



Making a New Male Studies Class: Lessons Learned from Developing and Teaching an Online Male Studies Survey Course

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The aim of the present paper is to discuss the process of designing and teaching a new online male studies class and to share the lessons learned throughout the process. We provide our own commentary in conjunction with perceptions of student engagement. We hope this paper will benefit instructors and possibly other audiences by discussing the merits and challenges of teaching a male online course. Our pedagogical approach relied on use of a breadth of topics with an overarching interdisciplinary bend. We assigned a mixture of books, articles, and media that were sufficiently accessible for the student audience. Both male and female students appeared to benefit from taking this course judging by their insightful analyses and enthusiasm for course content.

Keywords: male studies, online, teaching, pedagogy, interdisciplinary

Introduction

In fall 2012, the senior author of the paper participated in a two-day mini-conference in New York sponsored by the Foundation for Male Studies. It was a stimulating and inspiring experience. A small group of scholars shared their views on various topics central to the scientific study of human males. However, in the wake of that mini-conference, it was not clear what to do with those conversations. What kinds of tangible contributions could ensue? In contemplating this question, one answer was to create a new survey class on males to teach at a large U.S. state university (where we are based). Some of the initial discussion also included the possibility of making the class a MOOC (massive, open, online course), though various considerations such as expense and technical requirements pushed instead toward an online class restricted to our host university.

The aim of the present manuscript is to discuss the process of designing and teaching a new online male studies class. This has been a rich and interesting experience to us authors—one of us a tenured faculty member and the other a PhD student who assisted in the administration of the course, particularly with grading student assignments. We use the term “we” throughout though we largely filled different and complementary roles in designing and teaching the course.

As the field of male studies represents a recent amalgamation, we suspect that the audience of this journal may find the lessons learned from designing and teaching this online course to be of use. Some readers may be in the process of envisioning their own courses or a broader male studies curriculum. Some readers may wonder about relative merits teaching an online versus in-person class. Still other readers may be curious about the reactions of students to taking the class, such as whether they appeared to enjoy or find materials problematic. Moreover, some readers may wonder specifically about any political concerns raised by students, a possible concern given some of the media hype surrounding contrasts between “male studies” and “masculinity studies.” The creation of a male studies curriculum at the University of South Australia has also garnered political attention. We hope that the items we note in the present manuscript address these and other questions that may be of interest to readers.

What kind of class to create?

Various considerations arose when conceptualizing this male studies class. One of the first questions was whether to design a class for an in-person or online format. The decision was made to go with an online format for several reasons. One is that the senior author wanted to leave open the possibility of adapting online materials to a potential MOOC, if logistics were to make that feasible. Another consideration was enrollment. In order to be taught, a minimum enrollment is required at the large U.S. state university where the class originated. It was pure guesswork whether any or enough students would enroll in a first-time male studies class to enable even teaching it; an online class format, because of the more flexible scheduling inherent to them, was thought to be helpful in addressing enrollment concerns. At the same time, it was felt early in the process that the topics and materials of a male studies class would benefit from face-to-face discussion. Spontaneous exchanges are more feasible in an in-person format, sensitive questions can be addressed and potentially charged issues defused, and the ability for students to compare their own views and experiences with others’ is enhanced in face-to-face discussions. These comparisons between the benefits and concerns over in-person versus online formats represent perceived trade-offs in the delivery of contents.

Another major consideration was the nature of the class—to be taught as a “survey” course. A survey class would need to cover a breadth of topics under the umbrella of male studies. This would privilege breadth over depth. Without previous experience offering a class on male studies at our host university, it was not only unclear whether enrollment would be adequate for a survey course, but whether demand would be sufficient for more specialized offerings on topics such as male legal concerns or fatherhood.

Still another consideration was the student audience. We are in an Anthropology department. Our home academic department, combined with our training, compel us to emphasize concepts and examples that might differ from those of scholars in other disciplines. Most notably, we feature evolutionary and cross-cultural perspectives on any set of phenomena, including males. Yet we wanted to design a class that could reach a wider and interdisciplinary audience. Enrollment concerns were one reason to seek a wider student audience inside and outside of Anthropology. Another reason is the belief that the field of male studies is inherently interdisciplinary. While different disciplines may have different emphases, there is still a core of theory, methods, research, and applications that can be drawn from an interdisciplinary landscape to make up what amounts to male studies. We wanted to attract students from other social sciences, but also potentially from humanities and biomedical backgrounds. Accordingly, class materials such as examples, readings and media selections were intended to draw from a broad spectrum. Moreover, because we teach in the U.S. we wanted to ensure that assignments and resources were chosen to be of relevance to students’ lives.

To draw in students of wide backgrounds for a survey class on male studies, it was best to teach such as class without requiring an undue array of specific prerequisite courses. The class was offered at an academic level that required students to effectively have taken the equivalent of a survey class in their particular field (such as Psychology or Gender Studies). This requirement equivalent ensured that students had some previous coursework but also did not need to have taken many specific courses.

Putting together a syllabus

With some central questions about the aims and audience of the course addressed, many new questions were raised in the effort to craft a syllabus. What books and articles would be assigned as class readings? What topics would be addressed? How would students be graded? Different scholars might pursue different answers to these kinds of class logistical questions, but we also imagine that there would be overlap among scholars teaching within the scope of male studies.

The class syllabus employed in spring 2014 is included as an Appendix. By including it here, readers can readily discern the topics, assigned readings, and graded materials, among other core issues. A handful of male studies syllabi can be found through online searches, enabling some comparisons (e.g., a search reveals that Miles Groth teaches a class in Psychology at Wagner College in which Gilmore’s and Baumeister’s books are also assigned). Toward determining the topics and readings to employ for the class, the senior author drew upon his 15 years of experience conducting research and teaching, including with a research emphasis on the evolutionary, endocrine and cross-cultural approaches to human male social behavior. He also solicited input from several colleagues, including Ed Stephens and Chris von Rueden.

We perceive the need for some kind of text that could serve as a central resource to a male studies survey course. There currently is no single book that serves that function. We assigned a mixture of books and academic articles (articles that were uploaded as PDFs and available to students

on a university library website). The books were chosen because they complemented each other, were topically relevant and viewed as sufficiently accessible for the student audience. The Baumeister book addresses a host of male concerns from social psychological and to a lesser degree evolutionary perspectives. The Gilmore book features ethnographic accounts of manhood in variable cultural settings from around the globe. The Gray and Anderson book is an integrative book on fatherhood, incorporating evolutionary, cross-cultural and other topical insights. The Kimmel book focuses on young adult American male (e.g., ages 16-24) concerns, making it of topical relevance to the student demographics at our university. We considered many other books but found them wanting in various respects, such as in being dated, too topically restricted, insufficiently integrative, or otherwise.

We only used a few assigned articles. As an alternative to assigning books, more articles or other kinds of reading could be employed in such a class. We identified a few readings that helped fill conceptual and empirical gaps in the books assigned; examples include the papers on Pittsburgh young men's mental health, and the brief review of Australian male health. The Farrell reading, taken from the inaugural issue of "New Male Studies," was assigned because of Farrell's seminal writings on males, with the article a useful entrée to the general subject and in place of the somewhat-dated book upon which the interview drew ("The Myth of Male Power"). We believe that there exists a large body of research on what can be labeled as "male studies." However, the body of articles in which that work is published is not available as a reader at the moment, and assembling such a reader would entail a significant amount of interdisciplinary reading and integration.

Putting together the class contents

In an in-person lecture class, an instructor typically prepares an outline and contents, often aided by PowerPoint or a related technology such as Prezi. For an online course, the class contents have similarities and differences. As far as similarities, the array of topics may be similar, as may many of the assigned readings. But there are differences in the way contents are prepared, including greater use in online courses of electronic media such as websites.

Toward preparing the online course contents, the senior author distilled notes on the topics identified in the syllabus from books, articles, websites and through discussions with the junior author and two undergraduate male volunteers. Approximately 40,000 words of written content were prepared for the class, making for a significant amount of work. For a given topic (or module, with one module addressed in each week of class), an outline, aims, and key features were presented, with an attempt made to create relevant, current, and compelling content.

While an attempt was made to ensure the American students enrolling in the class would have their interests in males addressed directly, a limitation of the available materials was in ensuring a consistent international and cross-cultural scope as well. Much of the impetus for male studies has been in just a few Western countries, and this is reflected in the availability of relevant resources. Gilmore's book ("Manhood in the Making") was published in 1990, but draws upon earlier ethnographic materials. While it has interesting cross-cultural material, it is somewhat dated, and more qualitative and quantitative data on male issues in cross-cultural and international scope are sorely needed. We provided links to international websites (e.g., on crime and education) to facilitate the inclusion of an international view of males, but the data in these websites (such as Interpol) do not bring males to life in the same way that richer, focused studies do.

One of the strengths of teaching an online male studies class is the ability to draw upon ex-

isting Internet resources. Some of these sites are specific to work on males such as the GoodMen-Project.com. Other sites provide data of relevance, as in the UN and CDC websites that make available information on sex differences in educational attainment and longevity. Links can be readily embedded in online contents, and useful websites also noted. Images, however, pose their own challenges. Many are subject to copyright, which led us to largely rely upon open access sources, particularly Wikimedia.org. Different institutions have variable capacity to generate their own online course materials (such as interactive figures) and variably subscribe to other services (e.g., Corbus) that offer use of copyrighted images, which is relevant to putting together visuals and interactives to complement the written contents for each module.

The field could benefit, however, from a resource that compiles studies, websites, images, videos and relevant stories in the news. While a number of web resources provide such material, they are scattered. An instructor can provide links to the most useful set of these to help students locate them, and possibly incorporate them into class exercises and discussions. Online resources give one lots of freedom to explore the inclusion of creative avenues, but the search efforts can be time-consuming, costly and limited by access.

The use of relevant videos can be a major addition to an online course. Our university subscribes to several streaming video resources (e.g., Films On Demand) and has purchased access to an array of videos. We scanned the set of streamed videos to which our institution had access, seeking ones that were relevant and interesting. This yielded several videos that students were required to stream including one on ape violence and another on testosterone and male social behavior. There are a few other video resources that can be streamed. YouTube provides a massive amount of content, including short clips that can be inserted in the body of prepared written contents for a given module to help break it up. As an example, we used a brief clip available on YouTube of Richard Dawkins interviewing Randy Nesse about the evolutionary-based reasons why males tend to live shorter lives than females. A few TED talks are of relevance, including one used in the class featuring Simon Baron-Cohen discussing the extreme male brain. If the field of male studies were able to bring together a set of leading scholars to record brief TED-like presentations for use in such courses, this could prove quite useful as a resource. Short videos of the senior author were recorded for watching at the start of each module. These short videos were restricted to 2-4 minutes in length in order to state the key topics for a given module, but without repeating written contents. The short duration of these videos nonetheless requires technical capacity for recording and editing them, and the short duration was at the advice of our online education staff who noted that students tend to be little interested watching a professor speak at length in a recorded video.

Class topics and take-home points

The set of class topics explored is given in the syllabus. In the wake of having taught the class in spring 2014, we did not perceive any glaring topical omissions among this set. However, there was more to be said about some topics than others. Collapsing family relationships to a single week proved quite daunting, and necessitated many assigned pages for that module. Far less material was available for the modules devoted to mental health and legal dimensions. In seeking to apply class concepts to contemporary issues, new questions were raised about the relevance of these applications to different student audiences. As an example, discussion of the legal dimensions of male studies featured cases such as Title IX that have contemporary relevance to U.S. audiences but not necessarily elsewhere. Indeed, much of the work (e.g., Warren Farrell's foundational contributions) is geared toward Western countries like the U.S. and Australia, but proves limited when acknowledging gaps in a more international view of manhood (e.g., what do male soldiers perceive are the benefits and

costs of their roles? How does the rhetoric of male crisis translate in a country where males are the majority of college graduates?).

The topics were generated through readings, syntheses, and a sense of what would be key arenas of personal and contemporary importance to males generally as well as students enrolled in the course. Much of the discussion concerning a need for male studies centers on several key domains in which male indicators lag behind those of females: education, work, and health. These topics thus appeared to warrant their own foci in respective modules. Other topics appeared to stand out as needing their own modules because males predominate demographically (e.g., most violent crimes are committed by males) or these topics are central to how males organize their lives (e.g., friendship, sports and family relationships). A survey course needs to ensure its breadth covers those topics that could be explored in more depth in subsequent programs too (e.g., entire classes can be devoted to the study of male health, as recognized by a program for male studies in Australia).

In the concluding module to the course, our goal was to provide the class a set of 18 take-home points that reinforced key elements and central themes raised throughout the male studies class. We share these 18 take-home points here.

There are different perspectives on males. The study of males is an inherently interdisciplinary effort. Among the perspectives under which males can be viewed, these include social constructionist, biomedical, activist, and common sense or popular cultural representations.

An integrative, evolutionary approach offers one means to understanding males. By this view, humans can be understood with respect to complementary aspects of phylogeny, function, mechanism, and development (i.e., Tinbergen's framework). Humans are most closely related to other primates, particularly apes, and most specifically chimpanzees and bonobos. Ancestral males have been subject to evolutionary processes, including selection. Many sexually dimorphic human traits evolved under the influence of sexual selection. Yet males change across the life course (development), with a study of mechanism helping elucidate how those physiological changes take place.

Sex differences in human anatomy, physiology and behavior exist. While differences in reproductive anatomy may be readily apparent, differences in brain and hormonal systems also exist, and both regulate and respond to features of the social world such as competitive and mating encounters. Importantly, sex differences are only averages, with variations between males and females potentially exhibiting major overlap. The magnitude (or even lack thereof) of some sex difference differs across traits. Many sex differences are understandable when viewed within ancestral patterns of reproductive competition and success (e.g., why males have higher oxygen carrying capacities, which is helpful for fighting).

Males vary. There is lots of variation in males, with males often displaying greater variation in traits (such as height or IQ) than females. Males vary within- and between-groups. Each of us is truly unique, but also part of wider patterns of variation.

Males must be viewed in context. Male physiology, behavior and meaning vary by context. There may be cross-cultural or international differences (e.g., in the definition of masculine ideals). There may be differences among U.S. ethnic groups. There may be differences with respect to social status (e.g., as indexed by socioeconomic status in the U.S.). This variation among males also arises through the interplay of mechanisms across an individual's life course (e.g., learning social cues about appropriate behavior) in context. The evidence of male plasticity adjusting to contexts belies

any simplistic deterministic views.

The study of males recognizes an inherent politics. Males may have competing agendas with other males within groups. Male coalitions may have competing agendas with other male coalitions. Males and females may have different viewpoints. There may be male-male political tensions with respect to other factors like age. There may be tensions between individual and group interests. The variation among males belies any simplistic view that males have it good (e.g., the fallacy of male privilege recognizes that some males have it good and others have it bad).

How sex differences in outcomes are assessed is important. Sex differences may be viewed as evidence of bias; they may also be evidence of sex-specific preferences. In a related vein, males and females may have similar capacities, but different motivations. Throughout class, we have seen examples in which sex differences in outcomes such as mortality, jobs, or income exist, but how these are interpreted is a crucial question.

Males cooperate and compete. Males form alliances and coalitions, sometimes to compete against other alliances or coalitions. Male social capacities show a proclivity for engaging in coalitional activities (e.g., nationalism, identification with a favored sports team). Male friendships can be emotionally rewarding and adaptive.

Males strive for status. That makes sense for a social primate, given the linkages between male status and positive outcomes such as health measures and reproduction. For humans, males may specialize in protection, politicking, and providing valuable economic goods such as food. Male status-striving can be conceptualized as work, with males often undertaking risky kinds of work that yield public goods (such as group protection). Male status may be achieved through dominance interactions, but may also be freely conferred by others recognizing one's reputation and prestige.

Males are sexual beings. Males advertise to and court particular individuals, with important attributes including attractiveness, age, sexual orientation, personality cues, and otherwise. Sex may be short-term, as in hooking up, or longer-term, as in lifelong sexual partnerships. Males tend to have higher sexual desires than females, although male sexual desire is contingent on various factors including age, health status and cultural context.

Males tend to engage in family life. Long-term reproductive bonds may have arisen within the past two million years of hominin evolution, with paternal care a defining feature of our species. At the same time, the specifics of family life can vary cross-culturally and historically, as in the kinds of investments fathers make (e.g., livestock vs. helping with homework).

Males can be violent. In our close relatives, chimpanzees, males sometimes kill other males. In humans, most killings between- and within-societies involve men killing other men. Young males are most likely to be involved in love triangles that take a homicidal turn. Another common motive for violent encounters is revenge. Many features of male anatomy and physiology (e.g., upper body musculature) appear designed to aid success in fighting. Males may engage in sexual coercion both of females and other males (e.g. in gay male partnerships).

Males often watch and play sports. An appreciation for sports can begin with male-male physical play and aggression in other species (e.g., "rough and tumble play"). Sex differences in playing sports cross-culturally and in the U.S. exist, especially for team sports. Cross-culturally, sports have often served as training grounds for success hunting or in warfare. Males tend to watch more sports than females.

Males often specialize in crime and punishment. The more violent the crime, the more likely a male is to have committed it. Male crimes and punishment vary cross-culturally, with respect to age, and other factors such as socioeconomic status (e.g., “white collar crimes” in finance). There may be adaptive evolutionary foundations to crimes, such as theft. Most protective services (e.g., private security) against crimes are provided by males. Males are the vast majority of those in jail or given severe punishments such as the death penalty.

Males learn, sometimes in schools. The learning environments of hunter-gatherers typically included mixed age and sex groups. Cross-culturally, males have learned within variable social environments, including by observing (rather than formal teaching) older individuals, as in apprenticeships. In an evolutionary or historical scope, schools are a recent kind of institution. There are sex differences in various school-related outcomes, including males more often being expelled from school. In the U.S. and a majority of countries, women earn more college degrees than men, but there are also countries where men earn more college degrees than women. Fields of study in school show some sex differences, such as males more often focusing on engineering.

Males are mortal. Consistent with slight polygyny among our ancestors, human males have shorter average life spans than females, although aspects of family life may be protective. There are some male-specific health concerns such as sexual or reproductive health (e.g., prostate cancer). Males tend to use fewer health resources. Mental health outcomes also show some cases in which males have higher prevalence, including ADHD, autism, personality disorders, and substance abuse disorders (such as drug or alcohol abuse).

Males meet the law. There are various legal dimensions with a male-specific angle. These include family law (e.g., divorce, child custody), circumcisions, workplace safety, Title IX, violence, and sexual behavior (e.g., more laws have proscribed male-male sexual behaviors than female-female sexual behaviors).

For the topics considered in class, there is social and contemporary relevance. The applications are too diverse to list here. Yet some include concerns over male work (e.g., un- or underemployment, death professions), family involvement (e.g., why are some dads involved, but others not), the military (e.g., incorporating males and females in various roles, including along the front lines), and sports (e.g., how Title IX impacts university sports offerings to students).

Class Mechanics

How were students graded? They took two exams, a midterm and a final. Questions for those exams were multiple choice and true/false in order to enable automated grading. Questions drew upon the full array of assigned materials—prepared contents, streamed videos, and assigned readings. To provide more dynamic and interactive graded assignments, several other exercises were employed. Students were asked to participate in regular discussion forums. For each module, two or three questions were posed to students. Students were required to participate in at least ten such discussion forums in at minimum five different modules in order to garner participation points.

To illustrate discussion forum questions, here are the three employed during the module devoted to sports, which also happened to coincide with the U.S. college basketball tournament: 1) The world of sports encompasses a tremendous variety of competitive athletic games. Briefly discuss some of the cross-cultural patterning in sports. Perhaps you could identify a sport that differs from those typically played and watched in the U.S., including the cultural context in which that sport is

embedded. You might also consider some of the most common functions served by sports participation cross-culturally. 2) Discuss your experience playing a sport. What sport did you play? What did you get out of playing that sport at the time, and what might be some longer-term consequences of your having played that sport? 3) Lots of people like watching sports, as noted in the present module, including pages assigned in Kimmel's book. Since it's basketball tournament time, even the president has chimed in, sharing his picks (e.g., on the White House website and on ESPN). Why do so many people enjoy watching sports? What are some of the demographics of who watches sports, including different types of sports (e.g., individual vs. team sports; sports with and without physical contact; etc.)? What might be some downsides of people watching sports?

Discussion forums are one of the brightest elements of online courses. They ensure that students less likely to speak out in class have their voices heard. They enable students to see what their colleagues think of a specific issue. By virtue of requiring a written post, discussion forums can also require students to formulate their ideas clearly and ideally in expressive writing. We were consistently impressed by the caliber of student posts in discussion forums, particularly in content. Indeed, some of the most compelling comments drew upon personal or related experiences of relevance to class topical discussions. With a number of students having served in the military, they had opinions on male military roles informed from firsthand experience. Many students had travelled or had family from international backgrounds, contributing to the cultural scope of discussions.

In addition to responding to the discussion questions posed for a given week, discussion forums offered students a unique opportunity to comment directly on their fellow students' posts they found most compelling. Such replies created an ongoing thread between one or more classmates. The threads were often expanded by students to include additional reflections building upon the original post that typically included incorporating shared life experiences or similar opinions to add greater depth and analysis. Interestingly, these exchanges were highly positive and were most often characterized by students giving positive feedback and encouragement to one another, commending their original insights. Despite the inherent limitations of an online course in terms of face-to-face interaction, the discussion forum and additional thread postings appeared to foster an environment in which students could still freely exchange ideas and build a sense of camaraderie between male and female students alike.

The remaining graded activities consisted of a male movie exercise, male interview exercise, and a male-themed blog entry. The male movie exercise required students to watch a movie of their choosing that featured a male or group of males as the focus. Examples include "Fight Club," "Fast and Furious," and "The Good the Bad, and the Ugly." Students were required to write 2-3 pages of text, double spaced, briefly describing the movie and focal male(s) and describe two key aspects of male thinking and/or behavior featured in the movie (e.g., male violence, male risk taking; paternal roles), with specific examples given. Students were encouraged to address how male thinking and behavior might have changed across time or vary cross-culturally and how male patterned behaviors might be interpreted from an evolutionary perspective. The male movie exercise was chosen because male-centric films provide students the opportunity to use general themes presented in the class to address the question of why several male archetypes and stereotypes appear ubiquitous, all the while identifying underlying variation within a contemporary setting. Students appeared to have a real enthusiasm for writing about their favorite male film and this exercise appeared to instill a deeper understanding of male behavior. For example, several students said their understanding of male risk-taking behavior was observed in a new light since taking this class and that it makes sense why men are more motivated to choose riskier professions and be portrayed as the hero in cinema. This exercise forced students to begin to think about broad patterns in male thinking and behavior that

may be traceable all the way back to our evolutionary history as a species. As such, this exercise was intended to have students begin to consider a number of potential factors (e.g., social, evolutionary) that may be responsible for reinforcing male-patterned behavior within a deeper context.

The remaining two exercises assigned for the class were designed in such a way as to facilitate a more personal and experiential interpretation of male thinking and behavior. Students were required to conduct a semi-structured interview with a male of their choosing and submit a short write up (~400-500 words) summarizing the results of the interview. The aim of this assignment was to report a firsthand, contemporary account of how a male of their choosing experiences the world. Students often asked similar questions that related to manliness. For example, some questions included: "What do you think it means to be a man? How do you define what it means to be masculine?" The majority of the written interviews were quite insightful and very interesting to read. Many students expressed common themes uncovered during their interviews that paralleled nicely with class themes. For example, interviewees often were described as saying that boys should "toughen up" and "hide pain." Also there was a central focus on duty such that "Real men sacrifice for others and their family." Additionally, there was a lot of individual variation that led to men to struggle to achieve their goals and to become "a success." It was interesting to see the student's reactions to the reported sex-specific social pressures and stressors that men face in their everyday lives (e.g., the need to be a provider). Based on the commentary, we found this assignment to be illuminating for many of the female students in particular. Several of the female students stated that after completing this assignment they have a better appreciation for the struggles faced by men, and about which they were previously unaware.

The last written exercise required students to compose a 600-1000 word blog entry that focused on some aspect of males. Several blog links were provided to students as references to give students a feel for what a polished blog entry should look like. The idea was to have students choose a topic of their liking that related to one or more class concepts discussed throughout the course. Given that this was the last written assignment, this exercise was designed to have students show us they were now capable of synthesizing one or more class concepts and their own personal reflections into a creative and thoughtful analysis. Again, we found this assignment not only highly rewarding to the students but to us as well. The blog entries raised several interesting themes that were fascinating to read as a grader. For instance, several students identified that today represents a changing environment of masculinity in terms of what it means to be a "man." These definitions may be quite different from how previous generations would have interpreted masculinity. Yet within this changing social climate there still remained many parallels between the previous generation's stressors and the struggles men face today. Moreover, students identified that 21st century social dynamics require us to embrace changing definitions of traditional gender roles. More gender equality provides the impetus for a shift in traditional maternal and paternal roles, especially as we see a continual rise in women as bread winners and more women college graduates. How men cope with their new roles, such as stay-at-home dads, is another area that is of great curiosity for many of the students. One of the most consistent themes raised in this exercise was the observation that men, in addition to women, can be victimized as well. For example, many students raised the question, "Why is breast cancer awareness so highly publicized when men suffer and die more often from prostate cancer in comparison?" Additionally, several injustices were noted in the judicial system when it comes to custody battles (e.g., women receive custody 90% of the time compared to men) and the disproportionate longer sentencing of men compared to woman when committing the same crimes. Taken together, the biggest revelations in this assignment often were best expressed by women in the class, many of whom stated that this course provided them with a deeper appreciation for the struggles faced by men. Thus, the experience of taking this male studies course allowed them to have a better

understanding of what it is like to “walk a day in their shoes.” Here are a few quotes of particular relevance provided by three female students that sum up their own personal reflections:

- 1) “Since this course, I look at them (men) in new eyes, with a different reasoning into why they are the way they are.”
- 2) “After taking this class, I have realized there are more to men than I thought there was. Which also aides into the fact that men are just as complicated as women (Ha I knew it!).”
- 3) “How deeply engraved it is in society that we don’t give it a second thought, however, there is not only sexism toward females but also towards males.”

What did we learn from teaching this online male studies class?

Apart from the quality of student engagement in discussion forums and graded assignments, we learned much by teaching this new online male studies class. One of the first surprises was in the student demographics. While being unsure whether enough students might enroll in such a class to enable teaching it, we allowed a maximum of 80 students to enroll in it, and more might have if the maximum were allowed to have floated higher. That number meant it was not possible to respond to individual student’s discussion posts; instead, the senior author replied to students generally, pointing out themes and further points of discussion. That number also stretches the limits of grading generally. The use of automated exams and exam scoring helps offset the amount of time required for grading written exercises. How many written exercises can be graded depends on how long those take to grade, how many students take a class, and the personnel involved in grading.

Of the 80 students who enrolled in the class, we estimate based on names that about two-thirds were females. This surprised us, given the topical focus on males. However, in an initial discussion post soliciting reasons why students chose to enroll in the course, many female students mentioned having taken women’s studies classes but wanting to learn more about males. If one of the arguments for a male studies curriculum is to engage males directly, then this argument is weakened if more females than males enroll in male studies classes. Reasons why various student demographics might enroll in male studies courses is itself a topic worthy of study. The majors of students were also quite varied. This demonstrates that the interdisciplinary scope of the class, including in requirements, was mirrored in the variable majors from which students were drawn. The most common student majors were Anthropology (11), an interdisciplinary studies concentration (9), Criminal Justice (9), Psychology (8), Biology (5), Art (4), and Sociology (3), with other majors represented including Hospitality, Business, History, Human Services, Art History, Computer Science, English, Communications, Pre-nursing, Early Childhood Education, Theater, Philosophy and Political Science. The distribution of majors among enrolled students also means that, despite having originated in an Anthropology department, the course drew only a small fraction of students majoring in Anthropology.

Our experience designing and implementing this course surprised us in many ways. For one, the enthusiasm and engagement with the material and the quality of work produced by the students provides further impetus for the need for more male studies university courses. Men and women both benefit from being offered such a course, with women often having articulated the most insightful reflections in response to the material. Ultimately, a male studies course provides a logical balance to more female-oriented studies, which in turn provide students a deeper appreciation for the behavioral sex differences and the struggles faced by each sex. This experience has shown us that

students can develop a deeper understanding how sex differences emerge in response to differing social and adaptive problems and this in turn raises awareness that males and females still face injustices today. Offering a new male studies course provides a window into the lives of the male, one in which is not often given even in today's higher academic institutions. Students who participated in this course consistently showed a shift in their perspective that expanded compassion and a deeper appreciation for both sexes.

What did students get from class?

In the last module of the course, students were asked about their big-picture assessments of the class, such as what they found most and least interesting. The answers were illuminating. Many answers juxtaposed what had been learned from women's studies courses. This class, with its focus on males, offered a balance against those many classes focused upon females. Several also noted the tone of this male studies class: that it was blunt at times in articulating what could be positives and negatives about males, but also presented data and allowed students to develop their own beliefs. This differed from a female-as-victim narrative that a number of students had heard in women's studies courses.

As far as the topics and elements of class students appeared to most and least enjoy, these topics varied across students. Some most enjoyed the topical focus on education, while others least enjoyed it. A number commented on the friendship module being a favorite, while that on legal aspects of males garnered mixed views. Many comments enthusiastically embraced the spectrum of topics and the class as a whole. Judging by comments, the class appeared to be a general success. A number of students said that discussion forums were highlights, enabling them to comment on topics of contemporary importance, but also see what their colleagues felt about an issue. One of the most poignant of comments was by a non-traditional student who commented upon understanding why her deceased police officer husband had engaged in a risky act of altruism to save a would-be suicidal male—this was part of the discussion in a module devoted to males and work, and the reasons and consequences why males predominate in the 'heroism' professions. That said, several students expressed desires to view more videos, and the amount of reading was either seen to be at or exceeding a maximum amount for students' tastes. Kimmel's and Baumeister's books also appeared to be more polarizing than the other readings. Some loved Kimmel's "Guyland," while others felt the opposite, for reasons including writing style, relevance and views of male sexual coercion. Some felt Baumeister was repetitive and advocated points with which students disagreed, while others liked his informal and direct tone. A suspicion is that many of these variable views of the assigned readings would cluster by discipline (e.g., more sociology or interdisciplinary studies majors embracing Kimmel's book) though we do not have quantitative data on this potential alignment.

Understanding the male story is not always a black or white answer. Several students cited revelations that males appear to be equally complex as females even though they are wired somewhat differently. Students often reflected on several of these differences which gave them a better appreciation for understanding males. For instance, a female student wrote that she was surprised to learn that men often do not talk about their problems or emotions. Originally she suspected this was solely due to social pressures that shaped male behavior for concealing emotions but after taking this class she now she thinks that society is only partly to blame. She contends that perhaps men are more susceptible to conceal their emotions due to social pressures and because of a deeper evolutionary story in which it could have been viewed as adaptive in ancestral environments to conceal emotional pain for men. Several other students commented that they learned more from the interview assignment than any other part of the course, while others championed the discussion forums as a wealth

of information. Rather than relying on just ethnographic accounts depicting what it means to be a male, students applauded the complementary approach employed in which actual data from a variety of sources were used to support claims. One such arena was the use of statistics to report male health indicators compared to women. In this view, males appear to be the most vulnerable sex given that they have higher mortality in several life stages during their life course. By the end of the course most students commended the use of qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive view of the male perspective. Based on student's comments, the use of an integrative approach was most useful when approaching the complex nature of male behavior.

Conclusion

The aim of his paper has been to discuss the process of designing and teaching a new online male studies class and to reflect on the lessons learned throughout the process. This process proved interesting, rewarding and sometimes surprising. We hope the insights shared from this process are of use to instructors considering teaching a class on male studies or to wider audiences. We conclude by offering some suggestions for any instructor seeking to offer a male studies class.

Start early. It takes a considerable amount of time to read, synthesize and determine what and how you will present class contents. Unlike many fields in which introductory textbooks are readily available, streamlining an instructor's thought-process, this is not the case for male studies. The contents should be topically relevant but also relevant to students' lives, fostering the highest level of engagement. Use of technologies (e.g., online formats and websites) offers ways to connect with a larger audience and in more rapid ways. Use of media (e.g., streamed videos, youtube clips) can draw out points more viscerally than a long recorded lecture. Designing a class so that students can learn from each other (whether in online discussion forums or in face-to-face discussions) may enhance the emotional experience of a class, but also encourages a student to see how his/her views and experiences do or do not resonate with others'. The body of male studies material speaks for itself, without needing to take an overt political stance: presenting data, frameworks, and letting students exchange ideas helps them formulate their own views. In light of the enrollment numbers and breadth of student majors enrolled in the course, there may well be a niche for online and in-person male studies courses on other campuses too, though expect a varied student audience and lots of women.

Appendix:

Spring 2014 Class Syllabus

Anthropology 361: Making Mankind: Sex, Status, and Male Studies

Instructor:

Office:

Office Hours: TBA, or by appointment

E-mail:

Phone:

Web page:

Catalog Description:

This class undertakes an integrative account of what it means to be a man. We draw upon comparisons with other animals, insights into the physiology of social behavior, cross-cultural accounts of masculinity, and U.S. studies of male behavior, all within an overarching evolutionary perspective. Topics focus on central concerns over masculinity: friendship, sexuality, politics, violence, education, work, sports, fatherhood, and health. Discussion highlights the relevance of male studies to individual and social meaning, and informs contemporary societal concerns over men.

Course Objectives:

Students will grapple with current theoretical and empirical evidence concerning the integrative study of males. Students will gain insight into the similarities and differences in behavior between human males and males of other animals and cross-culturally. Through readings, students develop critical thinking skills to assess research on males. Through writing assignments, students have the opportunity to apply course theory to topics of particular interest and course relevance.

Upon completion of the course, the successful student will be able to:

Identify cross-cultural variation and patterning in male behavior and experience

Critically evaluate reasons underlying differences and changes in male behavior and experience, both in the U.S. and internationally

Describe, analyze, and evaluate central features of masculinity

Synthesize evidence, understand arguments, and draw logical conclusions

Reading:

Assigned readings derive from four texts that can be purchased in the UNLV bookstore or online. The four assigned books are: 1) Baumeister RF. 2010. *Is There Anything Good About Men? How Culture Flourished by Exploiting Men*. New York: Oxford University Press; 2) Gilmore DD. 1990. *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.; 3) Gray PB and Anderson KG. 2010. *Fatherhood: Evolution and Human Paternal Behavior*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.; and 4) Kimmel M. 2008. *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. New York: Harper.

Grading:

Grades will be based on a midterm exam (25%), a non-cumulative final exam (25%), a life history interview exercise (10%), a critique of a movie based on application of class concepts (10%), a draft of a blog entry (10%), and participation in online discussion forums (20%). Makeup exams are not permitted without medical documentation. Late assignments will not be accepted.

Please ensure you address all components of those assignments; writing quality and structure also count. To gain full participation points, you are required to post comments to discussions at least ten times across the semester, and from at least five different modules (e.g., full participation points are awarded for posting one comment in each of ten modules, or even two comments in each of five modules). To be credited for participation in a given module, you must post a comment during the time in which that module's discussion thread is open (i.e., 'back-posted' comments don't count); this facilitates active engagement. The last day to post a comment for it to count toward participation

is noon May 9. You are welcome and indeed encouraged to actively participate in discussions beyond this minimum. Participation scores will be tallied at the end of the course.

Course Outline:

Week 1: Introduction: History, Issues, Importance

Baumeister: pp. 1-80

Farrell, W. (2012). The myth of male power, Part II. *New Male Studies: An International Journal*.

Week 2: Theory: Evolutionary, Biocultural Approach.

Gilmore: pp. 1-29, 99-122

Gray and Anderson: pp. 1-30

Baumeister: pp. 109-158

Video: "Science of Men" (2007; 50 min)

Week 3: Work

Baumeister: pp. 187-220

Gilmore: pp. 169-200

Gray and Anderson: pp. 158-177

Week 4: Male Bonding: Friendships and Coalitions

Baumeister: pp. 81-108

Gilmore: pp. 123-145

Kimmel: pp. 1-69

Male Movie Assignment Due Wednesday, February 12, 11:59 PM

Week 5: Sexuality

Gilmore: pp. 30-55, 78-98, 146-168

Kimmel: pp. 169-216, 242-264

Week 6: Family Life: Partnerships, Fatherhood

Gray and Anderson: pp. 31-223

Baumeister: pp. 220-248

Week 7: Making War and Enemies: Violence

Baumeister: pp. 159-186

Gilmore: pp. 56-77

Kimmel: pp. 217-241

Video: "The Demonic Ape" (2004; 50 min)

Week 8: Midterm: Must be taken between 12:01 AM Tuesday, March 11 and 11:59 PM Wednesday, March 12

Week 9: Sports: Spectacle, Ritualized Violence, Training

Kimmel: pp. 123-168

Week 10: Crime and Punishment

Duntley JD and Shackelford TK (2008). Darwinian foundations of crime and law. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 13: 373-382.

Life History Interview Assignment Due Wednesday, March 26, 11:59 PM*Week 11: Education*

Video: "The Problem with Boys: Falling Behind in School and Life" (2000: 41 min)

Kimmel: pp. 70-122

Week 12: Health: Mortality and its Causes

Gray and Anderson: pp. 224-242

Streamed youtube clip of Randy Nesse discussing evolution and male mortality

Harris MF and McKenzie S. (2006). Men's health: What's a GP to do? *Medical Journal of Australia* 185: 440-444.

Week 13: Mental Health

Loeber R et al. (2001). Male mental health problems, psychopathy, and personality traits: Key findings from the first 14 years of the Pittsburgh Youth Study. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 4: 273-297.

Week 14: Legal Dimensions

Gray and Anderson: pp. 243-255

Blog Assignment Due Wednesday, April 23, 11:59 PM

Week 15: Course Wrap-up and the Future of Males

Baumeister: pp. 249-280

Gilmore: pp. 201-231

Kimmel: pp. 265-289

Final Exam: Must be taken between 12:01 AM Tuesday, May 13 and 11:59 PM Wednesday, May 14

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Dr. Peter B. Gray has a passion for understanding various aspects of human reproduction from an integrative, evolutionary perspective. That's a sensible scholarly passion too: in a Darwinian world, the ultimate currency is reproductive success. Peter Gray earned a PhD in 2003 in Biological Anthropology at Harvard University. He subsequently bulked up his clinical research and androgen side through a postdoc in Los Angeles. Since 2005 he has been an anthropology professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). He is part of an ongoing collaborative study focused on Jamaican fatherhood, and he engages in research on various aspects of human reproduction, including having lead-authored a 2013 book entitled, "Evolution and Human Sexual Behavior," published by Harvard University Press.



Timothy McHale is a second year Biological Anthropology Ph.D. student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). He had earned his MSc in Evolutionary Anthropology from Durham University, United Kingdom, and a B.S. in Biology and B.A. in Philosophy from the University of Central Florida. His interdisciplinary training has led him to focus on investigating various aspects of human behavior from an evolutionary perspective.

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