Reframing Equity Through Curriculum

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Film Analysis
Through Gender Lens

A Transfer Level English 1A Unit
Essay Prompt

Choose a movie and develop an argument about a film’s portrayal of gender roles, stereotypes, or the way that the film challenges traditional gender roles. In other words: What is this film saying about what it means to be a man or woman in our society? In writing your essay, analyze the film using the perspectives of two of the essays we have read throughout the unit. Be sure to highlight specific scenes and lines from the film as well as ideas and direct quotations from the two articles you are using.
Key Unit Concepts:

- Gender as a social construction (Devor)
- Looking at the world through an intellectual lens (Graff)
- Synthesis of multiple texts
- Writing about texts by analyzing, not summarizing
1. Unit Sequence

- Opening: Activating background knowledge and opinions

- Text: Jamaica Kincaid’s “Girl”

- Guiding Question: What roles are assigned to the girl in this story? How do social norms suppress a woman’s sense of power? How do women exercise power within these structures?
Opening Activity Instructions

- On your post-it notes respond to the following:
  - What does it mean to be a woman in our society?
  - Think of multiple, brief ideas.
  - For each idea, use a new post-it note. (as many as you have time for)

- Post your notes on the wall. Your group will have 2 minutes to silently work together: Read your group members’ post-it notes; re-arrange the notes into categories; you may move other people’s notes, and notes may be moved multiple times; try to end with between 3-6 clusters of related notes.

- Now, talk with your group about the common themes the notes revealed and label each category with a brief title.
2. Unit Sequence

- Academic Vocab—Creating the intellectual lens
- Text: Aaron Devor’s “Becoming Members of Society”
- Guiding Question: How do culture and language construct the meaning of masculinity and femininity?
3. Unit Sequence

- Modeling—How to analyze, not summarize
- Text: David Denby’s “A Fine Romance”
- Guiding Question: How do films create archetypes for masculinity and femininity? How have the notions of these archetypes changed over time?
4. Unit Sequence

- Fishbowl Discussion
- Guiding Question: How do social norms silence men? What are the consequences for acting outside one’s gender role? What are the consequences for conforming to society’s view of masculinity?
5. Unit Sequence

- Synthesis

- Text: Susan Sontag, “A Woman’s Beauty, Put-down or Power Source?”

- Guiding Question: How does society view beauty? How is appearance viewed differently for men and women? What are the consequences for conforming to or deviating from gender norms for appearance?
6. Unit Sequence

- Planning—thesis outline
- Guiding Question: What are the key elements of masculinity/femininity your film portrays?
Key Texts

- Kincaid, Jamaica “Girl”
- Devor, Aaron “Becoming Members of Society”
- Sontag, Susan “A Woman’s Beauty: Put-down or Power Source”
- Denby, David “A True Romance”
- Sabo, Donald “Pigskin, Patriarchy, and Pain”