

**MIT ES.242 - Spring 2004**  
**Gender Issues in Academics and Academia**

**Laurel Ruhlen & Kayla Jacobs**

<http://ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb/Special-Programs/SP-242Spring-2004/CourseHome/>

**Course Description:** Does it matter in education whether or not you've got a Y chromosome? You bet it does. In this discussion-based seminar, we will explore why males vastly outrank females in math and science and career advancements (particularly in academia), and why girls get better grades and go to college more often than boys. Do the sexes have different learning styles? Are women denied advanced opportunities in academia and the workforce? How do family life and family decisions affect careers for both men and women?

SES #	TOPIC	PAGES
1	Introduction; History of Gender in Education	2-3
2	Boys' Educational Issues	4
3	Course-Taking Patterns; Sex Education	5-6
4	Title IX	7-8
5	Standardized Tests	9
6	Single-Sex Schooling	10
7	Classroom Dynamics	11-12
8	The Feminine Mystique	13-14
9	Women's Studies	15-16
10	ESL Studies and Cross-Cultural Issues	17
11	MIT's Journey Towards Diversity	18-19
12	Opting Out	20-21
13	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Experiences	22-23
14	Summary and Conclusions	24

The notes below were prepared by the instructors as informal personal notes to help guide discussions during classes.

## ***SESSION 1: History of Gender in Education***

### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) Sadker, Myra and David Sadker. “Through the Back Door: A History of Women’s Education.” Chapter 2 in *Failing at Fairness*. New York, NY: Scribner, 1995. ISBN: 068480073X.
- (2) American Association of University Women. “How Girls Negotiate School.” Chapter 10 in *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Gender in Education*. Edited by Jossey-Bass Publishers. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002. ISBN: 0787960748.  
(This reading was originally published in the AAUW-commissioned 1996 report, *Girls in the Middle: Working to Succeed in School*.)

### Discussion notes:

#### **(1) Failing at Fairness: “History of Women’s Education”**

- Quite surprising in many ways
  - Describes many now-laughable theories on women’s abilities (e.g. algebra vs. ovaries, phrenology).
  - Interesting that now “laughable” – we don’t find things like “women’s careers” or “home-ec” laughable at all (though perhaps could feel it misguided or offensive).
- Changes both slow and fast
  - Hundreds of years till girls could even go to school or receive any education at all.
  - But then, “mere” decades till gender equality more-or-less recognized as a Good Thing to be striving for.
- “Professionalized motherhood” (p. 19) similar to description of the 1950s in Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (to be explored more deeply in Session 8).
- Reagan-era backlash particularly shocking – the late ‘70s and ‘80s were *recent*.

#### **(2) AAUW: “How Girls Negotiate Schools”**

- AAUW = American Association of University Women, founded 1881 (as the Association of Collegiate Alumnae). Funds lots of influential research on girls and women in educational settings (both pre- and post-university levels). Also has funds female graduate student stipends and holds national conferences on women in education.  
<http://www.aauw.org>

- Did you recognize the social cues and norms from your own experience? (Does answer differ depending on gender of student?)
- Big emphasis on role models
  - Really seemed to be a make-or-break factor.
  - What does this mean for areas without lots of female (or male!) role models? For example, physics today or medicine in the past for women, full-time homemaking or nursing for men.
  - Note over 50% of medical school students are female; less than 5% of nurses are male.
  - Keep in mind that there’s often a big difference between the percentage of a professional school class being a certain gender and the percentage of a *profession* being a certain gender. Practicing professionals went to school years ago, when the percentages were often different (usually reflecting traditional gender roles). Brings up “leaky-pipeline” issue too.
- Did you have any difficulties relating to Angela? Why?
- The “schoolgirls” studied were mostly white – would there be different conclusions for other racial groups? What would you expect the differences to be?

## ***SESSION 2: Boys’ Educational Issues***

### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) Kindlon, Dan and Michael Thompson. “Thorns Among Roses: The Struggle of Young Boys in Early Education.” Chapter 7 in *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Gender in Education*. Edited by Jossey-Bass Publishers. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002. ISBN: 0787960748. (This reading was originally published in Kindlon and Thompson’s 2000 book, *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*.)
- (2) Sadker, Myra and David Sadker. “The Miseducation of Boys.” Chapter 8 in *Failing at Fairness*. New York, NY: Scribner, 1995. ISBN: 068480073X. (This reading can also be found, identically, in Chapter 8 of *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Gender in Education*. See publication information above.)

### Discussion notes:

- (2) “The Miseducation of Boys” is from “Failing at Fairness” (where last week’s (1) “A History of Women’s Education” was also from), which was based on research conducted in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s.
- Never before thought of the “burden” of being a “star”
  - Definitely recognized the “star” stereotype from personal experience with classmates.
  - “Runner-up stars” a fascinating concept.
- “It is precisely because they intensified traditional notions of masculinity that educators found sports so attractive and incorporated them into the official school program” (Jossey-Bass Reader p. 188).
- In early 1900s, more women top school were administrators than today!
- Murder statistics really shocking.
- “Whatever sophisticated planning has gone into curriculum design at Alan’s school, the distinction between a good class and a bad class, for his point of view, has a lot to do with the freedom it offers to stand up and walk around” (Jossey-Bass Reader p. 159).
- Slower language development in boys: “If you start teaching [reading] any earlier, it looks as if all your boys have reading disabilities” (Jossey-Bass Reader p. 164).
- Action figures: “to be big instead of small, to have power in the world instead of the role of powerless child” (Jossey-Bass Reader p. 161).

### ***SESSION 3: Course-Taking Patterns; Sex Education***

#### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) American Association of University Women. “Course-Taking Patterns.” Chapter 11 in *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Gender in Education*. Edited by Jossey-Bass Publishers. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002. ISBN: 0787960748.  
(This reading was originally published in the AAUW-commissioned 1998 report, *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children*.)
- (2) Fine, Michelle. “Sexuality, Schooling, and Adolescent Females.” Chapter 17 in *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Gender in Education*. Edited by Jossey-Bass Publishers. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002. ISBN: 0787960748.  
(This reading was originally published in Fine and Lois Weis’s 1993 book, *Beyond Silenced Voices*, and in the February 1988 *Harvard Educational Review*.)

#### Discussion notes:

##### **(1) AAUW: Course-Taking Patterns**

- *Number* of math courses taken by girls and boys nearly equal now, but *type/level* not.
  - Should states make higher-level math required for all students? (AAUW p. 294)
- Have you heard of the issue of boys’ underenrollment in language and arts classes before? Has it struck you as a “problem” like girls’ underenrollment in physics?
- Boys and girls are approximately equally represented in the social sciences and APs.
- Remedial classes and tracking: Good or bad?
  - Good for gifted, not for others?
  - Is it helpful for slower students, or does it just hold them back?
  - Is it the responsibility of the schools to provide for the extremes of the bell curve? The state?
- Girls identified more than boys in gifted programs in elementary school, but they drop out: why?
  - Suggestions: Geek stereotypes, fitting in, etc.
- “U.S. culture often equates higher expenditure of effort with lower ability” (AAUW p. 291). What does this say about boys (who often assume/say their success is due to ability) and girls (who often assume/say their success is due to effort)? Does this stereotype ring true? Could girls’ efforts be to compensate for lower ability, or perhaps to give the *impression* of lower ability so as not to be “too smart”? (“Oh, I just studied really hard for that test; it’s not that I’m a math genius”—and thus geeky and unattractive.)

**(2) Fine: Sex Education**

- “Adolescent sexuality → victimization and danger” theme.
- “Sex-negative attitudes do not discourage sexual activity, but they do discourage responsible use of contraception. Teens who believe sexual involvement is wrong deny responsibility for contraception. To accept responsibility would legitimate ‘bad’ behavior” (Fine p. 377).
- Personal experience: 9th grade “Life Skills” class video on rape had only female victims of male aggressors depicted.
  - What does this portrayal say to boys who don’t/won’t rape?
  - What about male victims of rape? (More of ‘em than you might think! Though still much smaller than the number of female victims.)
- Don’t get into an argument about abstinence education: rather, focus on academic effects (pregnancy, drop outs...) if possible.
- Surprising that most parents didn’t object to sex ed in schools.

## ***SESSION 4: Title IX***

### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) Sandler, Bernice Resnick. “Too Strong for a Woman: The Five Words that Created Title IX.” Chapter 1 in *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Gender in Education*. Edited by Jossey-Bass Publishers. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002. ISBN: 0787960748.  
(This reading, which was edited by the author for the Jossey-Bass Reader, was originally published in the April 2000 issue of *Equity & Excellence in Education*. A version is available online, perhaps edited differently, at <http://www.bernicessandler.com/id44.htm>)
- (2) Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. 20 U.S.C. §1681-1688.  
<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/titleix.htm>
- (3) Riley, Richards and Norma Cantú. “Title IX: 25 Years of Progress.” U.S. Department of Education (June 1997). <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/TitleIX/index.html>
- (4) Toppo, Greg. “New Rules Would Allow More Single-Sex Schools.” USA TODAY (March 3, 2004). [http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2004-03-03-single-sex-schools-usat\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2004-03-03-single-sex-schools-usat_x.htm)
- (5) Irving, John. “Wrestling with Title IX.” *New York Times* (January 28, 2003).

### Discussion notes:

#### **(1) Sandler: “Too Strong for a Woman”**

- Sandler described by the New York Times as “the godmother of Title IX.”
- “Nice girls aren’t feminists” theme.
- “She [Rep. Edith Green (OR)] informed us that it would be better if we did not lobby because there was no opposition to the bill, and the less that people knew about the bill, the better its chances were for passage. We were skeptical, but she was absolutely right” (Jossey-Bass Reader p. 10).

#### **(2) Title IX itself**

- Clause (2): Good that they allow a grace period for schools changing to coed.
- Clause (3): Religious objections: But can’t religious schools then just do whatever they want then? (In other situations, yes for some things and no for others – e.g. religious schools still have a minimum standard for secular subjects that they must teach to children, but can focus on their religious beliefs like public schools cannot.)

- Is legislation the way to change these issues? Is Title IX enough? What about enforcement?

### **(3) U.S. Dept of Education: “25 Years of Progress”**

- Overall, great! But how can we tell what effects are due to Title IX and what are due to general societal trends?

### **(4) Toppo: “Single-Sex Schools”**

- More on this coming up in Session 6.

### **(5) Irving: “Wrestling with Title IX”**

- Interesting note: Author is a well-known writer of various books, including *The Cider House Rules* (made into a 1999 Oscar-winning movie), that often deal with feminism.
- A shame that most people know Title IX as a sports gender law and not a much broader and more powerful and important law.
  - Maybe because there’s a lot of money in sports, so this gets attention, whereas fewer people might care about the gender ratio of a science classroom
- Personal anecdote: Brother at University of Pittsburgh, where there’s enormously expensive (and profitable) men’s basketball and football teams. To “balance” the amount of money the school spends on them, they offer ridiculously specialized and obscure women’s sports that no one really wants. (Similar to Arizona rowing team example.)
- Could argue that women aren’t as interested in sports as men because there aren’t enough opportunities, encouragement, scholarships, prestige, etc. – which could be helped by keeping the sports interpretation Title IX as is.
- Or could argue that there’s just a statistical fact: that boys like sports more than girls – maybe because of biology, and maybe because of society, and maybe because of a mixture of the two – but the fact remains. Thus, spending should be divvied up accordingly.
  - But then couldn’t you make this argument about non-sports subjects, too? e.g. “Girls just don’t like computers as much as boys, so let’s not care if they’re outnumbered in computer science 3-1.”



## ***SESSION 5: Standardized Tests***

### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) Sadker, Myra and David Sadker. "Designing Tests" in "Test Dive." Chapter 6 in *Failing at Fairness*. New York, NY: Scribner, 1995. ISBN: 068480073X.  
(The section starts on page 131 and continues until page 156.)
- (2) The College Board Office of Research and Development. "Research Summary: SAT and Gender Differences." *College Entrance Examination Board* (February 1998).  
<http://www.collegeboard.com/research/abstract/3874.html>
- (3) Buck, Gary, Irene Koston, and Rick Morgan. "Examining the Relationship of Content to Gender-Based Performance Differences in Advanced Placement Exams." *College Entrance Examination Board* (2002). <http://www.collegeboard.com/research/abstract/20703.html>  
(Only read pp.1-3 (until the "Method" section), and p. 18 ("Implications"). The rest can be skimmed or skipped – it goes into far more detail than we'll need.)
- (4) Dittman, M. "College Women Underperform on Tests When in the Minority." *Monitor on Psychology* 35, no. 1 (January 2004): 14. <http://www.apa.org/monitor/jan04/college.html>

### Discussion notes:

- For the CollegeBoard articles, notice distinctly different "agendaization." However, in "Examining the Relationship," note on opening information page: "Researchers are encouraged to freely express their professional judgment. Therefore, points of view or opinions stated in College Board Reports do not necessarily represent official College Board position or policy." Do you think that's truly the case? Why or why not?
- SAT article. Very clear "SATs are good" message, almost defensive.
- AP article: Obfuscated concepts with technical terminology. Timidly asked for more research. Felt like researchers wanted to do a good job but toed the line of their higher-ups.
- Is it right to tailor questions to not be better for one group or another? Isn't *life* unavoidably different too?
- Very amusing, the origin of SATs with Columbia!
- "ETS suggests that the lower female scores are not a sign of test unfairness but rather the signal of a real educational problem. From the point of view of ETS, test critics are misguided; they are attacking the messenger because they do not like the message" (Sadker p. 156).

## ***SESSION 6: Single-Sex Schooling***

### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) Kaminar, Wendy. “The Trouble with Same-Sex Schools.” *Atlantic Monthly* (April 1998).
- (2) National Association of State Boards of Education. “Single-Sex Schools.” *Policy Update* 5, no. 15 (July-August 1997).  
[http://www.nasbe.org/new\\_resources\\_section/policy\\_updates/PU\\_SingleSex\\_Schools\\_08.97.pdf](http://www.nasbe.org/new_resources_section/policy_updates/PU_SingleSex_Schools_08.97.pdf)
- (3) Schemo, Diana Jean. “Administration Proposes Same-Sex-School Option.” *New York Times* (March 4, 2004).

### Discussion notes:

- Could “separate but equal” actually work for single-sex schooling?
  - How would fairness be measured? Enforced?
- How is single-sex schooling different / similar to separating kids by:
  - Race? (e.g. *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954.)
  - Ability level? (e.g. Tracking, gifted and remedial programs.)
  - Age? (e.g. Grade levels.)
  - “At-risk” factors? (e.g. Programs for low-income, disruptive, or pregnant teens?)
- Would your objections (if any) be alleviated or removed by single-sex schooling being an *option* – with a co-ed option always available? What problems might arise?
- Do public single-sex schools or partial programs seem to you to be against the spirit and/or the law of Title IX?
- Why do you think single-sex schooling has become more popular recently? What other social trends might be contributing to renewed interest in single-sex schooling? Or is it just that more thorough research is coming out?
- Might same-sex schooling be better if emphasized at different points in children’s lives? (e.g. Separate math classes in middle school, but together for high school?)
- Anecdote from friend at an all-female college: “I never see boys except as dates – they’re not friends or study partners, but have only romantic/sexual roles.” Since men and women work together in the workplace as adults, what issues might this feeling bring up?

## ***SESSION 7: Classroom Dynamics***

### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) Orenstein, Peggy. “Learning Silence: Scenes from the Class Struggle.” Chapter 1 in *SchoolGirls: Young Girls, Self-Esteem, and the Confidence Gap*. New York: Doubleday (1994). ISBN: 0385425759.
- (2) FAF chapter 3: “Missing in Interaction.”

### Discussion notes:

#### **(1) Orenstein: “Learning Silence”**

- “Amy walks to the far side of the room and, as she takes her seat, falls into a typically feminine pose: she crosses her legs, folds her arms across her chest, and hunches forward toward her desk, seeming to shrink into herself. The sauciness of the playground disappears, and, in fact, she says hardly a word during class. Meanwhile, the boys, especially those who are more physically mature, sprawl in their chairs, stretching their legs long, expanding into the available space” (p.7).
- “When the girls... do speak, they follow the rules... When Amy volunteers her sole answer of the period, she raises her hand, too. She gives the wrong answer to an easy multiplication problem, turns crimson, and flips her head forward so her hair falls over her face. Occasionally, the girls shout out answers, but generally they are the easiest, lowest-risk questions, such as the factors of four or six. And their stabs at public recognition depend on the boys' largesse; when the girls venture responses to more complex questions the boys quickly become territorial, shouting them down with their own answers... [The teacher] doesn't say anything to condone the boys' aggressiveness, but she doesn't have to: they insist on—and receive—her attention even when she consciously tries to shift it elsewhere in order to make the class more equitable.” (p. 9).
- “I don’t raise my hand in my classes because I’m afraid I have the wrong answer and I’ll be embarrassed” (p.11).
- Classroom interactions as power struggles.

#### **(2) Failing at Fairness: “Missing in Interaction”**

- To preserve order, most teachers use established classroom conventions such as raising your hand if you want to talk. Intellectually, teachers know they should apply this rule consistently, but when the discussion becomes fast-paced and furious, the rule is often swept aside. When this happens and shouting out begins, it is an open invitation for male dominance. Our research shows that boys call out significantly more often than girls.

Sometimes what they say has little or nothing to do with the teacher's questions. Whether male comments are insightful or irrelevant, teachers respond to them. However, when girls call out, there is a fascinating occurrence: Suddenly the teacher remembers the rule about raising your hand before you talk. And then the girl, who is usually not as assertive as the male students, is deftly and swiftly put back in her place. Not being allowed to call out like her male classmates... will not psychologically scar [her]; however, the system of silencing operates covertly and repeatedly. It occurs several times a day during each school week for twelve years, and even longer if [she] goes to college, and, most insidious of all, it happens subliminally. This micro-inequity eventually has a powerful cumulative impact" (*Failing at Fairness* pp. 43-44).

- "On the surface, girls appear to be doing well. They get better grades and receive fewer punishments than boys... Reinforced for passivity... As victims of benign neglect, girls are penalized for doing what they should" (*Failing at Fairness* p. 44).
- "When we videotape classrooms and play back the tapes, most teachers are stunned to see themselves teaching subtle gender lessons along with math and spelling." (*Failing at Fairness* p. 46)

## ***SESSION 8: The Feminine Mystique***

### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) Friedan, Betty. "The Sex-Directed Educators." Chapter 7 in *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: Norton (1963). ASIN: B000CBJK5L.
- (2) Friedan, Betty. "The Sexual Sell." Chapter 9 in *The Feminine Mystique*.

### *Optional:*

- (3) Film. *Mona Lisa Smile*, Revolution Studios and Columbia Pictures (2003).
- (4) Kayes, Rebecca. "Frowning at Mona Lisa Smile: An Alum Looks Back." *Counterpoint: The MIT-Wellesley Journal of Campus Life* 26, no. 1 (February 2004): 6-7.
- (5) Walsh, Diana Chapman. "Message from the President to Wellesley College Alumnae Concerning the Film, *Mona Lisa Smile*." *Wellesley College Office for Public Information* (January 9, 2004).  
<http://www.wellesley.edu/PublicAffairs/President/Announcements/monalisasmile.html>

### Discussion notes:

- *The Feminine Mystique* was hugely influential in women's movement.
- Inspired by a questionnaire Friedan (then a suburban housewife) sent to her classmates from the Smith 1942 class.
- 
- Formalized "The Problem that Has No Name:" 1950s middle- and upper-class white women's restlessness with concerning themselves only with house and home and family, often after college educations, and being told they had achieved perfect happiness.
- 
- "The problem that has no name - which is simply the fact that American women are kept from growing to their full human capacities - is taking a far greater toll on the physical and mental health of our country than any known disease" (Friedan).
- Questions remain: What about lower-class women or women of color? Were men happy with this situation? Did/can/should women truly fully embrace this domestic role? Men?
- Opening paragraph:  
"The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and

Brownies, lay beside her husband at night — she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question — ‘Is this all?’”

- Friedan went on to help found the National Organization for Women, National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Law, and National Women’s Political Caucus.

## ***SESSION 9: Women's Studies***

### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) "Men in Women's Studies Classes II." E-mail archive of WMST-L list (February 1999).  
<http://research.umbc.edu/~korenman/wmst/Men1.html>
- (2) Agozino, Biko. "What Women's Studies Offer Men." *West Africa Review* 2, no. 1 (August 2002). ISSN: 1525-4488. <http://www.westafricareview.com/vol2.1/agozino.html>

### Discussion notes:

#### **Starting Class Activity**

(Idea from Sadker, Myra and David Sadker. "Hidden Lessons." Chapter 1 in *Failing at Fairness*. New York, NY: Scribner, 1995. ISBN: 068480073X.)

- Take 3 minutes to write down as many famous men from American history as you can, trying for at least twenty. No sports stars or entertainers, please.
- Now take 3 minutes to write down as many famous women from American history as you can, trying for at least twenty. Again, no sports stars or entertainers.
- Is there a difference in the length of your two lists? In how hard it was to come up with names? Did you manage to get more than twenty on either list? What does that tell you?

#### **(1) "Men in Women's Studies Classes" E-mails**

- Marc Sacks:
  - "Women's studies isn't really an academic discipline so much as an advocate for women's issues and a feminist perspective."
- Irene Goldman-Price:
  - Used to 1-3 boys in a class of 20-25.
  - Now at school that gives diversity credit and now ratio is 16/40.
  - "The girls just haven't opened up the way they usually do."
- Daphne Patai:
  - "Confusion between intellectual inquiry and proselytizing, the endorsement of behavior that would never be tolerated in reverse, as if tit for tat were what feminism is all about..."
- Corey Hale:

- As a Gender Studies major, I’ve never failed to feel offended at the extra attention a lone male gets... I don’t want my theories to be given credibility by the presence of a man within my discipline.”

**(2) Agozino: “What Women’s Studies Offer Men”**

- “By asking what women’s studies offer men, we imagine that women’s studies are now championed by knights in shining armor who are out to save the apparently lost men from the web of their dominant hysterical gender ideology. The question is not what women’s studies can learn from men but what lessons men can learn by humbling themselves to listen to women’s perspectives.”
- Do men experience the same feelings of being “left out” or being the “odd one out” as women do in general classes that are male-dominated?
- How is women’s studies similar and different to African-American studies, Chinese studies, economic/social class studies...?



## ***SESSION 10: ESL Studies and the Cross-Cultural Issues***

### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) Morris, Lori. "Differences in Men's and Women's ESL Writing at the Junior College Level: Consequences for Research on Feedback." *Canadian Modern Language Review* 55, no. 2 (December 1998). <http://128.100.205.43/access/jour.ihtml?lp=product/cmlr/552/552-Morris.html>
- (2) McGroarty, Mary. "Cross-Cultural Issues in Adult ESL Classrooms." *Center for Adult English Language Acquisition Digests* (July 1993). [http://www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources/digests/cross\\_cultural.html](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/cross_cultural.html)

### Discussion notes:

#### **(1) Morris: "Differences in ESL Writing"**

- This study shows that women tend to succeed because they are good at obeying rules. Why does that make them "better" at learning languages and not, say, math – which relies even more heavily on sets of rules than language does?

#### **(2) McGroarty: "Cross-Cultural Issues in Adult ESL Classroom"**

- How effective are classroom techniques in overcoming cultural gender inequalities?
- How can teachers respect cultural differences while also ensuring that all the students receive an equal education? (e.g. Sitting in circle, looking at wife.)
- How is doing that different from trying to overcome American traditions of gender inequality?

## ***SESSION 11: MIT’s Journey Towards Diversity***

### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) Jaimes, Joel J. “Diversity at MIT: 1981 to Present.” *The Tech* 123, no. 3 (February 11, 2003). <http://www-tech.mit.edu/V123/N3/timeline.3f.html>
- (2) Penfield, Paul. “Faculty Diversity.” *MIT Faculty Newsletter* 6, no. 3 (January/February 1994): 1, 12-15. <http://www-mtl.mit.edu/~penfield/pubs/diversity.html>
- (3) MIT Committee on Women Faculty in the School of Science. “A Study on the Status of Women Faculty in Science at MIT.” *MIT Faculty Newsletter* 11, no. 4 (March 1999). <http://web.mit.edu/fnl/women/women.html>
- (4) Waugh, Alice C. “Policies Have Helped Boost Women Faculty.” *MIT Tech Talk* (March 31, 2004). <http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2004/fac-diversity-0331.html>
- (5) JBR chapter 26: “Examining Women’s Progress in the Sciences from the Perspective of Diversity” (Clewell and Ginorio).

### Discussion notes:

- Have you personally seen or experienced gender discrimination at MIT?
- MIT’s report has huge influence outside the Institute, too: MIT really “led the charge” and inspired other universities to examine their own policies. Some criticism recently that MIT’s efforts have not continued being pursued very vigorously.
- “How do these trends project into the future? To double the percentage of MIT women faculty to 35 percent would take 31 years, and to bring it to 50 percent would take 60 years--assuming that current faculty size, number of hires per year, percentage of women hires and tenure rates remained unchanged, Hopkins said” (*Tech Talk* article).
- Why is gender (racial, economic, cultural...) diversity important, aside from ensuring that those groups are included? What are the benefits to the “overrepresented majority”?
  - “A diverse faculty can carry out the mission of our department better than a nondiverse one” (Penfield).
- Affirmative action: a whole can of worms.
- MIT undergraduate admissions office defense of why women have a higher acceptance rate than men (though since the number of male applicants is much larger, overall more

men are admitted than women): the women applicants are more self-selecting, with only the very best even applying.

- "First and foremost it is essential to set aside the issue of whether these women were badly treated because they were simply not good enough. It must be understood that for these particular women the opposite was undeniably true. Despite discrimination, most of these women achieved at an outstanding level within their professions... Only people above the average MIT faculty could have succeeded at this level despite the many obstacles the senior women faculty encountered in their careers. Indeed, it should be almost obvious that the first women, the first blacks, the pioneers who break through despite enormous barriers must be exceptional" (*Study on the Status*).
- "Women are often the harshest critics of other women they deem less than better than most faculty for fear that they will reflect badly on all women" (*Study on the Status*).
- How much of the responsibility for improving diversity is MIT's, and how much is society's?

## ***SESSION 12: Opting Out***

### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) Belkin, Lisa. “The Opt-Out Revolution.” *New York Times* (October 26, 2003).
- (2) Wallis, Cynthia. “The Case for Staying at Home: Why More Young Moms Are Opting Out of the Rat Race.” *TIME* (March 22, 1994).  
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,993641,00.html>
- (3) Boufis, Christina. “Strange Bedfellows: Does Academic Life Lead to Divorce?” *Salon* (March 24, 1999). <http://www.salon.com/it/feature/1999/03/24feature.html>
- (4) Hilborn, Robert C., Ruth H. Howes, Barbara L. Whitten, Suzanne R. Foster, and Margaret L. Duncombe. “What Works for Women in Undergrad Physics?” *Physics Today* 56, no. 9 (September 2003): 46. <http://www.aip.org/pt/vol-56/iss-9/p46.html>

### Discussion notes:

#### **(1) Belkin, “The Opt-Out Revolution” & (2) Wallis, “The Case for Staying at Home”**

- How wide-spread are these phenomena?
- Profiles mainly of white, upper-middle-class, highly educated women.
- An important cultural clue for other groups, though.
- Work isn’t about “self-fulfillment” for everyone – most working women don’t have the choice to stay home with their kids because their families need the income.
- Sad for men that they don’t often feel they have the same “opt out” choices as women.
- Why is the media so enchanted with this issue?
- Do these articles confirm traditional ideas/fears? Progressive? Feminist?
- How realistic is the “detour” career option? (Education, good start to career, pause for a few years for little kids, resume at same level when kids are in school.) Not much data yet...

#### **(3) Boufis, “Does Academic Life Lead to Divorce?”**

- Anecdotes of many MIT female professors single or divorced, with no or few children, fertility problems post-tenure.

- Efforts by MIT and other institutions to alleviate tenure pressure on new mothers (and sometimes new fathers), especially to make tenure extensions automatic and not require a request (which may depend on the whims of an advisor or a woman’s worry over looking “weak” or “not dedicated”).
- Frenetic tenure questing bad for men too, not just women, of course!
- Different biological clock for men and women. Tenure track years = women’s fertile years.

**(4) Robert, et al, “What Works for Women in Undergrad Physics?”**

- Physics problems not just for girls: low retention of female students (and faculty as they advance forward) indicates problems for *everyone*.
- Lack of mentoring: a vicious cycle.
- Leaky pipeline: conflicting reports.
- Astronomy generally much better than physics on gender ratio. Possible explanation: astronomy much more of a solitary pursuit, without downsides of heavily-male group lab environments.

## ***SESSION 13: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Experiences***

### Readings to complete before class:

- (1) Steward, Doug. “Working Towards Equality.” *Academe* 89, no. 4 (July-August 2003).  
<http://www.aaup.org/publications/Academe/2003/03ja/03jastew.htm>
- (2) Feltey, Katherine M. “Living Outside the Center.” Chapter 6 in *Lesbians in Academia: Degrees of Freedom*. Edited by Beth Mintz and Esther Rothblum. New York, NY: Rothblum (1997). ISBN: 0415917026.
- (3) Anonymous. “My, How Times Have Changed... Or Have They? A Quarter Century as a Lesbian Academic.” Chapter 29 in *Lesbians in Academia: Degrees of Freedom*. Edited by Beth Mintz and Esther Rothblum. New York, NY: Rothblum (1997). ISBN: 0415917026.
- (4) Bernstein, Fred. “On Campus, Rethinking Bio 101.” *New York Times* (March 7, 2004).

### Discussion notes:

- Sex vs. gender
  - Sex = biological sex, based on physical features.
  - Gender = social role and identity (affects clothing, speech patterns, encouraged career goals, etc.).
  - Big question in cultural studies of how much of gender is determined by sex and/or by society’s conventions.
  - Both terms are used independently of sexual orientation (who a person is romantically/sexually attracted to).
- Because of their relative seclusion from the outside world, university settings can be excellent – or terrible – in terms of environment for GLBTs.
- Differently-gendered living arrangements
  - Pros and cons of same-sex roommates, floors, dorms, schools.
  - What about more “traditional” requests? “Yale Five” – Orthodox Jewish students at Yale sued the university for requiring them to live in co-ed dormitories (or, as it happened in practice, to pay for the dorms while actually living at home) which the students felt was against their religion’s teachings on moral living. Suit dismissed by courts because “the plaintiffs could have opted to attend a different

college or university if they were not satisfied with Yale's housing policy." How is this similar or dissimilar to GLBT accommodation requests?

- Should students at single-sex colleges be allowed to continue to be enrolled if during college they change to identifying (either personally or biologically) as a member of the opposite sex?

## ***SESSION 14: Summary and Conclusions***

### Readings to complete before class:

No readings for this class. Enjoy studying for final exams!

### Discussion notes:

- What about the topics we've discussed has interested you most? Surprised you most? Confused you most? Changed you most?
- What would you have done differently in this class?
- What next?
  - There's *plenty* more to read and discuss about all of the topics we covered.
  - Many more topics, too! As possible starting points for future explorations, here are some subjects that can relate to gender in education that we didn't explore in much detail:
    - Learning disabilities
    - Sexual harassment
    - Bullying
    - Technology in education
    - Biological differences between the sexes
    - More examples of non-U.S. cultures
    - Women's political movements
    - Physical education
    - Economic/social class
    - The media's role
    - Teaching styles of male and female teachers
    - Religious influences
    - Work environments outside of academia
  - Keep reading the newspaper: these topics show up frequently. Keep yourself up-to-date on current developments. These issues affect you and the world we live in.
- Thanks for a really fun semester!



MIT OpenCourseWare  
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

ES.242 Gender Issues in Academics and Academia  
Spring 2004

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.