

PSYC 320 - Psychology of Gender

Student Testimonials

Testimonial 1

Dear Future PSYC 320 Students,

Taking this course was one of my most positive experiences in my four years at UBC. As a Women's Studies major I am constantly learning about and discussing a variety of gender and inequality issues. PSYC 320 was an important addition to my studies because I was able to learn about these issues on a more day to day or real life basis.

So many different topics came up in the class and even more arose out of the discussion panels and teleconferences. Classmates brought up so many important issues, funny stories, and real life experiences that I hadn't considered, or I could identify with. To me, this gave the course a real credibility. Rather than backing up what we were learning with theories and reading research, the course material was validated every time someone would say "me too", or "this reminds me of something that happened with my family".

The teleconferences were also an important part of the course for me. I've taken quite a few distance education classes and you feel exactly that: distanced. In some courses you don't even know any of the other student's names or even hear mention that they exist. In this class however I feel as though we had a warm and supportive environment, coming out of my computer screen. The fact that we still are all a bit anonymous allowed us all to really open up about the gender issues we've discussed. Being able to hear everyone's voices just heightens the feeling of interaction and the idea that these are real people with real experiences, which I think is the most important thing I've taken away from this course. To me, nothing is as enriching or validating than hearing the voices of real people.

Testimonial 2

It has been a privilege to be part of your class. It really has made clear just how far we have come and how far we have yet to go to achieve gender equity. The structure of the course is incredible. It is a vibrant example of organismic learning in practice. I seem to recall asking what it would look like at the beginning of the course - thank you for enabling all of us to actually live it. The course has forced me to push my boundaries and comfort zone in a safe setting, with the result that I have a better understanding of who I am, why, and what still needs tweaking - no mean feat for a course. Of all of the courses I have ever taken, this is the one that has most personally affected how I think, feel and behave. It goes way beyond the more comfortable, familiar process of digesting and regurgitating information. The difficult days [okay, weeks] were more than amply compensated for by the feeling of empowerment, and yes,

anger. Never thought that I would be thankful for anger, but I am. The course has provided clarification for so many aspects of life that I am sorry that it is almost over. If I flunk the exam, can I take it over again???? Thank you for creating a magnificent life altering course. Your warmth, kindness and compassion shine through all of your encouraging comments. I will miss both of you!

Testimonial 3

Thank you for making this course such a pleasant, enriching, and rewarding experience. I learned a great deal, met (on-line) some very interesting people, and have come away from this course with more awareness, understanding and appreciation of our gender differences and similarities. I wanted to express my appreciation to you two for making this such a personal experience. I wonder if you 'wonder' about the personalities of your students since you've only 'met' them on-line and through their very revealing journals (as mine was). Must be a very interesting experience to know (students) so well through their papers and yet not have met them. How does that feel?

Testimonial 4

Thank you! I thoroughly enjoyed this class. Definitely my favourite Psych course that I have taken. I am a Psych major so I've taken quite a few. I think I learned a lot from this course too and it made me more aware of many things.

Testimonial 5

Through the Looking Glass (Brightly)

Gender issues, problems and inequalities surround us. In one of my journals, I described several 'snapshots' I have in my head about such gender inequalities. These snapshots include vivid scenes or incidences I have witnessed in my travels, and in my life. I have many such snapshots in my memory album – of inequalities, of

social injustices and of inequalities in power, as does everyone. One does not need to take a course on gender to realize, for instance, how little women, in particular, are valued in countries like China, India and Russia. Snapshots such as the ones I've witnessed evoke emotion, sadness and tears in all but the hardest of hearts. However, in taking a gender course such as this one, those snapshots are brought into sharper focus; the inequalities become more vivid; and the plight of women, in particular, remains in the forefront. In the past I would run the snapshots in my head and feel the sadness, the tears, and the empathy for women and children who are relegated to such a life. It is easy however, to stop bringing those snapshots to the forefront; it is easy to evoke them less and less until they eventually dim and fade from memory just like a real snapshot does. I never want that to happen. Taking this gender course has helped me to continue to keep those snapshots in the forefront but with a different bent; I now interpret, question and analyze

these snapshots in more detail. I bring, to these snapshots, the “why” and the “how” and the “what can be done about it”. That is not to say that I have come up with solutions. I’m still questioning and analyzing, but my awareness of the incredible inequalities that exist has increased sharply. I have done a lot more reading on this subject. I still don’t know how this information will help in searching for solutions to very complex issues, but I do know that knowledge, information and awareness are good starting points, and this gender course has helped me immensely in that path.

I know I’ve traveled a long, more enlightened road to gender awareness in the last five months. The journey has included the readings, naturally. But more importantly, the journey has taken me into the minds of other people who have differing opinions and beliefs about gender. These varied opinions have enriched my own thoughts about gender, and has contributed to my overall understanding of gender issues. By sharing ideas, opinions and beliefs about gender, we are all raising our awareness. This course has been the perfect medium for that especially since it is an on-line course. I feel that the anonymity it offers allows participants to be freer in voicing their opinions, and hence one gets a truer perspective of what is ‘out there’, and one gains a better insight into how other people think. In reading about other people’s opinions, I’ve become more positively influenced. As a result, I have begun to look at everything with new lenses. Sharper lenses. More in focus lenses. More gender aware lenses.

Testimonial 6

I thoroughly enjoyed my time with everyone from this course. I was very happy to see a psychology of gender course, and thought this course would benefit me. I was right! Interacting with all the other students online was so helpful and beneficial to me. It was wonderful to hear other people's thoughts, and being able to look at things from someone else's perspective, aided in a deeper understanding than I would of had if it was just a traditional classroom setting. I was especially exited about this course offering both a male and female subject matter. This is a great course, it was interesting, educational and a pleasure to be part of. I would recommend this course to anyone who is interested to learn more about gender.

Testimonial 7

Hello Future Students,

Prior to starting Psych 320, I really thought that as a mature student (returning after twenty years) I had a strong connection with the way in which gender and I as a gendered being, contributed to my personal world and the world as a whole. WOW, was I wrong!

I do think that I was in tune as far as knowing where I stood on the subject but

soon found that I actually had no clue why or how I got to be the gendered being I am. Although I was aware that I have always felt that individuals should be treated as equals and given the same opportunities as others, I didn't actually know much at all about the study of gender! Hence, I am still working on it and expect it to be a life long process.

Be aware that it can be a very frustrating and at times, upsetting process. When faced with the reality of some of the power struggles that should really not be in existence, the entrenched, outdated beliefs that still hold such undeserved power, let alone encourage the oppression that is still very much a part of even our western society. It is shocking! So much work to be done... we all must be ready to make changes and lead by example for our children and students if we are to make a difference.

When you hear others talking about how "...men do..." and "...women do...", remember that it may not be all men or all women and ask yourself whether you can really lump all males or all females in the same group or whether this is just another stereotypical event that is passed on and empowered by repetitive unchallenged word of mouth, lacking actual fact.

I would never have developed the interest in this course as I have, had it not been for its unique design, complimented by the way it was directed and delivered. I have thoroughly enjoyed the positive interaction between students and instructors, especially the open sharing that has gone on throughout our time as a class together.

Enjoy this most rewarding opportunity and Good Luck!

Testimonial 8

Dear Future Students of Psychology 320,

Looking back at what I originally thought this course would be and where I have come to now that this course is winding down, I can see that I was so wrong and so right at the same time. If I were to summarise this course, I would have to say that it is a roller-coaster ride of exploration and confrontation that will greet you at the most unexpected corners of your conceptualisation of gender. That is, of course, if you are up to the task.

From a purely academic perspective, the readings and discussions resulted in a total debunking of myths that I held so dear to my identity as a woman and a person. And I didn't even know that they were so dear! Conversely, where I expected my opinions to change or to experience the most growth didn't come to fruition...either I knew more than I thought, or I was still reeling from my 'aha!' moments. Of course, hindsight is 20/20 and it's only now at the end of this course that I can see how everything falls together.

One of my biggest changes is that I originally saw the social forces at work as a sort of 'big brother' that brainwashed us, when in fact, these forces are very close to home and they lack malicious intent to conform our identities, as I had thought. Gender sits with me a lot differently and it will be an ongoing process

to digest all that I have learned.

In my self-exploration and discussion with other students, I was able to process my anger and confusion and temper it with the fact that these are views of the individual. Putting it more bluntly, I have had very different experiences with gender than other students, and I am amazed that they can have such radically different views. I think that is very important to keep in mind: we are all affected by 'genderisation', but we are not affected equally.

Enjoy!

Testimonial 9

Hello Future Psych 320 students! I hands down recommend this course to you for I can think of no way that doing so wouldn't change, at least a little bit, your current thinking processes and ideologies in terms of your own gendered identities. To be honest with everyone - there have been psychology classes I have taken where I merely go through the motions, do the readings and I never look back at any of the material once the exam is over - they were merely for credit = I'm sure you ALL know what I'm talking about :) = However, that will not happen with this course, guaranteed. Consciously or not, you will begin to analyse, interpret and evaluate the world around you in terms of society's stamp on gender, as well as your own, much more than you would had you not been challenged by some of the readings and discussions abundant in this course.

I also recommend the online version! I had never taken a DE&T class before and, to free up my schedule I decided I would give one a try. Another bonus of the online version is that I believe I was able to access richer and more personal information from my fellow classmates - which is where the majority of your learning actually comes from! – since, due to the fact that you are faceless and anonymous, you have the courage to discuss and reveal personal insights you never would have had the guts to in a classroom. This becomes a very personal and intense course at times and, ironically, you find yourself closer to your fellow students than you imagined you could be through a computer screen. Challenge yourself and do enroll in this course - It has been one of my favorites and I know the knowledge and insight I have gained from it will not evade me as soon as the exam is over! This course is bound to stick with me for the long run, and for that I am grateful... May your experiences be as rewarding as mine was, and good luck to all!

Testimonial 10

This is a letter to future students of this course: Before I began this course, my eyes were closed to certain issues that concern me and every other human being. I did have a vague idea of the inequalities, and gender issues in the back of my head somewhere, but I did not consciously make any real effort to help change the situation, to make others around me aware. This course has helped me take action, has made me see that there are other people that share the same ideas as me, that are also struggling with similar personal, societal, and global problems. Thanks to the teleconferences and the discussion forums, I

have been privileged to hear/read stories of sorrow and happiness. I learned about the strength of a woman and gentleness of a man. I learned about different cultural, and personal views concerning gender, and not only.

The idea of journal entries did not excite me at first to be quite honest. However, now, I am really glad to have had that experience. I was never a person who liked to share her problems and I rather listened to others. Writing the journal has helped me deal with some issues that were never fully resolved, it has helped me explore my inner strengths and weaknesses further. So don't be scared guys!!! It's great (-: I would like to thank the instructors for their incredible dedication. Their knowledge has enriched my life forever, and I will pass it forward! I would also like to thank all my classmates for their honesty and willingness to learn and share)
Good luck to future students. Good choice!

Testimonial 11

Dear student,

This course is unlike many other courses that I have taken in the past. Through a combined approach of studying the material and having an opportunity to interact with others, sharing your ideas, thoughts, feelings and experiences, you will realize that gender shapes and influences every and all aspects of our lives. My understanding of the processes of gender socialization and the extent to which societal Agents of Socialization mould us into conforming or dis-conforming to gender “ideals” was the most valuable change, for I am a parent and wish my children to be free of stereotypes and rigid structures that prescribe individual males and females to be different while they are so much the same.

The process of this course was not easy for me – at times I felt anger and disappointment. These feelings arose when I examined the issues of power in our society, who shares this power and abuses it often. Issues of inequality, unequal opportunities, treatment and oppression of women will tell you that we need change in our society. You will realize that this change will not be easy to accomplish, for the starting point of this change lies within us, in the system of our own thinking and cognitive schemas of the world that have been communicated, taught and instilled into us through our own development.

Good Luck!

Testimonial 12

When I began this course I came in with an open mind. I also was not completely ignorant of many of the issues that were discussed in the course. With that said, I still learned a great deal from this course about gender issues in society, in others taking the course, and in myself. I could summarize all of what I can recall learning in this course, but that would be boring! Instead, I will focus on a couple of what I take to be the most important outcomes of this

course.

First, through the process of journaling my thoughts on gender-related issues, I gained greater insight into myself. By culling memories and events from my childhood and adolescence looking for evidence of gender socialization, I gained a richer sense of self through developing a greater understanding of my past. The kind of self-knowledge I achieved in this course has helped me to more clearly understand why I did, thought, and felt certain (sometimes bizarre) things over the years. Journaling enabled me to gain insight into the way that I previously and currently experience the world, and that is, to say the least, pretty neat.

Perhaps more importantly, the insight gained through this course will help me to have a greater sense of independence and autonomy of action now and in the future. Genderization helps to determine our actions. By understanding how genderization determines our actions we then suddenly seem to have more choice in life. How valuable is that? Priceless.

Finally, through participating in the online discussion forums, I developed a strong sense of hope in the possibilities of positive change for the future—change in the direction of greater equality among people regardless of gender. My optimism results from reading the many extremely intelligent comments and questions from my mostly female classmates. The voices in the forums and in the teleconferences were filled with passion, confidence, and in some cases wisdom. The fact that there are such amazing women out there of varying ages and backgrounds makes me think that changes in society, however slow, are happening and will continue to happen. That there were such liberal-minded men in the course was also quite heartening.

I can hardly think of better things to get out of a course than a greater sense of personal freedom of thought and of action, and a greater sense of hope for the future of society. Needless to say, I highly recommend this course to others and will continue to do so in the future.

P.S. This has not only been the best distance course I've taken, but it has been one of the best (although one of the more time consuming!) courses that I've ever taken.

Testimonial 13

Hi there reader!!!!

It is an honor to write this letter as it is so valuable to me to be able to share my experience in this... probably my most memorable class.

It has been a really intense journey of self discovery and discovery about how the concept of gender is so much bigger and pervasive than I'd ever imagined. I also discovered that it has effected me in so many ways, as part of what has been so brilliant about this course for me is that with the material we are encouraged to share our "personal" and "social" observations. That makes understanding these concepts so real, interesting and relevant.

It was a struggle for me to “open up” through the journaling and discussion boards, but when I took the risk and started exploring really honestly and deeply it became a transformation for me, unlike any experience I have had in University. I found through all the material, the texts and online that I would become enraged and depressed at some of the brutal realities people are subjected to under the “gender flag.” Many times I cried reading stories and learning things that made me feel like I was a part of something bigger.

The Kilmarten text has been the source of much personal and scholastic information for me. I love the Phenomenological perspective and plan to lend the book to all of the men in my life with the hope that they can heal some of the pain and scars of the institution of “manhood”. My absolute favorite part of the course material, which I have added to my academic and professional arsenal, was the paradigms of knowing...once I tried out that tool of exploring through the two realms of analysis, my creativity and energy for school and other subjects has been amazing!!!! I have thought up dozens of research ideas and future areas to study through the “marriage” of these two realms.

The Crawford and Unger text is very real and alive and dynamic, I know I will be re-reading it and referring to it for years to come. My struggle in this course has been keeping up to the discussion boards and trying to think of interesting postings as there have been so many wonderful heart felt contributions from so many smart people, I really had to “kick it up a notch”. My other struggle was to keep on schedule because I began the course a month later than a lot of the other students, and would have liked to be more immersed and have done more analysis. I think I have a mild addiction, almost because it was such a wonderful experience to have people “listen” to your contribution and be able to safely share “truths.” I have never experienced that before. I will miss it!!!!

The instructors, Jessica and Evelyn are very special human beings. I am personally indebted to them for putting this course together and for encouraging me academically and personally. Their wisdom, kindness and brilliance has honestly changed me. I am inspired and empoweredI am literally tearing up at the thought of having to end this course...I have gained so much. My unsolicited advice would be to open your heart and mind to this course and its teachers, I guarantee you will grow...it will be painful at times as most growing experiences are....but I feel like I have gone through a metamorphosis ...come out of a cocoon and now have new wings, don't be afraid to find yours!!!! Good luck and happy flying!!!