

INTERSECTIONALITY: Multiple Inequalities

Professor Diana Khor

This seminar meets for two consecutive periods every week on Monday (Periods 4 & 5).

GOALS

“Intersectionality” is a cutting-edge approach to theory and research which focuses on how different inequalities relate to — “intersect” with — one another. The approach is used not only in academic circles, but also in policies and court decisions that affect the lives of “real people”.

The main goal of this seminar is to help you become more sensitive to issues of inequality related to race, class, gender and sexuality, nationality, and so on, and expose you to the main theoretical and empirical works in the growing and interdisciplinary field. Another goal is to develop your skills in social research, discussion, presentation, and critical reading and writing. You will learn not only to understand academic writings or the process of research, but also to evaluate (i.e. critique) ideas and research. More importantly, you will acquire skills in thinking, analysis, presentation, discussion and writing that you can use for life, whatever your career paths.

The seminar will take primarily a sociological perspective. However, since intersectionality is a cross-discipline field of research and theory, you are welcome to bring in other perspectives to enrich the seminar.

WHAT WE ACTUALLY DO IN THE SEMINAR: Research and writing, reading and discussion, and presentation.

Individual Research and Writing

Third year: In the spring semester, think of a topic, search for relevant readings, and start reading. In the fall semester, continue to read, sharpen the focus, write up a substantial literature review and research proposal.

Fourth year: Continue to read, conduct research, and finish writing a research paper.

Students are guided in their research both in class (so that seminar members can help each other out) and also through individual consultations with me.

Some students conduct empirical research (collecting their own data) while others rely on existing research. Students’ research topics typically relate to at least one type, but frequently multiple types, of inequality. Here are some examples: masculinity in rugby, attitudes towards sex work, “genderless” people, migration and diversity, cosmetic surgery and the standard of beauty, how “beauty”

is represented in the women’s magazines, how Zainichi Korean students face discrimination in looking for a job, cultural diversity in Hawaii, discrimination against single mothers, and the institution of marriage. One student is writing a theoretical paper on the concept of “ideology” and how it relates to material inequality.

I encourage students to enter the university essay competition. One alumna has received an honorary mention for her research paper!

Reading

We do primarily two types of reading:

Core Readings: Readings on key concepts, theories or empirical work related to intersectionality.

Research Readings: These readings are chosen by each student, in consultation with me, from the background readings for his/her research.

In the first few weeks, we do core readings. Then, we focus on the research readings.

Through these readings, students learn to read and think critically and creatively, as well as engage in discussion.

Presentation

There are two types of presentation. One is a “reading presentation”, in which students take turns to prepare a detailed summary of a reading and guide a discussion on the reading. Another is a presentation related to each student’s own research—students present and receive feedback on their choice of topic, research plan, research-in-progress, and the completed research.

Workshop

I do not lecture in the seminar, but I devote some time to covering relevant research methods.

GRADING CRITERIA

Students are evaluated on discussion participation, comments on readings, reading and research presentations, a final research paper, and attendance. Active involvement is absolutely important.

IS THIS A ONE-YEAR OR TWO-YEAR SEMINAR?

Students are *expected* to take the seminar for two years. However, special arrangements have been and will be made for students going overseas to study or engage in comparable activities for a semester or a year.

Seminar transfer: A formal procedure including a written application/explanation and an interview is required for transfer from or to another seminar.

SEMINAR VISIT: You are welcome to visit us on October 15 or 22. You will be able to observe reading presentation and discussion, as well as talk with current students. Please email me beforehand so that I can prepare materials for you. It's best to attend both periods, but if you cannot, I'd suggest attending the 5th period. In any event, inform me beforehand.

THE SELECTION

- **Target enrolment:** Eight 3rd year students. (Interested 4th year students: email the instructor directly.)
- **Submit application to GIS office and me** by 17:00 on November 5, 2018.
- **Interview dates & time:** November 13 (Tuesday) or November 20 (Tuesday) (14:00– 17:00). Alternative arrangements may be made if you have class during these time periods.
- **Interview venue:**
- **Criteria for selection:**
 - Having passed *Race, Class and Gender I*
However, you may still apply if you have a legitimate reason for not having taken or passed RCGI. In this case, write the reason in the application.
 - Familiarity with sociological concepts/ perspectives
 - Interest in issues of inequality
 - Willingness to participate actively and responsibly in seminar activities
 - Acceptable level of academic performance, as an indicator of the level of your academic commitment and preparation required for seminar participation.

GRADUATES' VOICES

Seminar alumni went on to various fields upon graduation, including the financial sector, the mass media, IT, the fashion industry, and so on. Some pursued further academic study in sociology or an interdisciplinary field. I have space only for a few comments here.

"I personally gained a lot from Diana's seminar. While gaining a variety of knowledge from GIS's interdisciplinary courses, at the seminar you have the opportunity to dig into one topic (thesis) with the chance to engage in thought-provoking discussions with fellow seminar students. Although at times challenging, the seminar was one of the most memorable classes at GIS, and I was really happy that I joined, learned, and completed my thesis thanks to Diana and my classmates. The seminar pushes your brain to really think and question. If I hadn't taken this seminar I probably would not have made the choice to go to graduate school overseas. ..." (Yukari Shiozaki, graduated 2014, M.A. from Utrecht University, the Netherlands (2017). Her research paper was *"Blurring Boundaries of Takarazuka: Androgyny and Fandom in the Theater"*.)

"One of the good things about the seminar is that you have more time for discussion reflecting on the reading materials as well as your research projects. You get to know other students' ideas and it also helps you to improve your own research project. The seminar's got an

encouraging atmosphere, which makes you feel motivated." (Mai Kijima, studied in Leeds for a year, graduated 2015, working for Think Science, a Tokyo-based translation company. Her research paper was *"The Role of Emotions in the Reproduction of Social Inequality in Contemporary Japanese Context"*.)

"Seminar: Intersectionality is where you can pursue your academic passion and curiosity in the field of sociology. The intensive and extensive engagement in readings and discussions on current agendas in social issues and (in)equality will foster your logical and critical thinking skills. These skills are not only helpful for your seminar research, but also come in handy when dealing with, and preparing for, other courses in our interdisciplinary curriculum. I highly recommend joining the seminar for those who want to explore mechanisms and dynamics of inequality and are eager to tackle a series academic challenges. Your experience in Seminar: Intersectionality can make you one of the best thinkers amongst your peers." (Yuya Hasegawa, graduated 2016, obtained M.A. in Sociology at Essex University (UK) 2017. His research paper was *"Negotiating Difference in Japanese Society"*.)

"My research was about the career path that male and female students get to choose when applying for jobs - sogoushoku and ippanshoku, etc. By researching and studying this topic, I was able to understand the typical gender roles that Japanese society expects students of different genders to grow into. It made me more aware of what kind of career path I want and it helped me better prepared to face challenges in the corporate world. Seminar as an educational format per se has definitely enhanced my ability of thinking on my own feet and discovering social phenomenon through my own lens. This kind of independent thinking is very much needed in every aspect of life I reckon. Diana sensei's seminar is very open to discussion and she wouldn't just draw conclusion for students. Rather it's always an open-end discussion and leave the take-away lessons for students themselves. I found it very enlightening and useful." (Julina Yasumoto (Ling Zhu), studied in Baylor for a year, graduated 2011, and currently portfolio advanced specialist for Bloomberg in London. Her research paper was *"Women and Career Choices"*.)

"Diana's seminar is the place where you feel you want to come back and share what you have seen or experienced in your social life even after you graduated from GIS. So many things can be learnt, but the biggest gift through the seminar would be cultivating a curiosity for our everyday life (the society). Once you enter the sociology, you will find so many "why's" in our daily life that will make you want to find out the reason or the solution for. The comfortable and at-home environment, just like being at a cafe with your friends, let us think freely and discuss intensely. There is a fair amount of work and reading to be done in the seminar, but Diana is very supportive so there is nothing to worry about. Hope you will enjoy pursuing your curiosity, just like I did!" (Tomomi Yoshihara (Maehara), studied in France for a year, graduated 2012, formerly financial consultant at Nomura Securities and currently working for Persol Career. Her research paper was *"Pornography and Sexual Assaults."*)

Check out what senior student Daisuke Kose has to say about the seminar on the GIS website as well!

One last note: If you have questions about this seminar, email me at and also talk to current seminar members. However, please do not rely on second-hand information from those who have not taken my seminar before!