which institutions will be responsible for implementation?

Consider the impacts
Ask yourself...

- What strong, objective evidence suggests this is the most feasible approach?
- Which groups will benefit and which will be disadvantaged?
- Why is the proposed plan the most viable option?
Consider the counter-argument

- Be honest; this is your “limitations” section
- What are the plan’s weaknesses?
- Can you adequately defend your plan against contradictory stances?
- How will you “sell” this plan to the public?
  - Building consensus
  - Garnering support
  - Persuading hostile critics

Convincing the audience

- The policy will:
  - Benefit society
  - Advance social ideals while not furthering harms
  - Work in the “real world”
- Policy brief should be a desirable goal for a majority
  - Engage with ideals, such as fairness, justice, efficiency, public health
- Demonstrate how the plan will lead to desired results
Four types of policy arguments

- Social administration arguments
- Normative arguments
- Institutional competence arguments
- Economic arguments

Social administration arguments

- Arguments about how a policy will impact the workings of key social institutions
- Goal of increasing fairness in society
- Firm vs. flexible proposals
  - Amount of discretionary latitude implementation will allow
- Slippery slopes
  - Potential for unintended damaging results
Normative arguments

- Promote shared values
- Moral arguments
  - vis-à-vis generally accepted standards
- Social utility
  - greater good
- Corrective
  - focus on fairness & repairing inequities

Institutional competence arguments

- Which social institution should implement the law/policy
- Raises issues of discretion in implementation
- Individual vs. collective
- Adherence to existing legal and social norms
- How well the policy proposed fits within existing frameworks
Economic arguments

- Goal of improving efficiency
- Promotes particular economic strategy
- Efficient allocation of resources
- Cost-benefit analysis of proposed policy

What is policy?

- Jigsaw puzzle
- Laws, mandates, regulations, norms
- Reflects the principles on which laws are based
- Interprets the law while complying with it
- Implements particular approaches to a given issue
Lowi, “Law vs. Public Policy”

- Policy is a supplement to the law, not law in its own right
- Public policy emerged in 19th century U.S.
- Expanded in the 20th century
- An interpretation of and supplement to the law

IISD, “Achieve Gender Equality”

- Model policy brief
- Emphasizes how work toward SDG 5 enhances all other goals
- Presents a strong opening argument
- Links to authoritative primary and secondary sources
- Concludes with clear recommendations for action
Womankind, “Implementing the SDGs”

- Provides a blueprint for women’s advocacy groups to engage with the SDGs
- Policy provides guidelines for putting a law, ideal, or ethos into practice “on the ground”

Womankind

Objectives should include…

- What action is needed
- Who will take the action
- When they will take it
- Where or how they will do it (p. 15)
Throughout the semester we have encountered numerous examples of how language both reflects and constructs reality. Lowi argues that public policy is a uniquely U.S. concept that reflects dominant cultural perspectives on democracy. What aspects of Lowi’s five point discussion on linkages between law and policy most convince you of this point?

The IISD policy brief emphasizes the importance of gender equality to the attainment of all the SDGs. In the “Gaps and Challenges” section, the authors note that data disaggregated by gender and age are not always available for analysis. What socioeconomic forces prevent the collection of such data, given its potential to highlight important differences between and among particular demographics?

As you read Womankind’s advocacy guide, consider the factors that might make a municipal or national government resistant to the goals outlined in SDG 5. Can some of the strategies outlined in the advocacy guide potentially assist women’s advocacy groups with overcoming this resistance

Additional resources

- Political scientist Theodore Lowi’s obituary, which details his contributions to his field of study: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/us/theodore-lowi-dead.html
- Online resources related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/
- Womankind’s website: https://www.iamwomankind.org/
Week Nine:  
Writing to Influence Public Opinion

Readings for this Week

Available on WyoCourse as:


Context and Relevance

As you prepare for your policy brief presentation in weeks ten and eleven, it will be helpful for you to consider how the authors we have read so far strategically use particular language and presentation styles to influence public opinion. This week you will read about a significant change to public opinion and law that occurred in the late nineteenth century and which no reasonable person in the United States would oppose today: women’s right to vote. Critically examining arguments for and against a right that is taken for granted today will help you to creatively strategize about the best way to present your policy brief.

Sociologist Paul Burstein’s article draws upon existing published research to answer five questions designed to ascertain the impact of public opinion on public policy. He offers five conclusions based on his review of the literature, which he outlines on page 36:

“(1) Public opinion affects policy three quarters of the times its impact is gauged; its effect is of substantial policy importance at least a third of the time, and probably a fair amount more.
(2) Salience does affect the impact of public opinion on policy.
(3) The impact of opinion on policy remains substantial when the activities of interest organizations, political parties, and elites are taken into account...
(4) The hypothesis that government responsiveness to the public has changed over time cannot be definitively rejected...
(5) Our ability to generalize about the impact of opinion on policy is severely compromised by the narrow focus of available work, both geographically and in terms of issues.”

Public opinion in most of the nineteenth century overwhelming held that women should not have the right to vote. We read an article by Lyman Abbott, a prominent nineteenth century minister and lawyer, in which the author claims to speak for a significant majority of women who “do not wish the suffrage.” Abbott begins his article with the strong “statement of fact” that
ninety-six percent of women are opposed or indifferent to women’s having the right to vote. Throughout the piece, the author uses analogies from nature and religious texts to make the argument that men and women are naturally different in ways that should bar women from equal participation in the political process. He makes the circular argument that because society excludes women from the military they should not be allowed to make any political decisions, including voting, and that this exclusion is mandated by nature.

Reading the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions alongside the 1776 U.S. Declaration of Independence, authored seventy-two years apart, offers deep insight into the challenges first wave feminists faced as they worked to attain basic legal rights and freedoms for women that were already guaranteed to most men. The authors and signatories of the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, led by prominent suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, modeled the language used in the Declaration on the verbiage of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. Consider the following juxtaposition of excerpts from both texts, the first from the Declaration of Independence and the second from the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions:

Prudence, indeed, will dictate the Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such a Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government (U.S. Declaration of Independence)

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience has shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they were accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled (Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions)

There are many more examples throughout both documents that use similar language, and identifying these can help you to think critically about how the individuals who make up social movements advocate for their shared goal in strategic ways. Doing so will assist you with assembling your policy briefs.
**Reading Questions**

1. Are there aspects of the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions that remain relevant today, just as they were when they were written in 1848?

2. All fifty-six signatories to the Declaration of Independence were men; sixty-eight women and thirty-two men signed the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions. What did the authors of the U.S. Declaration of Independence need to believe in order to exclude women from this founding document, and why did the authors of the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions choose it as their model?

3. Now that you are at a point in the semester where you understand the dynamics at work in the research process, how do you read Abbott’s selective mobilization of evidence in support of denying women the right to vote? Why does Abbott present a compelling case for his contemporaries?

4. Abbott argues that women and men are naturally different in ways that make women ill-suited to political participation. Although his argument is circular and almost humorous today, do we still hear echoes of this argument in other forms today?

5. In the concluding paragraph of his article, Abbott argues that women choose their social role and yet also contends that women’s “natural” place is at home rather than participating in political life. How does the author reconcile this obvious contradiction?
Weeks Ten and Eleven: 
Policy Brief Presentations

Readings for this Week

Available on WyoCourse as:


Context and Relevance

In weeks ten and eleven we will read four texts concerned with representation, ignorance, and, of course, practical advice on improving your oral communication skills. These four texts will help you to think critically about your own and your colleagues’ policy briefs as you finalize and present them. These texts, particularly those by Gullicks et al. and Dunning, will encourage you to identify and correct gaps in your own and others’ policy briefs by increasing your awareness of the silent assumptions that can undergird people’s perspectives. Such silent assumptions can be so deeply embedded that individuals may not even realize that they have them. As you review your own policy brief and watch others present, remain attuned to the ways in which you and your peers mobilize evidence in support of an argument, paying special attention to whether evidence presented accurately depicts the sources cited.

Kristen Gullicks and colleagues analyzed the depiction of gender, ethnicity, and power in public speaking textbooks with the broader goal of identifying how such depictions create or reinforce particular versions of reality. The authors juxtapose dominant ideologies of U.S. education regarding race and gender in their literature review to emphasize how education often reinforces societal expectations. Books, especially textbooks, are often considered authoritative; consider the expressions that people sometimes use to indicate their familiarity with a topic or person. “I could write a book on the problems I’ve had with that guy,” someone might say to indicate an extensive history of difficult interpersonal interactions. The authors ask two research questions, noted on page 251, to add a new contribution to cited work, and coded 196 pictures featured in public speaking textbooks for the themes of gender, ethnicity, and power. Coding refers to the systematic sorting of information/data into a set of categories that can be determined either prior to reviewing the data (inductive coding) or after reviewing the data.
You read two pieces, by Siddons and Menzel & Carrell, designed to help improve your public speaking skills. Siddons opens by describing the physiological response triggered by anxiety and then provides a number of techniques that anxious public speakers can use to combat this response and improve their performance. All these techniques involve practicing mindfulness to ensure that you are fully present in the moment and can do your best work, which allows you to have a positive influence on others. If you are anxious about public speaking, consider ways to reconceptualize your internal dialogue about public speaking so that you move from “have to mode”, in which you dread public speaking but suffer through it, to “want to mode” in which you feel fortunate to have the opportunity to confront your weaknesses in order to grow and flourish.

Siddons reviews the importance of nonverbal communication, encouraging readers to monitor their own as well as the audience’s body language to adjust their way of engaging with them. Viewed in this way, a presentation is very much like a conversation in which both the presenter and the audience respond to one another; understanding this point is a key to effectively presenting. All too often individuals think that others have some gift or innate ability to communicate effectively or otherwise practice a skill in which they regard themselves as lacking. This negative thinking discourages such individuals from seeing the practice and other factors that contribute to the admired person’s seemingly effortless success. Consciously managing reactions to stress will make you more inclined in the future to begin managing it before it becomes overwhelming. In other words, speaking with confidence becomes ‘natural’ with more practice.

Research featured in the Menzel & Carrell you read confirms the importance of committing to improvement in the area of public speaking, as their results demonstrated that students with higher GPAs, more preparation time, and more practice performed better at public speaking. When researchers study a phenomenon, they follow a clearly defined set of procedures that allow other readers to assess the merits of the work. Menzel & Carrell videotaped 119 students presenting and then the students completed questionnaires about their preparation time, past experience, anxiety about public speaking, and GPA. They acknowledged that preparation time is not the only factor that ensures success, as the relationship between speech and thought processes are very important. Some people feel energized and excited by the opportunity to speak in public, while others dread it; likewise, some people spend a great deal of time preparing to present in public yet perform poorly, while others do not prepare at all and appear very charismatic. These factors dramatically inform performance, yet they are within your control to change by following steps clearly outlined in our assigned readings.

Anxiety about public speaking is very common and unfortunately can create a self-fulfilling prophecy of poor performance. Communicating clearly and effectively is an essential part of succeeding at anything and so if nervousness about public speaking is an issue for you, now is the time to overcome it by mastering this essential professional and life skill. Menzel & Carrell argue that individuals who experience anxiety about public speaking waste considerable time that could be better spent focusing on preparation. Their research indicates the need to carefully balance one’s inner state in order to relay information effectively. Critically reading studies on
public speaking such as this one can help you to realize that you can systematically overcome challenges around speaking in public by breaking down the various components of successful public speaking into a clear set of steps to make the task less overwhelming. Spending more time preparing visual aids, for instance, leads to more thoughtful engagement with the material by the presenter and better audience reception and comprehension.

Psychologist David Dunning’s article opens with a table of contents that offers a kind of critical reading map that allows us to “see the skeleton.” Dunning identifies the “double burden” of the Dunning-Krueger effect, in which individuals who perform poorly lack awareness of their deficiencies and, as a result, are unable to correct their performance in the absence of clear parameters for doing so. Dunning notes that a number of studies show that the average person in the U.S. is lacking in knowledge about essential subjects such as government, financial literacy, and health literacy. He argues that ignorance is an important subject of study because of its tremendous impacts on numerous areas of everyday life.

Dunning outlines the factors that inform why people believe that they have skills or expertise that they actually lack. One of the sources of anxiety about speaking in public is that the speaker may not feel comfortable in their knowledge about the topic. Knowing the limits of one’s knowledge on a given topic can help a speaker to fill gaps when preparing, anticipate questions, and even just simply state “I don’t know.” Remember that world authorities in a subject area will readily admit the limits of their knowledge, which is why academic articles often end with a statement on the need for future research. As Dunning notes, the more skilled a person becomes in a given area, the more s/he understands the limits of their knowledge and expertise. Likewise, the more knowledge a person has of their abilities in a given area, the more realistic they are in their assessments of their knowledge and abilities.

Dunning contends that awareness of ignorance remains hidden for three reasons: unknown unknowns (relevant information that people are unaware they lack), mistaking misbeliefs for valid knowledge, and misapplication of general knowledge to a specialized area. All of these phenomena disguise ignorance in ways that make it hard for the person experiencing the Dunning-Krueger effect to recognize. Dunning finds that people experiencing this effect interpret the world to suit a particular set of beliefs, rather than facts even when facts are available to them. There are limits to people’s overstatements of their knowledge; as Dunning notes, most people lack enough general (“reach-around”) knowledge to offer to perform heart surgery on a friend yet many people have enough knowledge about sports to feel that they could effectively coach a team. Those who are ignorant of their own ignorance cannot accurately judge others’ abilities because they do not have sufficient knowledge to assess whether their capabilities are better, worse, or similar.

A final aspect of the Dunning-Krueger effect is that top performers at a given task tend to feel that others performed at the same or higher level of proficiency even when this is not the case. Bottom performers at a given task lack this ability to accurately assess their performance relative to others, yet they improve when provided with resources that help them to understand the parameters for evaluation. If a person does not understand the criteria for evaluating mastery or competency in a particular area, they cannot accurately assess their own performance and consequently over-evaluate their abilities.
The Dunning-Krueger effect has serious implications for gender and science, an area in which women are less represented relative to men. Preconceived beliefs about gender, ability, and the internalization of both are evident in study results that show women underestimated their abilities in science and volunteered to participate in a science competition less often than men. “One can speculate”, Dunning writes on page 282, “about how many life and career decisions are guided by a similar psychological process that bears no relation to actual ability or achievement.”

**Reading Questions**

1. You have now conducted a thorough literature review for your annotated bibliography and used the results to write a policy brief. How has putting research into action in this way made you engage differently with the literature reviews of assigned readings and the choices that researchers make in writing them? For instance, how does the literature review in Gullicks et al. add context and depth to the author’s argument?

2. Given the advent of so many different types of publishing and ways to share information, why do books have such authoritative staying power of the kind described by Gullicks et al.? Why, according to the authors, is this power particularly evident in textbooks? What implications does this reality have for their finding that women are less likely than men to be depicted in textbooks as being in a position of power?

3. Dunning presents a lengthy analysis, beginning on page 265, of counter-arguments to the Dunning-Krueger effect and his refutations of them. Are you surprised by the amount of attention devoted to these criticisms of the author’s research? How does reading this section help you to envision research as a conversation between scholars?

4. What are some of the most important “real world” implications of the studies we read for this week, and how can you put some of them into practice to become a more well-rounded person and a more confident public speaker?
Weeks Twelve and Thirteen:
Writing Effectively and Using Constructive Criticism to Prepare for the Final Presentation

Readings for this Week


Context and Relevance

Your next steps in our class will involve writing a draft paper that you will present to peers and then revise based on constructive critical feedback from your peers and professor. As you do so, consider the process followed by researchers whose work you included in your annotated bibliography and which you used to assemble your policy brief. Researchers must make difficult decisions as they formulate their research design, including the type of data they hope to collect and the methods they will use to do so. Authors of each of the three studies you read this week made these decisions after extensive critical reflection on the best means by which to approach their research question. As you read, consider potential reasons why each of the researchers made particular decisions about what to include as well as what to exclude in their work.

Last week we read psychologist David Dunning’s work on the power of ignorance. This week we begin with anthropologist Anne Esacove’s work on AIDS prevention efforts in partnership with the U.S. Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which has been ongoing since 2003, in Malawi. Esacove argues that focusing prevention efforts on moral categories such as “risky” and “healthy” ignores or neglects sexual practices that may result in HIV infection. She draws on anthropologist Gayle Rubin’s notion of the “charmed circle” of heteronormativity that, like all social constructions, requires consistent reinforcement. Socially constructed phenomena are powerful because they rely on an active process that requires participation by numerous actors and institutions.

Sexuality, because it is so politicized and yet socially constructed as “private”, is a potentially powerful site of study that can illuminate a host of social issues. Esacove argues that embedding moral messages within public health campaigns is at least as old as the Victorian era, when the separate spheres model of gender dominated. This view sharply divided women and men into moral categories that positioned women as in need of protection from men’s ostensibly uncontrollable sexuality through clear divisions into “good” women, who were married, straight, and monogamous, and “bad” women, who were not. These beliefs endure today in the focus on monogamy as the best tool to prevent HIV infection.
Using AIDS prevention in Malawi as her case study, Esacove’s research asks what happens when another country, in this instance the U.S., takes the lead in defining local efforts to address a problem. She uses a narrative approach to the way that particular actors frame issues (such as the narrative of “risk”) and analyzes these narratives as a particular storyline that individuals select from the cultural narratives that are available to them. This narrative method is designed to ascertain the foundational logic that underlies the ways that people discuss HIV/AIDS in Malawi. Esacove notes that meta-narratives are the abstract concepts that connect these storylines by covering up the inconsistencies between the scripts individuals follow in relaying their narratives. These meta-narratives, she argues, include the overarching belief that monogamous forms of love relationships hold inherently protective powers against HIV. This dominant narrative obscures the complex contexts in which HIV is actually at risk of being transmitted, the fact that people do not always do what they say they do (including being monogamous), and ignores the gender inequalities that inform decisions individuals make. She concludes by noting that “love matches” promoted by prevention efforts promote a flawed logic that legitimizes state control of sexual expression.

Sociologists Liz Grauerholz and Lori Baker-Sperry provide an account of their experiences with significant media misinterpretation of and backlash to their research on children’s fairy tales. A common criticism of academic research is that it is published in highly specialized journals and written using jargon and concepts that can be difficult for the general public to understand. Public intellectuals, including public sociologists, make research and theory relevant for a mass audience in ways that can positively impact society. Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry sought to accomplish this goal by making their research findings more widely available to the public by speaking with the media. Throughout their article, they emphasize the importance of recognizing that media will distort researchers’ claims because journalists seek a wide audience and lack researchers’ depth of knowledge and expertise.

The case study Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry present shows how media distills academic research findings into forms that do not reflect the nuance of academic articles. Language used to represent their work became increasingly polarized as more media outlets picked up the story. The authors document how, to garner increased audience attention, media reports on their research became increasingly distorted so that a statement they made encouraging children’s critical thinking about fairy tales quickly became misrepresented by media in ways that completed changed their intended meaning. Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry note that researchers cannot control the reception of their work once it reaches the public sphere, including in unrestricted online fora. Nonetheless, they emphasize the importance of continuing to reach a broader audience, offering six key recommendations for public sociologists to better and more effectively convey their research results.

As you have seen throughout the semester, there are many different kinds of academic writing that vary considerably by field, author style, and type of publication. One style we have not yet encountered uses a review of the literature in order to determine gaps and potential trajectories for future research. This is the style of Nick Rumen’s article, which identifies three potential research trajectories that scholars could follow in order to better understand how gender operates in the workplace in the wake of more widespread gender equality. Often researchers will identify gaps in existing knowledge about a particular topic and write about how other
scholars—especially those new to research—can fill these gaps. All research must contribute something new to existing knowledge, otherwise it will not be published; hence reviews like this one can be very helpful to those who are seeking to make a meaningful contribution to a field.

Rumens uses existing literature on postfeminism to develop a threefold definition of this concept, which is difficult to do given that the fourth wave of feminism is contemporary and ongoing. He observes that postfeminism is [1] more inclusive of fluid gender identities and conscious of cultural differences; [2] based in a belief that many feminist goals have already been achieved; [3] the result of a backlash that characterize movements for gender equality as too restrictive and anti-family. He explores this concept as it applies to research about men, masculinities, and work by offering suggestions for future research that build upon existing work in this area of study. Note the way that Rumens frames his recommendations for future research under italicized subheadings in which he fully develops each idea. This is a useful writing strategy for you to follow as you write your draft paper in order to stay well-organized and ensure that you fully develop each point you introduce.

**Reading Questions**

1. Characterize the different first person and omniscient writing strategies used in the three assigned readings this week. Which did you find most engaging and why? How might you incorporate some of the strategies for presenting written evidence into your own work?

2. Esacove observes that public health campaigns routinely convey messages that replicate dominant cultural norms surrounding sexuality and gender. What other messages do such campaigns convey with respect to drug use, homelessness, or other important social issues?

3. Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry emphasize the importance of public sociology—sociological research made accessible to a general audience—but also note the pitfalls of such an endeavor. Based on your reading of their article, did the authors experience different or more extreme public reactions to their work and the media distortions of it than, for instance, scientists who study climate change?

4. How can we apply our knowledge of the Dunning-Krueger effect to help interpret the negative reactions Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry faced in the wake of their efforts to publicize their research to a general audience? How could the recommendations they offer on pages 285-289 help audience members to overcome the Dunning-Krueger effect by providing them with information necessary to assess researchers’ work?

**Additional Resources**

1. Anne Esacove’s professional website: [https://www.sas.upenn.edu/gsws/people/anne-esacove](https://www.sas.upenn.edu/gsws/people/anne-esacove)

2. Liz Grauerholz’s professional website: [https://sciences.ucf.edu/sociology/people/grauerholz-elizabeth/](https://sciences.ucf.edu/sociology/people/grauerholz-elizabeth/)
3. Link to the original news story that generated the fairy tales controversy:
Weeks Fourteen and Fifteen:
Final Presentations of Draft Short Papers

Readings for this Week

Available on WyoCourse as:


Context and Relevance

The last two weeks of the semester will be very busy as you present, engage in peer review of your colleagues’ presentations, and carefully consider how to incorporate peer review of your own work into a revised version of your paper. The four articles you will read during this period are designed to help you critically reflect on the important role played by audiences and peer review in a presenter’s ability to effectively convey information. We have spent most of the semester focused on the research process and how researchers can most effectively convey their findings to an audience. It is appropriate, as we wrap up the semester, to now consider how audiences and peer review impact researchers/presenters with a view to thinking about how one can best respond to challenges that arise both with audiences and with peer review.

Psychologist Monisha Pasupathi and colleagues’ research found that speakers with attentive listeners are more likely to commit information relayed to long-term memory. Telling and listening in any social context is a collaborative act, which is something we should all remember as we think about how to be a good audience member in class, during presentations, and in other settings. The authors argue that listeners play an important role in influencing a teller’s memory for two reasons. First, telling/recounting events or information helps a teller commit the information to long-term memory (hence the importance of class discussions of our assigned readings and rehearsing presentations). Second, listeners’ behavior directly impacts a teller’s ability to recall information relayed. Those with unresponsive or distracted audiences regard their storytelling performance as worse than do those with attentive audiences. Audience reception has such a powerful impact on the human mind that, in experiments conducted by
the researchers, people began to believe inaccurate versions of events just by repeating them to attentive audiences.

Philosophers Robert Frodeman and Adam Briggle’s article on peer review examines how the two most prestigious research grant institutions, the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation, evaluate the potential social impacts of proposed research. The authors chose this topic because the world of knowledge production is changing rapidly due to the expansion and democratization of new means of publishing, evaluating, and sharing research work. Such rapid changes, which the authors refer to as “dedisciplining”, are in sharp contrast to the hierarchical form of knowledge production and evaluation that was in place as early as the seventeenth century. The authors argue that gauging the social impact of research is now more important than it has ever been, whether in terms of the ability to publish, obtain grant funding, or be taken seriously as a researcher. They offer two conclusions, on page 16, that may reassure researchers who feel concerned by increased openness surrounding the research process: “First, although the inclusion of broader impacts is riddled with difficulties, these are not different in kind from the problems entailed by the disciplinary peer review of intellectual merit. Second, rather than simply a threat, broadening the scope of peer review can actually serve to bolster the autonomy of science in a post-modern age.”

Psychologists Anna Kuhlen and Susan Brennan report the results of their research study on the extent to which speaker’s expectations of audience reactions shape the speaker’s presentation. The authors note that all forms of communication are social. Accordingly, all interactions are shaped by the expectations a person has of others as well as the feedback they receive from those others. Speakers with more attentive listeners spoke more vividly and behaved in a more engaging manner than did those with a distracted audience. It follows, the researchers argue, that presenters who come to expect distracted audiences may become even less engaging, which creates a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the audience becomes even less interested in their message. As you critically reflect on these research results, consider the expectations to which you hold yourself as an audience member in class, during presentations, or in other settings that require your attention, and the impact that your behavior has on those who attempt to share information with you.

Sociologist Diane Bjorklund conducted research for four months at a public speaking group she calls the Sunbeam Club, which meets on a weekday at 6 a.m. with the goal of helping professionals to improve their presentation skills. She explores how presenters respond to the expectation that they use humor to engage the audience and how they navigate the telling of jokes while still being taken seriously and without offending the audience. Bjorklund concludes that humor is multi-faceted because it conveys informality and can foster familiarity with an audience yet must be carefully managed by presenters to avoid reducing the speaker’s credibility or offending the audience. This balance is just one more aspect to consider as you work toward becoming an accomplished and charismatic presenter who is comfortable presenting an evidence-based argument in multiple formats.