

## 《授業報告》

## Teaching “The World of Gender”

The first time I seriously studied the paradigm of gender was when I was a graduate student at Cornell University’s Department of Anthropology in the early 1980s. I had the good fortune of taking a course from Professor Kathryn March, who at the time was a new faculty member. Professor March had utilized gender theory in her studies of the Tamang in Nepal. I would come to use gender as a guiding paradigm in my studies of Japanese society, including research on blue-collar women in a lingerie factory, senior citizens in “Silver Talent Centers,” men and women seeking work/life balance in a multinational firm, “salarywomen” forging new paths in a major Japanese corporation, changing norms and patterns of family life, and families in Tokyo and Paris. Professor March’s introduction to the theory of gender in anthropology and sociology was crucial in all of these, and more broadly in my career.

I am pleased to have been given a Waseda University Teaching Award for my 2021 fall semester course, “The World of Gender,” as it confirms that my style of teaching has been well received by the students. It is particularly gratifying that while I thought that approach was most effective in a face-to-face setting, it could be utilized effectively even under the unusual circumstances brought to us by COVID. I have to admit, I was more than a bit worried at the outset about how I could sustain students’ attention for a three-hour-long, online, discussion-based course. Perhaps

the fact that the class was totally online and hence quite a challenge to manage made the students feel more sympathetic! Or, perhaps the importance of the subject became even more clear during the pandemic, driving the students' interest even more than in previous years. In recent years, too, there has been a burgeoning production of social-science-based literature on genders, so the increased awareness of diversity in gender may have prompted student interest. In any case, it was gratifying to know that the students gained as much from this body of knowledge as I have gained. We had some robust discussions.

This course is intended for MA and PhD students. Most of the students are from the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, although we also attract a few students from other departments such as the Graduate School of International Culture and Communication (GSICCS). The class size has grown larger over the years. Of late, it was 24. I always begin this course by asking students what they think the word "gender" means, and how they distinguish it from "sex." This usually leads to a good discussion, as different students have different ideas about this vocabulary. We begin the course by discussing diversity in gender, for instance, by looking at the gender systems of native North Americans. We also add perspectives from research on transsexualism (Shapiro, 2005) and intersex (Kessler, 1998). Students understand from this rich material that gender is socially constructed, with diverse meanings across societies. We then query such topics as whether there is any basis in the common belief that women have a "maternal" instinct. We look at theories that posit the division of gender roles as stemming from a material base, through reading Mascia-Lees and Black's (2016) work, "The Materialist Orientation." At times I have added perspectives from economics as well,

especially those of Folbre (1994) who discusses gender as one of the “structures of constraint” in the modern world. We dive into the gendered implications of government policy as well. Other topics we discuss in the course are the socialization for gender roles, parental accountings of gender variance, gender and masculinities, and gender and emotional labor under capitalism. Although I always refresh some of the readings with newly produced research, I have found that it also helps to have some historical anchors, so that we can see how the field has developed over the years.

Aside from there being a plethora of interesting readings to choose from when designing a course such as this, which makes it a pleasure to teach, since the students easily engage with the readings, another necessity of teaching this or any other course is to allow plenty of time for discussion. I see the readings as a springboard for discussion, not an endpoint in themselves. Our diverse students bring different interpretations to the readings I assign for each week, so it helps everyone’s understanding if these disparate understandings are voiced. Students learn from each other as much as they learn from me, as long as they all put the time in to read deeply and are not afraid to voice their opinions and ask questions. I owe this teaching style to Carol Greenhouse, my legal anthropology professor at Cornell. Dr. Greenhouse would always ask us for our interpretations of the readings we had done. She did not lead the class with her own interpretations. We came to class knowing that we would be asked, so we did a lot of thinking before taking our seats!

To encourage fruitful discussions, I have the students write summaries of one reading for each week. I then read and comment on these for the following week. Furthermore, each week, a group of students will do

a presentation of one reading with discussion questions to launch the conversation. The key to making this work is to encourage students to feel that any question is valuable, and that their ideas will be taken seriously. There is no fear of feeling awkward or stupid in my classes, I hope. Of course, some students come to the course with more prior knowledge than others, and discussion will be easier for them. Other students do not have English as a native language, so communication itself may be a challenge, but I encourage all students to voice their thoughts and be part of our mutual production of meaning. The fact that our student body at GSAPS is highly diverse internationally also helps when it comes to discussing readings, as students are coming from so many different cultural backgrounds. Students learn a lot from each other, and I, too, am a beneficiary of this diversity. For their final research papers, students choose their own topics, first writing a prospectus and obtaining my feedback. Last year, we met one extra session so that some students could present their papers to everyone and receive feedback.

Gender is central to our identity, yet it is also taken for granted as something “natural” or even fixed. Through immersing themselves in the rich literature that takes gender as a concept of inquiry, students can learn of the wealth of diversity in gender, how it is expressed, how it is lived, and how it is evolving. In this way, learning about gender helps us to understand more about each other, but also about ourselves. And that, I think, is what makes teaching this class, and anthropology in general, worthwhile.

### **Works Cited**

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