

# Syllabus

## COMA 303: Gender and Communication

**Class Date/Time/Location:** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 11:15 AM - 12:20 PM in Admin 202

**Instructor:** Dr. [Marnie Ritchie](#), Assistant Professor of Communication & Affiliate Faculty with Gender, Sexuality, and Race Studies. [mmritchie.com](http://mmritchie.com)

**Student Hours:** Monday's 2-4 PM in person (Ingram 129) or over Zoom (email me to set up a Zoom). Also available by appointment.

**Email:** [ritchiem@plu.edu](mailto:ritchiem@plu.edu) Email is the best way to reach me. I do not correspond weekdays after 5 PM nor weekends, but I always try to respond within 24 hours.

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# ABOUT COMA 303

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## Land Acknowledgment

PLU is on the traditional lands of the Nisqually, Puyallup, Squaxin Island and Steilacoom peoples; we acknowledge and respect the traditional caretakers of this land. This statement is a recognition that land acknowledgments are not enough. This class will strive to notice the connections between gender and communication with Indigenous and Native interests and decolonization. As [Keely Toledo writes](#), “Decolonization is about power and a transfer of power...”

## Masking

I strongly encourage us to mask in our classroom space. Thank you!

## Course Description

How we communicate is inextricable from understandings of gender and sex that we become socialized into. This class provides an overview of how gender and communication relate, with an emphasis on contemporary American cultural contexts. The course explores gendered/sexed communication across four themes: language, voice, media, and bodies.

## Learning Objectives

1. Build a vocabulary to communicate expansively about gender and sexuality in everyday life
2. Become informed, critical media consumers/producers as related to gender and sexuality by analyzing media representations
3. Practice feminist pedagogies characterized by cooperative learning, a critical view of knowledge construction, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to learning outcomes
4. Apply social justice praxis to our everyday lives through inquiry, dialogue, and reflection

## Required Materials\*+

- Articles and Book Chapter pdf’s posted on Sakai under Resources. There is no textbook for this course.
- A tool (laptop, tablet, notebook) to take notes in class
- A separate physical notebook in which to write journal entries

\*If you do not have a way to access these materials, please email me [ritchiem@plu.edu](mailto:ritchiem@plu.edu) ASAP.

+If printing PDFs for our class is a prohibitive cost, please email me [ritchiem@plu.edu](mailto:ritchiem@plu.edu) ASAP.

# COURSE POLICIES

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## Attendance

Please email me if you need to be absent, so I can mark it down.. Come to class because you want to, not because you have to. It is recommended you come to class regularly, so that you can follow along with the class. If you are absent for more than two days, I will try to check in to see what support you need.

## Self Care

Your personal well-being is essential and not just to your performance in college. Learning to manage stress is an ongoing process. Asking for help is a skill.

If you feel that you might fall behind in work, I ask that you speak with me when you notice this feeling. I encourage you to contact the Center for Student Success (CSS), which can connect you to resources. You can contact the CSS by email ([success@plu.edu](mailto:success@plu.edu)) or phone (253-535-8870).

## Add/Drop

Students are responsible for understanding [the policies](#) and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, and similar topics.

## Academic Integrity

All graded work must be the original work of the student claiming credit for it, with proper credit given to outside sources via citations. Students who use unoriginal work or permit another student to use their work will not receive credit for the course. Students who are uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult with me. For more information, please see PLU's [statement on Academic Integrity](#).

## Laptops, Tablets, Technology

I allow laptops and tablets in class, and I put trust in you to use them responsibly.

## Accommodations

If you need academic accommodations because of a documented disability, have emergency medical information to share with me, or need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. If you have questions concerning the services available for students who need reasonable accommodations, contact the Office of Accessibility and Accommodation at 253-535-7073 or [aaa@plu.edu](mailto:aaa@plu.edu).

## **Pronoun Use**

We will use one another's personally designated pronouns. Do not assume anyone's gender in the course. Some of our readings use "she and/or he" to the exclusion of a more inclusive "they." I encourage you to normalize using gender neutral language in your communication practices.

## **Title IX**

I am a mandatory reporter under Title IX. This means that if you disclose sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or gender-based discrimination to me related to the Pacific Lutheran University community, I must report it to Campus Safety, Students Rights and Responsibilities, Human Resources, and/or a member of the University Dispute Resolution Committee.

If you would like to confidentially submit a disclosure, meaning one that does not activate Mandatory Reporting, you can do so via the following resources:

- [Advocacy Services in Center for Gender Equity](#) (253-538-6304)
- [PLU Health Center](#) (253-535-7337)
- [PLU Counseling Center](#) (253-535-7206)
- [PLU University Pastor](#) (253-535-7464)

## **Inclusive Learning Environment**

Pacific Lutheran University is a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). We mark this so that we can name and challenge whiteness in our class's collective imaginary.

It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course and that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity across all dimensions, including gender, sexuality, disability, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students.

We will strive to make this class an inclusive space, which means we will actively contest exclusionary practices. Here are a few best practices for ensuring our space is actively more just: avoid words with exclusionary histories; do not minimize marginalized identities' negative feelings and need to process; take responsibility for the impact of our beliefs. If you are unsure what might constitute an exclusionary impact in class, let's chat in Student Hours.

## **Respectful Learning Environment**

The University holds as basic the integrity and well-being of every person in the community. I am committed to providing a living, learning and working environment that is fair, consistent, caring, and

supportive of intellectual and personal growth. Further, PLU is committed to protecting the rights of its community members to engage in dialogue and express ideas in an environment that is free from harassment, discrimination, and exploitation. This freedom of expression does not, however, entail the freedom to threaten, stalk, intimidate, harass, or abuse.

Students are therefore expected to treat every individual with respect. The University prohibits any activities that cause or threaten physical or mental harm, suffering or exhaustion, that demean the dignity of any individual, and/or that interfere with one's academic progress, living environment, or employment responsibilities.

## **Content Warnings**

Students are advised that difficult or sensitive issues may be represented or discussed in this class. While care will always be taken not to cause distress and to create a welcoming learning environment for everyone, there may be occasions where you will confront images or texts, or where you hear discussions that are uncomfortable for you. While I cannot presume to know what is and is not triggering or traumatizing for a student, the syllabus does include content warnings (signaled by CW) for topics in the readings that may be sensitive for students.

If you ever feel unable to continue to participate in a particular class, you may leave at any point and will not be challenged. I will follow up to address any concerns and provide additional resources for support.

You are also, of course, welcome to share any concerns about the course content you may have at any time during the term, and I promise to listen openly and respectfully.

# ASSIGNMENTS

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## Rationale

There is no major written project for this class. Let's make our time together manageable. We will apply what we learn through inquiry, discussion, and reflection.

Make no mistake: This work is challenging. It's very hard to:

- Reflect our own communication habits, beliefs, and actions.
- Connect the personal to the systemic.
- Improve our praxis (how we enact change in our everyday lives).
- Engage with others about systems that organize gender, sexuality, race, nationality, religion, disability, class, etc.

## Discussion

Point value: 300 points

Your perspective is important to the critical discussions that we will have.

Here is how I assess discussion:

- 270-300 – Creative insights and questions, risked speaking in class on a regular basis (1-3 times a week), consistent evidence of preparedness, generous openness to other perspectives, excellent insights and questions, took an active role in their own success, evidence of listening to peers (references to peers' comments in close reading comments and/or in class, active and present on facilitation days)
- 240-269 – Adequate class participation, reliable evidence of preparedness, curiosity concerning other perspectives, was present and listening
- 210-239 – Present in class, adequate preparedness, acknowledgment of differing perspectives
- 180-209 – Unpreparedness that disrupted others' learning, no acknowledgement of differing perspectives
- 0-179 – Student interfered with peers' learning, disrespectful of class atmosphere, consistent unpreparedness, un-self-reflexive in their treatment of others

## Discussion Facilitation

Point value: 200 points

I ask that you work with a peer or two to facilitate discussion for one Wednesday class period. More information will be provided in class.

## Close Readings

Point value: 300 points (20 points each; 15 total; one “freebie”)

I ask you to please engage in “close readings” of the assigned readings using hypothesis. Click the Close Readings tab in the left-hand menu on Sakai.

To receive full credit, each close read should have the following:

1. **TWO substantive comments on the reading.** These can be a critical question, a reflection on why a sentence stuck out to you, a reference to other relevant sources, and/or a critique of something the author wrote.
2. **AND TWO replies to a peer.** This can be a specific compliment, a question, and/or a complication. If no one has responded to the reading yet, please make two additional comments on the reading.

## Journal

Point value: 200 points (20 points each; 10 total)

Every Friday, starting the second week of class, I ask you to please write a journal entry that you bring to class. Each week, your journal entry should respond to the given prompt, which is related to the theme for the week. The prompt will be available in the [Course Schedule](#), at the start of the week each Monday.

Entries should be at least two paragraphs long (approximately 100-200 words, at least 4 substantial sentences per paragraph, though you may write more). They will be assessed on the basis of basic length, substantive engagement with course themes, and self-reflexivity. You are encouraged to bring class discussions and readings into your reflections.

We will make space to share every Friday. Please do not feel pressure to share, if you are not comfortable doing so. More information will be provided in class.

# GRADES

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## Grade Breakdown

Assignment	Point Value
Discussion	300
Discussion Facilitation	200
Close Readings	300
Gender and Communication Journal	200
<b>TOTAL:</b>	1,000

## Grading Scale

See here for [the scale](#).

## Explanation of Assessment

I use rubrics which are made available to students. Please wait 24 hours before speaking with me about any graded assignments. Any grade complaints must be submitted within seven days of receiving the grade in writing.

# CITATIONAL ETHICS

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I thank Peter Ehrenhaus, Justin Eckstein, Lamiyah Bahrainwala, Erin Rand, and Valerie Renagar for syllabus inspiration. I thank students from prior COMA 303 classes for their input. And I thank Kate Hoyt for the format of the “live syllabus.”



# Schedule

All links have been deactivated to protect student info & copyrighted materials.

## COMA 303: Gender and Communication

Please note: the course schedule is subject to change at instructor's discretion. Any changes will be announced over email and reflected in this "live" schedule.

COURSE INTRODUCTION			
Date	Topic	Readings To Do Before Class	Assignments Due at Start of Class
W 09/07	Introduction to the Course	Look over the <a href="#">Course Syllabus</a> and Course Schedule (the document you are in)	Please <a href="#">introduce yourself</a>  (Optional) Complete <a href="#">Anonymous Presemester Survey</a>
F 09/09	Class Culture, Learning Objectives, Clarifying Journal Expectations, Signing up for Discussion Facilitation	---	---
GENDERED LANGUAGE			
Date	Topic	Readings To Do Before Class	Assignments Due at Start of Class
M 09/12	No Class: Prof travel issues. Thanks for your understanding.		
W 09/14	Your Questions about Gender and Sexuality	<a href="#">"Terms and Concepts"</a> by <b>Susan Stryker</b> (CW: Discussion of gender dysphoria on p. 18)	<b>Close Reading 1</b>  Watch: <a href="#">"What Does Two Spirit Mean?"</a> by <b>Geo Neptune</b> (CW: discussion of colonization and residential schools,

			<p>mention of the history of the term “berdache”)</p> <p>Watch: <a href="#">“What is Accountability?”</a> by the Barnard Center for Research on Women</p>
F 09/16	Your Questions about Gender and Sexuality	---	<p>Journal Entry 1: <b>Prompt: How do you know what you know about gender?</b></p>
M 09/19	Close Reading Day: Intersectionality	<p><a href="#">“Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies,”</a> Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall</p> <p><a href="#">“We Cannot Leave Black Women, Trans People, and Gender Expansive People Behind,”</a> Karla Mendez (CW: Discussion of reproductive injustice, racism, sexism, transphobia, forced sterilization)</p>	<p>Close Readings 2 &amp; 3</p> <p>Watch: <a href="#">“What is: Intersectionality”</a> by Kat Blaque</p>
W 09/21	Discussion Day: Intersectionality	---	Discussion Facilitators
F 09/23	Reflection Day Intersectionality	---	<p>Journal Entry 2: <b>Prompt: Thinking of intersectionality as “a lens, a prism,” as Crenshaw says, what does intersectionality enable you to see in your life?</b></p>

			Soft deadline for Journal Entry 1
M 09/26	Close Reading Day: Gendered Language	<p><b><a href="#">“Gendered/Sexed Language”</a></b>  <b>by Catherine Helen Palczewski, Victoria Priun DeFrancisco, and Danielle Dick McGeough</b></p> <p>(Content Warnings: example related to enslavement on p. 105; mention of miscarriage on p. 105; mention of rape culture on p. 111 and p. 117; example related to domestic violence on pp. 112-113; n-word and f-word quoted on p. 115; d-word quoted on p. 119; mention of Trump’s phrase confessing assault on p. 120; This is A LOT of content warnings. It’s important to understand the violence of language, but let’s also make some space for joy during class.)</p>	<p>Close Reading 4</p> <p>Watch: <b><a href="#">“The History Behind the Word ‘Queer.’”</a></b> <i>them</i> (CW: Discussion of AIDS epidemic)</p> <p>Watch: <b><a href="#">“The History of the Term ‘Genderqueer.’”</a></b> <i>them</i></p>
W 09/28	Discussion Day: Gendered Language	---	Discussion Facilitators
F 09/30	Reflection Day: Gendered Language	---	<p>Journal Entry 3: <b>Prompt:</b>  <b>What does “queer” mean to you?</b></p> <p>Soft deadline for Journal Entry 2</p> <p>Please fill out <a href="#">this optional anonymous poll</a> about SNACKS</p>
<b>GENDERED VOICES</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings To Do Before Class</b>	<b>Assignments Due at Start of Class</b>

M 10/03	Close Reading Day: Gendered Voices	<p><b><u>“Gendered/Sexed Voices”</u></b> by Catherine Helen Palczewski, Victoria Priun DeFrancisco, and Danielle Dick McGeough (CW: curse words, p. 63; gay slur, p. 66; intimate partner violence, pp. 70-72)</p>	---
W 10/05	Discussion Day: Gendered Voices	---	<p><b>Close Reading 5</b></p> <p><b>Discussion Facilitators</b></p>
F 10/07	<p>Reflection Day: Gendered Voices</p> <p>SNACK DAY: Snacks will be provided</p>	---	<p><b>Journal Entry 4: Prompt:</b>  <b>Describe a conversation you had where you felt differences and/or similarities in conversational style related to gender and/or sexuality. How do you think gender and/or sexuality affected the conversation?</b></p> <p><b>Soft deadline for Journal Entry 3</b></p>
M 10/10	Close Reading Day: Trans Voice	<p><b><u>“Trans Voice in the House,”</u></b> from <i>Trans Exploits</i> by Jian Neo Chen (CW: Discussion of detention of trans people and colonization throughout; mention of sexual abuse on p. 136 and p. 145; mention of slavery and slaveholders on p. 138; border patrol abuse on p. 143-145; discussion of deaths of Victoria Arellano and Roxana Hernández on p. 145; There is also discussion of trans liberation movements which voices resistance to this violence)</p>	<p><b>Close Reading 6</b></p> <p><b>Watch: “<u>Jennicet Gutiérrez - Transgender [Person] Who Interrupted President Obama’s Speech,</u>” <i>American Latino</i> (4 minutes; CW: Discussion of detention of trans people)</b></p>

		(Optional but highly recommended) This <a href="#">short excerpt from Dean Spade's Normal Life</a> which critiques assimilationist queer and trans politics	
W 10/12	No Class: Professor at Public Address Conference		
F 10/14	No Class: Professor at Public Address Conference		
M 10/17	Close Reading Day: The Voice of AI	<a href="#">“Racial Technological Bias and the White, Feminine Voice of AI VAs”</a> by Taylor C. Moran  Read/listen to disability rights activist Alice Wong, <a href="#">“I Still Have a Voice”</a> (2 minutes)	Close Reading 7
W 10/19	Discussion Day: The Voice of AI	---	Discussion Facilitators  <b>Journal Entry 5: Prompt:</b> <b>From where did/do you inherit the ideas that there is a “female-sounding” voice and a “male-sounding” voice? In your opinion (and keeping agender people in mind), can a voice be “genderless”?</b>  (Please note that this journal is due on a Wednesday not on a Friday, like it normally is!)  <b>Soft deadline for Journal Entry 4</b>

F 10/21	No Class: Fall Break		
<b>GENDERED MEDIA</b>			
Date	Topic	Readings To Do Before Class	Assignments Due at Start of Class
M 10/24	Close Reading Day: Gendered Media	<p>“<a href="#">Gendered/Sexed Media</a>” by Catherine Helen Palczewski, Victoria Priun DeFrancisco, and Danielle Dick McGeough (CW: sexual advertisement on p. 223; discussion of hypersexualization on pp. 242-247; mention of assault threats on p. 247 and p. 250)</p> <p>“<a href="#">Popular Culture: Media Masculinity</a>” from <i>The Will to Change</i> by bell hooks (CW: Discussion of male violence; spoils the plot of <i>Monster Ball</i>)</p>	Close Readings 8 & 9
W 10/26	Discussion Day: Gendered Media	---	Discussion Facilitators
F 10/28	Reflection Day: Gendered Media	---	No Journal Entry - No prompt
M 10/31	Close Reading: On Witchcraft	<p>“<a href="#">White Supremacy as Zoological Witchcraft</a>,” from <i>Racism as Zoological Witchcraft</i> by Aph Ko (CW: graphic reading; discussion of racism and enslavement/colonialism throughout; discussion of lynching on p. 54 and n-word; this chapter spoils the plot of the film <i>Get Out</i>)</p>	<p>Close Reading 10</p> <p>(Optional) Watch <i>Get Out</i> film <a href="#">here</a> (1 hr, 44 min)</p> <p>YouTube login info: [removed]</p>

W 11/02	Discussion Day: On Witchcraft	---	Discussion Facilitators
F 11/04	Reflection Day: On Witchcraft	---	Journal Entry 6: Prompt: What is an example of conceptual racial consumption you've seen in media? How does it show how zoological racism happens in media?  Soft deadline for Journal Entry 5
M 11/07	Close Reading: Histories of Sexualization	<p><b><u>"Searching for Black Girls"</u> by Safiya Umoja Noble</b> (CW: graphic in nature: racist sexualization of girls and women is discussed throughout; mention and images of pornographic search results throughout; rape discussed pp. 33-34; blackface images in art pp. 37-38; images of Jezebel whore representation from Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia on p. 39)</p> <p><b><u>Hear from Dr. Noble about her work</u> through the MacArthur Foundation (1 min)</b></p>	<p><b>Close Reading 11</b></p> <p>Please complete <a href="#">this anonymous poll/check-in</a> before class.</p> <p><b>Watch: "<u>The Weird History of Asian Sex Stereotypes</u>," MTV Decoded (6 minutes)</b> (CW: Discussion of racism throughout; and mention of pornography)</p>
W 11/09	Discussion Day: Histories of Sexualization	---	Discussion Facilitators
F 11/11	Reflection Day: Histories of Sexualization	---	Journal Entry 7: Prompt: What, to you, is social justice praxis? Did anything from our

	COFFEE AND SNACK DAY		<p>discussions this week prompt you to change/reaffirm your beliefs and actions?</p> <p>Soft deadline for Journal Entry 6</p>
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**GENDERED BODIES**

Date	Topic	Readings To Do Before Class	Assignments Due at Start of Class
M 11/14	Close Reading: Gendered Bodies	<p>“<a href="#">Gendered/Sexed Bodies</a>” by Catherine Helen Palczewski, Victoria Priun DeFrancisco, and Danielle Dick McGeough (CW: mention of disordered eating, p. 78 and 83; mention of suicide, p. 78; mention of harassment of trans people in bathrooms and transphobic laws, p. 97)</p> <p>“<a href="#">Problem Bodies, Nation State</a>” from <i>Arresting Dress</i> by Clare Sears (CW: Discussion of anti-Chinese immigration law and detention) (I requested the endnotes for this chapter. Sorry they’re not included here. Will send once I get them.)</p> <p>(Optional) “<a href="#">History of Crossdressing</a>,” from <i>SAGE Encyclopedia of Trans Studies</i> by Clare Sears (CW: Discussion of detention and misgendering of gender non-conforming people; mention of anti-Native American suppression and coloniality on p. 2; mention of using crossdressing to escape slavery p. 2 and minstrel shows p. 3)</p>	Close Readings 12 & 13



W 11/16	Discussion Day: Gendered Bodies	---	<p>Discussion Facilitators</p> <p><b>Journal Entry 8: Prompt:</b>  <b>What is an example you've seen of how someone "can play with gender performativity to challenge gender/sex norms," as Palczewski, DeFrancisco, and McGeough write (p. 77)?</b>  <b>How does that playfulness challenge gender/sex norms, in your opinion?</b></p> <p>Soft Deadline for Journal Entry 7</p>
F 11/18	<b>No Class: Professor at National Communication Association Conference</b>		
M 11/21 - F 11/25	<b>No Class: Thanksgiving Break</b>		
M 11/28	Close Reading: Bathrooms and the PISSAR Survey (#PeeLU Patrol)	<p><b><u>"Calling all Restroom Revolutionaries!"</u> by Simone Chess, Alison Kafer, Jessi Quizar, and Mattie Udora Richardson (CW: Mention of anti-trans, anti-genderqueer violence in bathrooms)</b></p>	<b>Close Reading 14</b>
W 11/30	Discussion Day: Bathrooms	---	<b>Discussion Facilitators</b>
F 12/02	Reflection Day: Bathrooms	---	<p><b>Journal Entry 9: Prompt:</b>  <b>[removed]'s close reading comment states, "The inaccessibility and lack of</b></p>

	+20 points of Extra Credit if you complete a PISSAR survey of a university bathroom		safety of bathrooms is a very intersectional issue that affects multiple identities.” In your opinion, what coalitions could emerge around bathroom accessibility for identities not mentioned in the reading?  Soft deadline for Journal Entry 8
M 12/05	Close Reading Day: Body Hair	<p>“<a href="#">Chemicals of the Toilette</a>” from <i>Plucked: A History of Hair Removal</i> by Rebecca M. Herzig (Just an FYI: You have access to this entire book digitally through the PLU library)</p> <p>(CW: Mention of enslavement pp. 35-36; mention of physiognomy, an element of eugenics on p. 36; lots of bodily liquids mentioned in this reading, including meat processing pp. 44-47; discussion of <a href="#">Orientalism</a>, pp. 51-54)</p>	Close Reading 15
W 12/07	Discussion Day: Body Hair	---	Discussion Facilitators
F 12/09	Final Course Day!  Come for some of the time or the whole time.	---	Journal Entry 10: Prompt: When it comes to modifying the body (hair removal being just one example), do you feel you have a good sense of

			<p><b>why you (or others) do it?</b> <b>How are your practices (or their practices, if you don't want to focus on yourself) connected to histories of gender, sexuality, race, science, hygiene, and beauty standards, in your opinion? Feel free to share whatever you're comfortable sharing.</b></p> <p>Soft deadline for Journal Entry 9 (There is no soft deadline for entry 10)</p>
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\*There is no midterm or final for this course.