

SOC 38: Sociology of Gender

Kingsborough Community College, CUNY

Fall 2025

Dr. Alison Better

Professor, Department of Behavioral Sciences

Class meets fully online in an asynchronous format

Students' Hour: Tuesdays 10-11am and by appointment

3 credits

Welcome!!!

Hello and welcome to Sociology of Gender with Professor Better. This is an exciting course that helps us understand the world we live in. This course will challenge you to think critically about our social worlds.

How do people construct or “do” gender? How does gender structure everyday life and society in general? This course explores the ways in which people construct gender, how gender is produced in both macro and micro social institutions. Issues addressed in this course include: gender and biology; sexuality; the gendered division of labor in the home and the workforce; gender and religion; race, class and gender as intersecting systems of inequality.

This is an advanced level sociology course which requires SOC 31 Introduction to Sociology as a prerequisite. This course transfers to all four-year CUNY colleges as well as to most other colleges, public and private. SOC 38 is also a Women's and Gender Studies Concentration elective and helps students to fulfill their requirements for CUNY's flexible Core Group D.

A little about me:

Hi! I'm Dr. Alison Better (she/her), a Professor of Sociology at Kingsborough Community College in the City University of New York, where I have been teaching sociology and gender studies courses for about fifteen years. In 2023, I was honored to receive the Hans O. Mauksch Award for Distinguished Contributions to Undergraduate Sociology from the American Sociological Association Section on Teaching and Learning. In addition to being recognized for my teaching, I am also a leader in the field, having chaired the [Teaching and Learning](#) Section and served on the section councils for the sections on [Sexualities](#), [Sex and Gender](#), and [Body and Embodiment](#) of the American Sociological Association ([ASA](#)).

If you're curious, you can find a lot more about me on [my website](#).

A little about this syllabus: it's packed full of useful information, but I know that can be a little overwhelming, so there is a 60 second summary to make getting started and sorted out a little easier.

Syllabus in 60 Seconds: To succeed in this class,

- Keep track of our course schedule and do the work listed for each week [here](#).
- Read the [assigned reading every week](#) (*before* our class, so you can actively participate!)
- Do your own work- [the use of generative AI](#) is strictly prohibited in this class.
- **This course is built to be flexible and work within the other demands of your life.**
- Studying at the university is challenging for everyone!
[Take advantage of all of the support](#) that is available to you!

- We are learning here together, so if I can be of any assistance, email me!

Course Policies

This course is built to be flexible and work within the challenges of your life. We are engaging in our study of sociology of gender during a time of social and political upheaval. We can't predict what will happen during the semester. I hope we all are able to stay safe, well, and healthy. I have built this course so that if life gets in the way (you or someone in your family gets sick or other catastrophes happen), you will still be able to complete the course on your own schedule. I will provide due dates for all assignments, but as long as everything is completed by *December 14th*, I will be able to submit your grades for this course. If you need more time, please talk with me about your options with an Incomplete.

Our online course is a space of respect and dignity of everyone in this class. This virtual classroom will be a space where the targeting of students based on their identities, beliefs, appearances, or immigration statuses will not be tolerated. As an educator, I fully support the rights of all students to pursue their education and to live free from the fear of deportation; prison; Islamophobia; anti-Semitism; anti-black racism; racist and xenophobic violence; homophobic, transphobic and sexual violence; ableism; and, other forms of hatred and discrimination. If you have any concerns about deportation and/or any issues that are interfering with your autonomy, safety, and mobility, please feel free to speak with me. I will respect your wishes concerning confidentiality.

I also support the rights of students to pursue their education with sufficient food to eat and a safe and stable place to live. KCC's Single Stop office (<https://www.kbcc.cuny.edu/arc/>) can offer support to students who face housing or hunger insecurity. Please contact them for more information, and also know that you are welcome to discuss these concerns with me. If you are facing a short-term financial hardship (loss of job, medical bills, housing emergency, etc), KCC has emergency grants (visit <https://www.kbcc.cuny.edu/admission/EmergencyFund.html> for more information). Also, be in touch if you are having trouble with [access to computers](#) or the internet. Again, I will respect your wishes concerning confidentiality and more details about all these programs are found at the end of this document.

The Course

This section of SOC 38 is developed in an asynchronous format. That means, there are no scheduled online meeting times. I see myself in the role of professor in this online course as a cross between a coach, mentor, teacher, and curator. I have set the course up for you to engage with the materials on your own time and to interact as much or as little with your classmates and myself as you need. I hope you find this flexibility helpful as you think through the ideas presented in this course.

All course materials are posted on Brightspace. Students are expected to keep up with the weekly materials on Brightspace, including readings, videos, and discussion boards. Two papers will assess student's learning and give students an opportunity to think through course materials. Students will do this coursework on their own time, with the hopes that everyone is able to keep to the schedule laid out in the syllabus. It is impossible to predict what will happen

outside of this course for all of us this semester. I built this course mindful of a multitude of issues that can get in the way of our focused learning and allow for flexibility to engage in these materials on your own time.

This course is designed to provide an introduction to the ways gender operates in our social world. A major focus of this class is figuring out how and where you see the social construction of gender and its impact on individuals and institutions.

The learning objectives for this class are:

1. Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
2. Evaluate evidence and arguments critically and analytically.
3. Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.
4. Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the relationship between the individual and society, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, history, journalism, philosophy, political science, psychology, public affairs, religion, and sociology. This course will apply sociological frames of reference to the development of gender identity and contemporary gender roles.
5. Examine how an individual's place in society affects experiences, values, or choices.
6. Identify and engage with local, national, or global trends or ideologies, and analyze their impact on individual or collective decision-making.
7. In addition, students should be able to:
 - Understand and use the concept of social construction to show how people construct and do gender in their everyday lives.
 - Demonstrate how gender is institutionalized in macro and micro levels of society which contribute to individuals' gender identity and gender inequality.
 - Understand the historical development and contemporary contributions of the women's movement and feminist theories.
8. Your personal learning goal(s) for the semester:

How to Succeed in this course

Office Hours/Student Hours

I want to be able to help you with this course in any way I can. I will be holding Student Hours weekly on Tuesdays from 10-11. To schedule a time to chat, please visit the calendly link on brightspace. I am available to chat on Zoom during my office/student hours each week. I'm also happy to answer questions by email outside of my office hours. I will try my best to reply to emails sent to my KCC account within 24 hours on weekdays.

Work Plans

You will need to do several hours of work each week, and it can be easy to forget- block off time now in your schedule so you have regularly scheduled time to work on this class. For a 3 credit hour class, you should be spending 6-10 hours a week engaged with the materials and assignments.

Grades

Final course grades are based on your discussion board participation (20%) and two papers (#1: 30%; #2: 50%). All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade in this class. There is also a third paper which can replace the Discussion Boards (20%) or can serve as extra credit for the course grade (up to 5 EC points) if all other assignments are completed.

Students' knowledge, understanding, and engagement with the course materials will be assessed through two graded papers. All papers will be submitted on Brightspace.

Paper #1 is worth 30% of your grade (due 10/3)

Paper #2 is worth 50% of your grade (due 12/10)

Course discussion boards on Brightspace are worth 20% of your grade in this course

a note about deadlines: All deadlines in this course are negotiable, you can ask for as many extensions as you want and you do not need to declare a reason. I set deadlines to try and keep us on track (some of us, like me, really need deadlines to be motivated), but if anything is getting in the way of your learning this semester, just get in touch with Prof. Better by email and we will work it out.

Course Discussions

Students will participate in class discussion boards, which will be posted on Brightspace.

Discussion boards will allow conversation between students as a group and with Prof. Better.

There are posting opportunities most weeks. Students will respond to at least FOUR of these.

20% of your course grade will come from discussion board postings.

Alternatively, you can complete the Extra Credit Paper which will count towards this portion of your final grade. (please let Prof. Better know if you will be choosing not to post on the discussion boards and to do the extra credit in its place for that 20% of your final grade.) You can also do both the discussion boards and the extra credit for up to an extra 5 points added to your course grade.

Schedule, Readings, & Resources

- The schedule of topics, readings, and work is [here](#).
- This is a zero textbook cost course. **While the assigned reading is free, it is also required, not optional.** The required reading will consist of books and articles that are available through [Kibbee Library](#) at KCC as well as other publicly available materials.
- **Books** (all available online from the Kibbee Library, use your CUNYFirst login to access):
 - Kate Bornstein *My New Gender Workbook* (2013)
 - Sara Crawley *Gendering Bodies* (2007)
 - Anne Fausto-Sterling *Sexing the Body* (2000)
 - Jack Halberstam *Female Masculinity* (1998)
 - Messerschmidt, Messner, Connell *Gender Reckonings* (2018) **GR**
 - Baker Rogers *King of Hearts: Drag Kings in the American South* (2021)
- Relevant Articles and Videos linked in the weekly schedule.
- You may find [Zotero](#) to be useful for reading and highlighting the free PDF of this textbook or PDFs you make of the articles selected by the class. Zotero is free, syncs across all of your devices (phone, tablet, and computer), and is very easy to use. Zotero

will also generate citations so you can cite your sources and has plugins for [Google Docs](#) and [Microsoft Word](#). I am always happy to help you get started with it if you like.

Course Schedule

Week	Week beginning	Topic	Readings
Week 1	9/9	Course Overview	AFS Chapter 1
Week 2	9/15	Bodies and Gender	AFS Chapter 2, 3 Kessler " The Medical Construction of Gender "
*You must participate in the class - attend, complete an assignment, touch base, something! by Sept 25, or you'll be dropped from the course. (This is a college rule, not mine, and applies to all of your classes)			
Week 3	9/22	Social Construction	West and Zimmerman " Doing Gender " GR Chapter 1 (Myra Marx Ferree) GR Chapter 15 (Lorber) PHC " Black Feminist Thought " 2000 Ch 1&2
Week 4	9/29	Blurring Gender Boundaries	Bornstein <i>My Gender Workbook</i> Lucal " What it Means to be Gendered Me " GR Chapter 5 (Vigoya)
Paper #1 Due	10/3		Submit Paper #1 on Brightspace
Week 5	10/6	Gendered Bodies and Sexualities	Crawley Chapters 1 & 2 GR Chapter 6 (Misra) Anne Koedt " The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm " Peggy McIntosh " White Privilege " Kimberle Crenshaw intersectionality talk
Week 6	10/13	Bodies Disrupting the Binaries	AFS Chapter 4 Crawley Chapter 3 David Reimer Case (videos link CW: Suicide)
Week 7	10/20	Trans Bodies	GR Chapter 3 (Schilt) Emily Paine " Embodied Disruption: "Sorting out" Gender and Nonconformity in the Doctor's Office. " (2018) <i>How Sex Changed</i> Chapters 3, 6 (optional)
Week 8	10/27	Gender Fluidity	Paris is Burning (film) Judith Butler "Doing Justice to Someone"
Week 9	11/3	Drag	Baker Rogers book
Week 10	11/10	Queering Gender	Halberstam <i>Female Masculinity</i> Chapters 1, 5, 7
Week 11	11/17	Gendering Sex and Pleasure	GR Chapter 16 (Schippers) Espiritu " We Don't Sleep Around Like White Girls Do " Stevi Jackson " Gender, Sexuality, and heterosexuality " Angela Jones <i>Camming</i> (talk link)

Week 12	11/24, 12/1			GR Chapter 14 (Risman) GR Conculsion (Connell)
Paper #2	12/10			Submit Paper #2 on Brightspace
Last Day to Submit Work		Sunday	12/14	last day to submit any work

KCC Resources and CUNY Policies

1. Access-Ability Services

If you require any accommodations or supports to do your best learning for any disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other), or have any questions about accommodations, whether you need them, or how to get them, please contact the office of **Access-Ability Services (AAS)** at 718-368-5145, room D-205 on campus, via email at aas@kbcc.cuny.edu, or [online](#). I have designed this course using [UDL principles](#) in the hopes that the course can work well for a wide variety of students, but if there is any way I can make the course more accessible for you (whether you have officially recognized accommodations or not) please email me. I am here to support you so you can do your best learning.

2. Support Services

Take advantage of the many, many opportunities for support in your development as a student available at Kingsborough. Some of these are for academic support, some are for basic needs support- both types of support are essential to your learning, so please make use of all available supports so you can do your best. **All of the offices/services on campus have remote assistance available.** Some offices on campus that may be helpful to you include (but are not limited to):

i. Basic Needs Supports

it's impossible to do your best learning if your basic needs are not met, so please use these services if they would be helpful (and please share this information with your friends!)

1. **Access Resource Center** (718-368-5411, [Access Resource Center](#) - benefits screening, winter coat and clothing closet, resource center, legal and financial consultations
2. **Food Pantry**- Several food supports available, including grab and go, weekly pantry bags, and weekly produce bags [Food Resources](#).
3. **The Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation Student Emergency Grant Fund**- [Student Emergency Funds](#) provides financial assistance to KCC students who are currently enrolled, are in good academic standing and are facing short-term financial emergencies (examples: job loss, illness, or death of family member/self, need for glasses or dental work, homelessness or impending homelessness, theft of books/computer, etc).

ii. Physical and Mental Health Supports:

You cannot learn if you do not feel well, so please prioritize your mental and physical health. Due dates in this class are flexible so you can take the time you need if you are facing mental or physical health challenges, and the offices below may also be helpful:

1. **Counseling Center** (718-368-5975 [Counseling Center](#))
2. **Health Services** (718-368-5684 [Health Center](#))
3. **Women's Center** (718-368-4700 [Women's Center](#))

iii. Academic Supports:

I encourage you to seek help with your work early and often, whether you are having trouble in our course or not! The Library, CAWS, and IT are here to help. I have used (and continue to use!) all of these resources myself, from online chatting a librarian to aid my research to having IT get me into my email after I lost my password, so please take advantage of them.

1. **KCC Library:** [KBCC library](#)
2. **Kingsborough Learning Center** (offers live online tutoring for subjects and writing), [KLC](#))
3. **IT Helpdesk:** [IT Helpdesk](#) 718-368-6679 or helpdesk@kbcc.cuny.edu

iv. More Student Resources are listed here: [Current Student Resources](#)

3. Anti-discrimination & Courtesy

a. Anti-discrimination statement

CUNY's Policy on Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination applicable to all colleges and units is—to recruit, employ, retain, promote, and provide benefits to employees and to admit and provide services for students without discriminating on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, creed, national origin, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, marital status, partnership status, disability, genetic information, alienage, citizenship, military or veteran status, pregnancy, status as a victim of domestic violence/stalking/sex offenses, unemployment status, caregiver or familial status, prior record of arrest or conviction, or any other legally prohibited basis in accordance with federal, state and city laws. Read more [here](#).

b. Gender Pronoun and Name Preference:

I affirm all forms of gender expressions and identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster, please let me know. There are instructions for updating your preferred name in CUNYFirst [here](#). Feel free to inform me on your preferred gender pronoun or if you do not have a pronoun. The gender-neutral bathrooms are located in the following places on campus: A117, A119, L303, L504, M436, T4 154, T8 108B, V211, and V212. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. For more information, please visit [Protecting the Rights of Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Students – CUNY Newswire](#)

c. Courtesy

Students must treat each other with respect. **All opinions must be backed up by evidence from reputable academic sources.** Some of the topics we will cover may be challenging or troubling (as well as exciting and empowering) for different students because of their past experiences. If you anticipate or are experiencing any such difficulties with course materials or assignments, please email me as soon as possible so I can help best support you.

4. Brightspace, Email, Computers & Tech Support

a. Brightspace

- i. Our class will happen on the Brightspace

b. Email

I will communicate with you as a group and also individually through your KCC email. Please be sure you regularly check this email or forward your KCC email to another address. You can update your preferred email in CUNYFirst using [these instructions](#).

c. Computer Reservations, Loaner Laptops, and WiFi

The work you do for this class will be done online. The work will be much easier (and less frustrating) if you can do it on a computer, not a phone or tablet. You can reserve a computer and/or study room in which to do your online class work on campus (instructions are [here](#)). KCC also has loaner laptops available if you need one (instructions are [here](#)). If you are close to another CUNY campus, you can use the Eduroam wifi on your own device to do your work there (instructions are [here](#)).

d. **IT Helpdesk:** [IT Helpdesk](#) 718-368-6679 or helpdesk@kbcc.cuny.edu

5. Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is of the utmost importance- this is your learning, and you must be responsible for it. I am here to help in any way I can- if you find yourself tempted to engage in academic dishonesty for any reason, please discuss it with me, as there is likely a better option available. Nevertheless, cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be punished to the fullest extent possible, including academic and disciplinary sanctions (i.e. failure or suspension). Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, having other people do your coursework, buying prepackaged or custom answers to papers, tests, or assignments, using AI/chatbots to write your blogs/papers, and working with other students on class projects when not specifically permitted to do so. Keep in mind, if you can find a place to buy/generate a paper/answers on the Internet, your professors probably can find the same place, because we have the Internet too. Because it's important, I will repeat: the use of generative AI to create work for this class, or to do research for this class is not permitted. **You are spending your time, money, and/or financial aid to learn and improve your skills- do not cheat yourself of this opportunity by taking shortcuts.** In the end, your learning is what matters here, do not get in the way of your own success.

You may wish to familiarize yourself with the official KBCC [Academic Integrity](#) policy.

As a Kingsborough student, you are expected to be familiar with and to follow the KCC policies on academic integrity. As noted in the [KCC Student Handbook](#) "academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. Examples of Academic Dishonesty include cheating, plagiarism, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records."

Do your own work- [the use of generative AI](#) is strictly prohibited in this class.

6. Most importantly, have fun. Learning is fun, engaging with new ideas is fun. Sometimes we are so focused on our end goals that we lose sight of the process. Enjoy your time engaging with these materials and thinking critically about gender in society.

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