

Fields of Interest Assessment Exercise

1. Emerging Fields of Interest

Women's and Gender Research Topics

- Women and poverty/homelessness
e.g. -demographic of women in DTES
- Women and reproductive health & rights
e.g. -limited access to abortion in some eastern Canada provinces
-cultural comparisons/Sex-selective abortions
- Women and the double workload (work and motherhood)
- Women and incarceration (what factors lead to incarceration)
- Women as the subordinate gender/Women as sexual objects
- Gender-based violence/violence against women
- Toxic masculinity and health/male anxieties
e.g. -negative gender archetypes across cultures and physical and psychological effects
-living up to the conventional masculine image
- Gender prejudices across the globe (culturally embedded misogyny and misandry)

2. List of courses (current or completed) related to your emerging field(s) of interest

Term: Fall 2016

ANTH 121 Introduction to Social Anthropology with Maureen Bracewell

In this course, I was introduced to a wide variety of cultural responses to the challenges of human life, such as: surviving and thriving in particular environments, communicating ideas and beliefs, organizing societies, and finding creative outlets for expression. This course applies to my emerging field of interests by providing the core concepts and methods of social anthropology, which is integral to any cross-cultural comparisons/perspectives I may undertake in my research.

GEOG 100 Human Geography: People, Places and Cultures with Kirsten McIlveen

In this course, we examined the relationships and interactions people have with their environments and cultures, across space and place. This course applies to my emerging fields of interests by providing a basic understanding for the diffusion of ideas. As well, this course provided a basis for the comparing and contrasting of cultures different to our own, which will be relevant in any cross-cultural analysis in my research, especially, how and why different mentalities prevail and spread in different culture areas.

Term: Spring 2017

WGST 250 Gender and Popular Culture with Maureen Bracewell

In this course, we used the feminist lens to examine how popular culture functions to reinforce social norms concerning gender roles and identities. This course first inspired my interest in cross-cultural masculinities, and the negative impacts of gender roles. This course applies to my emerging fields of interest by providing knowledge on many women's and gender studies terminologies and theories, as well as making me aware of many societal pressures and gender oppressions reinforced in Western media.

Term: Fall 2017

WGST 222 Cross-Cultural Perspectives with Maureen Bracewell

This course used an anthropological perspective to explore: gender diversity across cultures; the social and cultural construction of gender categories and social roles; variations in norms and beliefs concerning sex and gender; and, the diverse ways in which gender intersects with other areas of culture such as work, family life, language, religion, and art. This course applies most to my emerging fields of interest, because it involves researching cross-cultural perspectives on gender and gender roles.

PSYC 100 Introduction to Psychology I with Sally Walters (*taken online*)

In this course, I was introduced to the major concepts and approaches necessary to an understanding of human behaviour from a psychological perspective. Especially interesting to

me, and relevant to my emerging fields or interest were the modules on: biological basis of behaviour (nature vs. nurture); personality (how previous experiences influence how we think and act); how feelings of control can influence happiness and health; and, how each of these factors can influence our well-being and could contribute to psychological disorders. When applied to specific gendered

Term: Spring 2018

FILM 323 Queer Cinema with Ki Wight

In this course, I viewed, analyzed, and critiqued cross-culture queer-cinema, through the lens of feminist theory and queer theory. This course relates to my fields of interests by furthering my knowledge of feminist theory to include LGBTQ2+ intersectionality. As well, this course expanded my recognition of hegemonic representations in culture and media, and provided examples of how people are overcoming these norms in society.

3. List of Extra-Curricular Experiences Related to Your Emerging Field(s)

I. Volunteer at Aunt Leah's Place organization (Spring/Summer 2017)

Aunt Leah's Place helps prevent children in foster care from becoming homeless, and mothers in need from losing custody of their children. I volunteered for Aunt Leah's Place because I wanted to become involved with an organization who cater directly to women and children in Vancouver. The motives of this organization align with my emerging fields of interest, being that one of the primary focuses is the wellbeing of vulnerable women in our society.

II. Circumstances of Early Life

Although not an "extra-curricular experience", the most profound influence on my emerging fields of interest has been growing up in a single-parent family raised by my mother. My mother is a landed-immigrant in Canada, and we have no other family in the country. Because of this, I have grown up knowing how difficult it can be for single mother to raise a child without a proper support system (whether it be family, friends, or professional). I recognize the privilege my mother and I were born into and how that has helped our lives in

many ways, and how different and difficult our situation might have been otherwise. It is because of these circumstances that many of my emerging fields of interest relate directly to the well-being and rights of women, especially, women in vulnerable situations.

The circumstances of my upbringing also relate to my interest in masculinities. Overwhelmingly the adults in my life when I was growing up were divorced women with children. This dynamic resulted in conversations about the actions of men (usually negative), but ignored any potential reasons behind these actions. Because of this, I am interested in the cultural and societal pressures and norms experienced and embodied by men, and the effects of hegemonic models of masculinity.

4. Signature Work Analysis

I. Ad Analysis for WGST 250: Pop Culture and Gender with Maureen Bracewell

One piece of academic work that is representative of my emerging fields of interest is my analysis of hegemonic masculinity, privilege, and sexual objectification in Suit Supply advertisements, completed for my final WGST 250 project. This analysis essay required the selection of, and analysis of, an artifact of popular culture as it relates to the course material. In this essay, I analyze the male gaze present in three Suitsupply advertisements using feminist theory. This essay argues that “the ‘Shameless’ campaign, marketed by Suitsupply in 2010, does more to promote hegemonic masculinity, superordinate privilege, and the sexual oppression of women than it does the products being advertised.”

To produce this analysis, I familiarized myself with some of the key course concepts by way of reviewing class notes and reading various academic journal articles. In my final work, I referenced to nine academic journal articles on the topics of feminism, hegemonic masculinity, privilege, and sex and violence in media. The choice of feminist themes in my essay reflect my emerging fields of interest, especially: toxic masculinity, gender-based violence, and women as sexual objects.

This assignment shaped my fields of research interests by expanding my knowledge on feminist theory, leading to a greater curiosity for related topics under the feminist theory umbrella. The recognition of how prominent and accepted the objectification of female bodies is in Western patriarchal society, as exemplified by these advertisements, further inspired my passion for gender equality. As well, analyzing the Western archetypical model of masculinity present in these advertisements furthered my interest in masculinities.

II. Term Paper for Film 323: Queer Cinema with Ki Wight

A second piece of academic work that is representative of my emerging fields of interest is my term paper for Film 323: Queer Cinema, written in April 2017. This research essay is titled: "What really happened between Julio and Tenoch?" *Masculinity, Homosexuality, and Your Mama Too.*' The essay is based on the coming-of-age film by director Alfonso Cuarón, *Y tu mamá también* [sic] (translated: *And your mama too*), and discusses the film as a representation of the queer cinema genre and examines aspects of the characters' masculinities. The thesis of my essay reads: "At the time of the film's release, Meers described the discourse around the film's narrative as "the hottest queer cinephile debate since New Queer Cinema polarized gay audiences a decade ago. What really happened between Julio and Tenoch?" (Meers 37) This essay will attempt to answer this question posed by Meers, using the gender belief system, hegemonic masculinity, and Mexican *machismo* to explain homosexuality and the associated expressions of shame and denial by Julio and Tenoch in *Y tu mamá también.*"

The term paper assignment required a 1500-2500 word academic essay based on a topic of personal interest related to the course material. I chose to analyze the representations and expressions of masculinity within an international queer cinema film. This choice of essay topic reflects my ongoing interest in masculinity, especially: the way individuals embody masculinity, challenge hegemonic norms, and what effects this embodiment has on the person. As well, my choice of analyzing an international queer cinema film reflects my interest in cross-cultural comparisons.

My self-guided research for this essay consisted of reading and referencing to eighteen academic journal articles on the topics of hegemonic masculinity, *machismo* (the hegemonic masculinity form in Mexico), and gender (queer theory). The research I undertook for this term paper has furthered my interest in cross-cultural comparisons of masculinity (e.g., different cultural models of masculinity), and how the embodiment of, or challenging of, masculinity can affect the individual. This term paper assignment broadened my interests and insights to include the intersectionality of LGBTQ2+ into the experiences of how individuals manage hegemonic masculinity. As well, because much of my research referenced the experiences of both hetero- and homosexual men in Mexico, this term paper assignment has furthered my ability to impartially examine cross-cultural perspectives.

5. Sample Research Projects

I. One line of investigation for my upcoming Tutorials might look at women (including all individuals who identify as women) in the Downtown Eastside from a Geography perspective. I am particularly interested in the general question: “How and why do women come to live in the DTES?” This Tutorial might cover my fields of interest including women and poverty/homelessness; women and incarceration; women as sexual objects; and gender-based violence. Through this tutorial, I hope to garner an understanding of the general demographics of women in this area, including, but not limited to: age and ethnicity, including country of origin and citizenship; current living situation; previous socioeconomic status; previous and current employment status; mental and physical health history and current condition(s); criminal record and arrest history; and previous and current marital status. This tutorial would consist of researching academic journal articles specific to this demographic, and to the area; archival research; case study review; and comparing and contrasting statistics and information published by government agencies against those published by local non-profit organizations. As well, I would like to incorporate the analysis of photographs representative of life in the DTES into my tutorial syllabus – taken with consent, and or by individuals residing in the DTES. To formulate reflection essay(s) for this Tutorial, I would utilize information learned throughout

the term, and incorporate concepts learned in WGST courses (especially, feminist theory on privilege).

II. Another possible line of investigation for my upcoming Tutorials might look at toxic masculinities in media, either from a Women's and Gender Studies perspective or a Film perspective. This tutorial would investigate forms of media including film, television, and music to research how different media forms portray masculinity; the prevalence of toxic masculinity representation; how toxic masculinity affects form or genre of media (for example, do films portraying toxic masculinity target male audiences?); and, if and how toxic masculinities in media influence perception and behaviour. This tutorial would consist mainly of first-hand media analysis. This analysis will be supported by researching academic journal articles on the topics of toxic masculinity and toxic masculinity in media; correlational studies between violence in media and violent behaviours; and literature-based research on Feminist Theory. For this tutorial, I would like to produce a montage about toxic masculinity in media with the (working) title 'Be a Man.' This montage will begin with representations of toxic masculinity in media. After this, the montage will display images/scenes of men tackling feelings of inadequacy. The montage will finish with positive representations of how one might choose to embody masculinity – this might include visuals of men standing up against acts of toxic masculinity. The point of this montage will be to reinforce the notion that there is no one right way to *be a man*, despite societal and cultural pressures, aside from behaving with decency and respect for yourself and for those around you.