

Gender Meta-Narrative Project

Overview:

The way we relate to each other as girlfriends, boyfriends, sons, daughters, sisters, moms, etc., draws upon a long story of what it means to be a male or female. Men have traditionally been positioned as assertive leaders, while women have been the community connectors and nurturers. The cultural narratives that steer men and women to act in certain ways are very powerful. We can see how our relationships are connected back to Medieval ideas of courtly love: in a time when marriages were arranged, a man would be attracted to another man's woman because she is forbidden, which increases his romantic desire and "love" for her; achieving the woman's affection is also a challenge to the other man's power over her, thus the woman becomes a battle over male domination. Male and female identity is still connected to the old stories that defined these roles.

For this project, I want you to develop a representation of your gender narrative. What larger stories have shaped your sense of gender identity? How do you see yourself fitting into or resisting those cultural stories? Your final project should present your message both through words and images. The goal is a personal narrative with references to cultural meta-narratives, which may be brought out visually or spoken in quotes. You can use images and music from the media, photographs or video clips, to assist the message of your words.

Instructions

Step 1:

Background research on gender meta-narratives. Use the following links for preparation for the assignment. You may also use these sources in your presentation, too. Pick two of the sites and post to your Group discussion board a comment on your understanding of the information in the site and insights it gives you on the connections between narrative and gender identities. Your post should be at least 200 words. Also reply to two other students' posts; your reply should add new information to the original. So, don't just post how you agree with the person. Consult class schedule for times to post and reply.

http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/ATLAS_EN/html/the_social_roles_of_men_and_wo.html

<http://www.oneonta.edu/faculty/farberas/arth/arth200/gender.html>

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/exploring-womens-history-through-film-4> (explore links within site)

<http://www1.assumption.edu/WHW/old/NarrativeGuide.html>

Step 2:

Research gender meta-narratives on your own. Use primary or secondary sources to help you define male and female identity. You might consider the following: fairy tales, such as Sleeping

Beauty; legends, such as King Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot; tv shows; movies; advertisements; music videos; etc. Post a comment to your group discussion board that covers the following: Briefly outline your chosen story. Briefly summarize points made from three different secondary sources on how the story relates to gender identity and meta-narratives.

Step 3:

Develop a presentation of at least 3 minutes on how you see your life in relation to gender meta-narratives. Be prepared to explain your thinking to the class (talking from notes but not reading) as you present visuals to illustrate your points. Your presentation should demonstrate understanding of the meta-narratives (and counter-narratives) that guide sex roles in our culture. Your understanding of these larger cultural narratives should be assisted by external sources, which should include ones from Step 1 and 2. Your own interaction with these cultural stories should be evident, too. Include a bibliography at the end.