

INTERSECTIONALITY: Multiple Inequalities

Professor Diana Khor

This seminar meets for two consecutive periods (180 minutes) every week on Monday (Periods 4 & 5).

GOALS

“Intersectionality” is a cutting-edge approach to theory and research that focuses on how different inequalities relate to — “intersect” with — one another. The approach is used not only in academic circles, but also in laws and policies 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 of intersectional research and theory. 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.

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

WHAT WE ACTUALLY DO IN THE SEMINAR: Reading, research, discussion, presentation and writing.

Individual Research

Third year: In the spring semester, think of topic, search for relevant readings, start reading. In the fall semester, continue to read, refine topic, write up 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.

Currently students are working on such research topics as how bi-racial (“*haafu*”) young people negotiate their hybrid identities, the coming out

experiences of Japanese and foreign gay men in Japan, intolerance of violations of gender expectations, attitudes towards sexual minorities in Thailand, representation of Muslim women in France, and how Filipino women in the entertainment industry negotiate stereotyped images. In all of these projects, students explore various bases of inequality.

Reading

We do primarily three types of reading:

Core Readings: Readings on key concepts, theories or empirical work related to intersectionality. We select readings from Grzanka, Patrick R. (ed.) (2014). *Intersectionality: A foundations and frontiers reader*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

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

News topics/short articles: One- or two- page articles on current topics for discussion.

Every week, we do one long reading (either “core” or “research” reading) and one short reading.

Presentation

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

GRADING CRITERIA

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

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

Students are evaluated on a semester-basis but they 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. A formal procedure including a written application/explanation and an interview is required for seminar transfer (from or to another seminar).

SEMINAR VISIT: You are welcome to visit us on **October 3, October 10 or 17**. Please email me beforehand so that I can prepare materials for you.

THE SELECTION

- **Target enrolment:** SIX 3rd year students, and a couple of 4th year students.
- **Submit application to GIS office** by 11:30 on October 28, 2016.
- **Interview date & time:** November 8 (Tuesday), between 12:30 – 16:30, at [REDACTED]. Contact me by email for alternative arrangements if you have class during this time period.
- **Interview venue:** [REDACTED]
- **Criteria for selection:**
 - Having passed *Race, Class and Gender I*. However, you may apply if you have a legitimate reason for not having taken or passed RCGI. In this case, provide the explanation in your application or talk to me directly at the interview.
 - Familiarity with sociological concepts and perspectives, interest in issues of inequality, and willingness to participate actively and responsibly in seminar activities. *Some background in social research is a plus.*
 - Academic performance will also be considered, as an indicator of the level of your academic commitment and preparation required for seminar participation.

GRADUATES' VOICES

Students went on to various fields upon graduation, including the finance sector, the mass media, IT, as well as various interesting jobs in less conventional fields, and some pursued further academic study. 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. The seminar is a great way to finish your last two years of university and learning experience at GIS." (Yukari Shiozaki, graduated 2014, started M.A. program at Utrecht University, the Netherlands, in Fall, 2016. 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, 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. Moreover, through dealing with a series of weekly assignments, you can also learn to enhance your efficiency in task and time management skills. Together with your advanced thinking skills, your daily student lives would become much less strenuous and more pleasant. 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, will start M.A. in Sociology at Essex University (UK) in September, 2016. 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), graduated 2011, and currently portfolio advanced specialist for Bloomsbury 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), graduated 2012, financial consultant at Nomura Securities. Her research paper was "Pornography and Sexual Assaults".)

One last note: If you have questions about this seminar, email me at [REDACTED] and also talk to current seminar

September, 2016

Office: [REDACTED] / Email: [REDACTED]

members. However, please do not rely on second-hand information from those who have not taken my seminar before!