

“AWESOME CLASS!”

—ANONYMOUS FORMER STUDENT

“DR. GRAHAM ROCKS, DUDE!”

—ANONYMOUS FORMER STUDENT



ENGL 4522
LANGUAGE AND GENDER
Dr. Sage Graham
TR 1:00 – 2:25 -- Fall 2018



Language is ever-present in our daily lives and plays a critical role in how we see our world and the others around us. In this course, we’ll explore how gender affects the ways we communicate in our daily interactions. Looking at a variety of settings, we’ll analyze spoken and written language to determine how men and women are perceived differently (and act differently) when communicating with others. Some questions we might explore are:

- How do you expect men and women to communicate? Do you think men and women communicate differently?
- Have you ever had a conversation where you felt like someone of the opposite sex just wasn’t understanding what you were saying?
- Do you think women are gossip-y? Are men uncommunicative? Do men not communicate what they’re feeling while women do it too much?
- How are men and women portrayed differently on TV? Corporate websites? In literature? What about movies? Advertising?
- How do we see ‘strong’ men versus ‘strong’ women? How do female vs. male ‘superheroes’ talk, for example? Or male/female heroes/heroines in books or on TV?
- How do men and women communicate differently in conversation?
- What kinds of words do we use every day to mark someone’s gender? We have to say *male* nurse, for example, because the presumption is that nurses are female. We used to say *firemen*, but now we say *firefighters* as that profession has changed. Do you say ‘policeman’ and ‘policewoman’ or do you say ‘police officer’ or ‘law enforcement officer’?
- How does swearing intersect with gender? Do b*tches always have to be female?
- Do women swear as much as men? How are they seen if they do?

These are just some of the topics we’ll explore this semester. The course is designed to allow students the opportunity to choose a focus that matches their interests and/or specialty area(s). Some students might want to examine male and female behaviors in online gaming, some might explore medical practice web pages; others might investigate how men and women are characterized in literary texts; others (creative writers, for example), might look at their own work in light of how they portray particular types of characters to achieve specific effects – so many options, so little time!!!!