

Gender & Sexuality Final Paper Assignments

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Overview

These assignments build on each other, culminating in your final essay at the end of the term. Over the term you will interview someone you know centering their gender and/or sexuality experiences. These individual assignments are meant to operationalize the steps of a writing a paper.

1. Plan your project
2. Draft interview questions
3. Search the library for relevant research
4. Schedule and conduct your interview
5. Summarize and reflect on the interview
6. Submit an outline of your final paper
7. Analyze and write your paper
8. Submit a draft for peer review
9. Submit a final product

Planning your project

To start off you will develop an idea and plan for your project. While this can change during the term, I recommend trying to stick with your initial plan so as to not have to duplicate work. This assignment requires that you conduct one interview on a topic relevant to this course. You want to interview someone with an identity and experiences that will give you rich information about the topic.

You will identify three people to potentially interview and why you would like to interview them. You will also identify the time frame you will interview them, taking into consideration the time constraints of the course schedule, your schedule, and your potential interviewee's schedule. You will write interview questions at this stage under the assumption your top interviewee subject is available and willing to talk about what you are interested in learning more about. If your first interviewee subject is not available you may need to edit your questions.

You will likely only need 3-5 open-ended questions relevant to your topic with another 3-5 questions to give you background about the interview subject. Do not take for granted the background of the participant if you know them, ask them to share what they find is relevant about them to understand their experiences.

Have questions that provide background about the participant's gender and sexuality.

Other questions should center on either a social issue or resilience/resistance to a social issue. What kinds of experiences have they had? What kind of knowledge do they have? How do they feel about their experiences?

Always end an interview with an open-ended question, do you have any more thoughts that you want to share that we didn't cover?

You will turn in your 6-10 interview questions.

Example interview questions

How do identify your gender?

How do you identify your sexuality?

What was the process of changing your gender marker like?

How did you learn how to change your name?

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What are your thoughts or feelings more generally given that it's easier to change one's name and gender legally?

What is difficult about being [nonbinary]?

Article search

Before you conduct your interview, you will do some research on the library website to learn the social context for the topic(s) you are interested in exploring with your interview.

Use the library website to find 3 peer-reviewed articles related to the topic you interview someone about. You will complete and turn in the table in step 3 below for this assignment. These articles will also be used as sources for your final paper. We will start this assignment in class, but will need to complete it on your own.

Step 1: Search and collect articles

Come up with at least 3 different key words or sets of key words to see what different results you encounter. Limit your search time frame to the last 5 years. Limit your results to Peer Reviewed Articles. How many results come up? Take notes about the usefulness of the term and anything else that strikes you about the search results.

If you have limited results or if it otherwise makes sense (like you want to talk about something pre-covid) then you may extend your search time frame, start incrementally by extending the time frame to the past 7 years then the past 10, etc.). Essentially we are looking for current discussions, so we start off with more constrained search parameters and then extend them if we do not find enough content.

Search Term(s)	Number of results	Notes

Step 2: Review and refine your article selection

Review the titles first, and then read the abstract to verify if an article seems like it will be a good fit for you to understand wider social contexts for your interview topic. When you are reading these articles later, you may find that the article doesn't fit for your work, if that is the case you may need to do a new search at that time.

Step 3: Skim your articles and extract key information

Skim the articles (read the introduction and discussion and conclusion); and from the methods fill in the table to the best of your ability. See the example for the level of detail needed. This kind of note taking can be useful for you to quickly refer back to key qualities about a research article.

Author (year) Title	Methods	Population and/or data source	Theory used	Key points

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<p><i>Blum, Linda (2007) Mother-Blame in the Prozac Nation: Raising Kids with Invisible Disabilities</i></p>	<p><i>Semi-structured in-depth interviews & fieldwork</i></p>	<p><i>Mothers raising children with invisible disabilities (primarily attention disorders)</i></p>	<p><i>mother-valor/mother-blame</i> <i>Lareau argues that good “parenting” has become a project of “concerted cultivation”</i></p>	<p><i>-Mothers feel the stigma of perceived blame for their child’s diagnosis</i> <i>-To combat stigma, mothers engage in “relentless action” to cultivate their child’s potential</i> <i>-Mothers of children with invisible disabilities often become experts in “learning and teaching styles, health care organization, psychiatry, and psychopharmacology”</i> <i>–“scientific motherhood for the twenty-first century”</i></p>

We'll have some class time to work on this. But, if you have trouble finding articles, please schedule time to meet one-on-one to discuss your topic.

Schedule and conduct your interview

Your interview should last 30-45 minutes. You should tell the interview subject that this is for a class, and that their responses will be shared with me, and possibly discussed in the classroom for educational purposes only.

I recommend audio recording your interview if your interview subject agrees, otherwise you should take notes during the interview. If you have audio, you can copy down a few direct quotes from your participant, but you do not need to transcribe word-for-word. When the interview is complete, listen back to the audio and take notes summarizing the interviewees responses. If they say something that stands out to you as particularly powerful or meaningful, get that down word-for-word, but just jot down generalizations for other parts. When you do word-for-word quotes you do not have to include umms, uhs, like, so, etc. You want to be able to capture their words and how they say something, but to have it

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be readable. When you have a direct quote from the interview be sure to mark it with quotation marks, that way I know it is not you summarizing what they said, and you know that also. When you summarize something someone else says, that summary is filtered through your perspective, so knowing when you've interpreted something versus their direct words is key.

You will turn in your interview summary and quotes along with the following initial analysis.

Initial analysis

Answer the following questions as soon as possible after you complete your interview.

1. How have your values, attitudes and beliefs entered into this interview?
2. What similarities do you have with the participant?
3. What differences do you have with the participant?
4. How do you think your similarities influenced the interview?
5. How do you think your differences influenced the interview?
6. What stood out to you during the interview?
7. Did you have any challenges during the interview?

Submit your responses/reflections along with your interview summary and quotes.

Final essay – Outline

Draft an outline of your final paper. This should include the expected points you will make in your paper including what key terms you will use, what research findings demonstrate about the social context of your interview, key points from your interview, and your conclusions. I recommend starting to draft your introduction at this point as well. Be sure to identify 3-5 of the course materials in addition to your research that you will reference in your final paper.

Review the questions that should guide your writing to consider for organizing your paper.

Final essay draft for peer review

You will submit a completed paper for peer review. The paper should be 4-6 pages, double-spaced. Students will review each other's work, giving specific and clear feedback.

The following questions should guide your writing.

1. Describe what was the gender and/or sexuality experience that the person you interviewed shared with you?
2. Synthesize the results from the research articles from the article search assignment to provide broader context around the topic(s) presented in the interview.
3. What have we learned from the course materials to understand what may explain their experiences?
4. Applying what we've learned about gender and sexualities, what could make their experience better?

Writing Guidelines

Why do we have writing guidelines? Because as I read many papers it is helpful for me to have easy-to-read documents. It takes you a few minutes to get these settings correct, if I am doing this it can easily expand into a lot more work on top of creating all the assignments, preparing for discussion, and grading with feedback. It can also save me so much time if I don't need to ask for new files.

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1. All writing assignments should be submitted electronically. Be sure it is saved in a Word document (.docx). Do not submit your assignment as a link to Google docs (links to cloud docs introduce technical challenges with permissions), as a .pages file (my computer can't open these), or a .pdf (I want to be able to edit and comment on your work and can only do this with ease in Word).
2. Use a common font (Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri)
3. Use 11- or 12-point font size
4. Double space lines
5. Make sure to indent each new paragraph
6. Use default margins (typically 1 inch)
7. Remove assignment guidelines from your final work
8. Make sure to spell check your work – look out for words that may be spelled correctly but have a different meaning from what you are trying to say (things like weather and whether; there, their, they're; etc.)
9. Use in-text citations and include a bibliography page, but no need for a title page. Use APA or MLA citation style.

Do not go under the minimum page suggestions as you will likely not provide an adequate assignment. However, you can go over the suggested page limit. Page limits are meant to help give you a sense for how much you need to say to provide enough information while doing it in a clear and concise manner.

Peer Review Instructions

General Considerations in Peer Review

1. Before you even make your first comment, read the document all the way through.
2. Make sure you leave enough time for you to read through, respond, and for your peer to edit their document with your comments before any deadlines.
 - a. If you implement peer review on any future work (ie. essays or writing samples for grad school) this is important. Count back from your deadline, giving people 1-3 weeks for review, depending on the length of the writing.
 - b. You might be able to find peer review partners in your program or through professional associations.
3. Point out the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the document.
 - a. Include affirmations, compliments, and strengths of the paper. When you are doing this you are considering the authors feelings and you are letting them know what they did well.
 - b. This may include pointing out what you find interesting in their evidence.
4. Offer suggestions, not commands.
 - a. There are multiple ways to potentially address certain writing issues. If there is not enough evidence you may suggest an evidence source, but it is up to the author to decide whether to incorporate that source or another one.
5. Editorial comments should be appropriate and constructive. There is no need to be rude. Be respectful and considerate of the writer's feelings.
 - a. Critique ideas, evidence, flow, etc. not the author.
6. Be sure that your comments are clear and text-specific so that your peer will know what you are referring to (for example, terms such as "unclear" or "vague" are too general to be helpful).

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- a. Tell the author why you think something is unclear. Do you think that defining a term would be helpful? Or do you think an example would strengthen a statement?
7. As a reader, raise questions that cross your mind as you read, these may be points that may have not occurred to your peer author.
8. Try not to overwhelm your peer with too much commentary.
9. Be careful not to let your own opinions bias your review (for example, don't suggest that your peer completely rewrite the paper just because you don't agree with their point of view).
10. Reread your comments before passing them on to your peer. Make sure all your comments make sense and are easy to follow.
11. Avoid turning your peer's paper into your paper.

The Mechanics of Peer Review

There are multiple ways to provide your peer review. Depending on the purpose of the document and the status each of these may be utilized. Lists or Tables are good when you have multiple people providing feedback on a single document or when you are continuing to fine tune a paper while you are awaiting feedback. You can better collate suggestions to take into consideration if you have suggestions in separate documents. In these scenarios you do not have to do as much version checks to verify what you have in your document includes all the desired changes. If you are using a single person for peer review and will not make significant changes then track changes and comments can take less time and allows the author to "accept" or "reject" changes more quickly.

Track changes and Comments

In Microsoft Word

1. On the Review tab, go to Tracking and select Track Changes.
2. Highlight text or place your cursor after text, right click and select "New Comment."

In Google Docs

1. In the top right, if you don't see "Suggesting," click Editing and then Suggesting. If you don't see this option, ask the file owner to let you suggest changes.
2. Highlight text or place your cursor after text, right click and select "New Comment."

In Pages

1. Turn on tracking: Choose Edit > Track Changes (from the Edit menu at the top of your screen). If the review toolbar is showing above your document, you can also click Track Changes in the toolbar.
2. Select text or click where you want to add a comment, then click Comment in the toolbar.
3. If you make any suggestions for changes in language, make sure you include justification in a comment.

List

1. Create a numbered or lettered list (do not use bullets). Each number or letter should refer to a single point of feedback. Include specific feedback first, listed in the order that corresponds with appearance in the paper. Specify where in the paper that you are referring to (eg. Second paragraph, third sentence, it says, "xxxx."). After your specific feedback you can include more general feedback.
2. This is the format that is typical for journal articles where you typically write out a response to each point of feedback. However, for this class track changes and comments may be less labor and I would suggest using that.

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Table

1. Similar to making a list, you can make a table to organize your feedback. You would still have a column for a numbered or letters list, along with a column for where to find the original text, and a column for feedback, comments, or suggestions.

Peer Review Assignment

Step 1

Send or Share your Final Paper Draft with your assigned partner and open their document. Decide how you will provide feedback (track changes, list, table) and prepare a separate document or turn on the track changes feature.

Step 2

Read through the paper and provide feedback with the following questions in mind. You do not have to make specific notes on every question. These are meant to guide your reading and to focus your feedback. Thus, as you are reading keep the following points in mind:

1. Is the writing clear?
 - a. Do you have feedback on organization?
 - b. Is there a clear topic sentence and theme for each paragraph?
 - c. Does the writing flow?
 - d. Are there confusing words or phrases that you don't understand that are not explained?
 - e. Are there any minor copy-editing mistakes (spelling, punctuation, grammar)?
2. Is there enough evidence?
 - a. Is there enough specific data to explain and contextualize the interview?
 - b. Where could the evidence be stronger?
 - c. Are there any sources that are questionable?

When you are finished, save a copy of the document with comments. If you used track changes and comments save the file with your initials at the end of the filename. If you used a separate document save the document with a file name that mirrors the original document name with your initials. Send the feedback to the original author AND submit the feedback to the instructor via Canvas. If you used a separate document to keep track of your feedback submit the original text and the feedback together. If you used Pages or Google docs make sure to save any documents as .docx before submission.

Step 3

Read through the feedback provided by your peer reviewer and ask for any clarifying comments as needed. Spend time to think through the feedback. Write out your own response to each point of feedback, explain how you have addressed their feedback and submit this to the professor. Incorporate the edits and suggestions into your document when you turn the assignment in again in a couple weeks.

Final Thoughts on peer review

When you are working in your future classes and careers you'll need to communicate clearly to others and evaluate the validity of information and the effectiveness of processes. Peer review helps you to hone your own and others' communication, learning how to work in a way that is both professional and conscientious. You are becoming experts and will join communities where your expertise is valuable, learning peer review skills will help you to develop and grow reciprocal professional relationships. Peer review gives you an opportunity to think about and articulate what works and what does not work, which helps your own thinking and communication.

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Final essay

Your final essay should incorporate edits from the peer review and your own additional edits, reviewing your paper for additional common challenges like tense, punctuation, grammar, and formatting. You may need to make significant edits if you receive feedback that something is not clear enough.

Be sure to follow the writing guidelines specified above. You will be graded on your clarity, organization, incorporation/response to your peer feedback, your connections to the course materials and your research, and otherwise following the assignment guidelines.