GSWS 399-4: Numeracy, Gender and Cultures (Q)

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Lecture: Thursdays 13:30 – 17:20 AQ 5039
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Course Description:

Why do we generally have separate public washrooms for men and women yet share the same facilities at home? Why do men and women compete in separate professional sporting events? Why do we have to record our sex or gender on our driver’s license or passport?

Behind every public decision that regulates our bodies exists an argument for why these practices were implemented. And as the amount of information we are exposed to on a daily basis increases, so does our need to assess the information in order to not only understand the message but more importantly, to understand the context and validity of an argument.

Specifically, in the 1992 book: Risk society: Towards a new modernity, Ulrich Beck discusses power in developed countries as the ability of an individual and of society, to control their exposure to risk. He also introduces gender as a dimension from which to analyze risk. Contemporary arguments of risk have been co-opted by governments and advertisers to offer services and goods to help the individual control our exposure to risk and, to justify draconian policies and laws developed in relation to unknown threats in an atmosphere of fear. These policies have led to a ‘blame the individual victim mentality’ and they have a particular application to risk theory debates over maternal vs. fetus rights; the origins of illness such as cancer and individual lifestyle; genetic testing; the need for immunization against HPV; legal responses to sexual assault and, policies for at-risk youth.

This course will encompass three themes:
1. Historical arguments about the gender roles of men and women in western society.
2. Beck’s concept of risk and various case studies to discuss how neoliberalism and the trend toward individual responsibility affect arguments about policy and gender in the developed world.
3. Contemporary arguments about gender and risk-taking behaviors within various cultural settings. Case studies will include debates about intersex and transgender people, non-traditional work and extreme sports.

Learning Outcomes: As a “Q” designated course we will focus on three course objectives:
1. To define and explore quantitative formal (deductive, probabilistic) reasoning.
2. To use a GSWS theoretical framework to understand the larger context of historically reasoned examples.
3. To develop skills in practical problem solving, critical evaluation and analysis as they pertain to contemporary case studies.

Course Texts and Courseware:
Courseware package will be available at the Burnaby campus bookstore (Additional readings will be available online)

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
Participation and attendance (10%)
In class group assignments (4 @ 5 % = 20%)
Midterm (20%)
Research Paper (25%)
Take Home Final Exam (25%)

Prerequisite: 30 units

THE DEPARTMENT OF GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN’S STUDIES ENCOURAGES CLARITY OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION AND GOOD WRITING. STUDENTS WILL BE EVALUATED ON THESE SKILLS IN ALL COURSES GIVEN BY THE DEPARTMENT. IN ADDITION, THE DEPARTMENT WILL FOLLOW POLICY T10.02 WITH RESPECT TO “INTELLECTUAL HONESTY,” AND “ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE” (WWW.SFU.CA/POLICIES/TEACHING)