Gender, Philosophy and Popular Culture

- Module outline/Assignments
- Gender theories
- Gender fluidity/Goffman/Butler
- Gendered media and subject positions
- Consuming gendered popular culture
  - Encoding/decoding
- Cartesian philosophy, gender and the body
- Care Ethics
- Why the workshops
Popular Culture

- Popular culture and the media linked
- How gender is produced, represented and consumed in popular culture
  - Including the media
- Philosophical reasons for why certain ideologies dominate
  - How we respond to gendered representations in media/popular culture
Gender, social construction and performance

- Socially constructed categories of masculine and feminine

One becomes a man or woman

- Simone de Beauvoir (1949)

- Gender as something we ‘do’

- Plato – rational, courageous and appetitive
Understanding Gender Identity

Non-Essentialist, Fluid gender Identities

Essentialist, Fixed Gender Identity

Where are you?
# Gender Fluidity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cisgender</td>
<td>Matches the sex assigned at birth and conforms to gender identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genderqueer</td>
<td>does not subscribe to gender conventions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>Identity does not correspond with sex assigned at birth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender fluid</td>
<td>Sometimes identifies more as male / more as female</td>
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Goffman: Performance

- Goffman (1959): masculinity and femininity are gender roles which we perform
- We act through gender displays
- Perform our gender
- But we don’t freely choose – social structures may lead us to conform
Butler: Performativity

- Gender is the outcome of performativity
- Scripts of masculinity and femininity which we continually re-enact
- Popular culture/media teach us how to do masculinity and femininity e.g. how toys are marketed
- The act of consuming or being a fan is performative
Gendered Media

- Issues/topics as women’s or men’s interests
  - Codes and conventions understood in particular genres
- Pressure to invest in traditional masculinity and femininity
- Modleski (1982) and ideal mother
- Power involved in these positions
Encoding/Decoding

- Producer encodes meaning
- Dominant preferred
- Negotiated
- Oppositional

Encoding and Decoding
Stuart Hall’s Communication Theory

- Sender (encoding)
- Receiver (decoding)
- Physical Context
- Cultural Context
- Roles in Society
- NOISE
- Education
- Gender
- Ethics
- Receiver (decoding)
Criticisms

- Assumes ONE preferred meaning
- Does not allow for the diverse media institutions
- Sub categories e.g. celebratory, compliant, hostile, apologetic, deferential, defensive, vulnerable, analytical, ironic etc.
- Encoding/Decoding American Idol
The Consumer

- Theories assume a consumer
  - Individual who reads/views/listens to a media text in an active way
- Casual readers who browse?
- Other activities at the same time
- Collective consumption
  - Gender has been found to be important in this
  - Social relations e.g. seeing a film which friends choose
Why Philosophy and Gender

- Cartesian approach – reason enables us to gain knowledge
- Dualism
- Feminists reject these Cartesian assumptions
- Knowledge is socially situated
- The body = irrelevant to philosophy
- Senses mislead us
- Feminist philosophy = embodiment is relevant
- Caring connection with others
Care Ethics

- Traditional philosophy = gender is irrelevant for knowledge
- Men are rational, women are emotional
- Reinforces gender binaries
- Kuhn (1962), Foucault – Knowledge reflects the interests of its knowers
- Is reason itself gendered
- What standpoint are you writing from?
Why the Workshops

- When you do something practical it moves into your longer term memory.
- You challenge your (and my) own assumptions. This did happen last year!
- Skills: Being out of our comfort zone and writing/reflecting on this afterwards (useful for interviews)
- Theory needs to be balanced with these real life situations –
- Challenging everyday assumptions in a real setting.
- It stimulates deeper learning
Summary

- Gender, philosophy and popular culture
- Social construction versus essentialism
- Pressures to conform
  - Whether ideologies/discourses in popular culture
  - Social structures
- Goffman/Butler in relation to performance/performativity and gender
- Consuming Popular Culture/Media
- Cartesian Philosophy and Care Ethics
- Why the workshops
References

- Milestone, K. & Meyer, A. (2012) Gender and Popular Culture. Cambridge, Polity. (not in library but a journal article by these authors is available)