Essay #3

For this essay, I am giving you a choice between two options. You can write a standard academic essay focusing on one of the questions given below, or you may write a research-driven paper. Please note that the research paper, while perhaps the more intimidating of the two assignments, is also the freer and possibly the more interesting.

Standard Academic Essay
For this option, you will write a standard academic essay on one of the topics given below. Please note that the questions given are NOT thesis sentences; you are expected to refine your own thesis from the general topic question and to provide the reader with your own thoughts and analysis. This essay will be graded on the following criteria:

1. A strong thesis and good use of argument and evidence;
2. Through understanding and good analysis of the texts used;
3. Original insights into the topic; and
4. Clear academic writing, correct grammar and citation, and proper formatting.

This paper should be between five to six (5-6) pages in length, exclusive of the Works Cited page. It should use at least two of the readings from class, at least one of which should be from the syllabus dating from 10/14 to 12/11, and you may find it useful to analyze four or five of the texts. You should use these texts in-depth, by doing a close reading of those texts and citing them carefully -- I cannot give a minimum number of citations per text, but I will say that two citations of a text is not a thorough and careful use of it. Please be careful to cite summary material as well as direct quotes; when you use any material from a text, it must be cited -- in quotes if it is in the words of the original author, without quotes if you are paraphrasing or summarizing.

If you wish to use outside sources to reflect on any of these topics, please consider doing a research essay, using these questions as a springboard (see the Research Essay option on the other side of this sheet).

Your possible topic questions are:

1. Consider the multiple meanings of virginity in Western culture using Blank's book, and discuss one or more of the following questions about it: Why do we see virginity as relevant for women, but not for men? Is virginity a gendered "commodity?" How are race and class encoded in virginity? Lastly, why do virginity myths about the female body endure? You may find Ritchie and Duazo useful (for discussions of race and virginity), as well as Fausto-Sterling and/or Nicholson (with regard to virginity and gender and virginity and the body), and if you wish, you may also use Abu-Lughod's discussion of virginity discourse among the Bedouin or Marjane Satrapi's discussion of virginity and marriage in Iran as a cultural comparison.
2. Performances of gender vary from the everyday to extravagant staged productions. Discuss an aspect of the performance of gender which interests you, such as the performance of androgyny or "butchness" (Robertson), the performance of "proper" masculinity in Western or other contexts and different types of masculinity (Morrison & Halton, Patrick, Ricciardelli & Clow, Brubaker & Johnson, Allison, Mead), the performance of "proper" femininity and different types of femininity (Bartky, Allison, Mead, Satrapi), the construction of gender performance (all of these above), body and gender performance, or gender performances in a particular culture (such as the United States or Japan). You may find the excerpts from Butler and Newton useful for this question.
3. Work is highly gendered in many cultures. Consider some of ways in which work is gendered, exploring one or several of the following questions: in what ways is particular work marked as meant for one gender or another? What are the results of such markings? Who benefits from such gendered understandings of work? Do these gendered understandings have larger
repercussions? Suggested readings to use include Allison, Cassell, Chang, Russ, and Mead.

**Research Essay**

For this option, you will write a standard academic essay using not only in-class readings, but also outside research on your topic. This essay will not have starting questions; you are permitted to formulate your own questions, although the topics you can research should be relevant to class. This essay will be graded on the following criteria:

1. A strong thesis and good use of argument and evidence;
2. Through understanding of the texts, strong research, and use of relevant, well-applied academic sources;
3. Original insights and analysis; and
4. Clear academic writing, correct grammar and citation, and proper formatting.

This paper should be between **five to six (5-6) pages** in length, exclusive of the Works Cited page. It should use at least one of the readings from class from 10/14 to 12/11 in-depth, and you may find it useful to use more of the in-class texts. In addition to these, you will need to do outside research, comprising at least two academic, scholarly sources outside of those presented in class (scholarly sources meaning no newspapers, blog posts, etc.: they MUST come from a peer-reviewed journal). You may also use non-scholarly sources, but these must be in addition to your two scholarly sources. If you have any questions regarding what does and does not count as a scholarly source, please consult me or a librarian.

Be certain to cite clearly and correctly, whether you are paraphrasing or quoting directly from your sources. Note your sources for research on the Works Cited page.

Wikipedia may NOT be used as a source for this essay. Essays using Wikipedia will be given a zero.

*Your possible topics include:*

- Third, Fourth, and Fifth Genders (What constitutes a "third gender"? What happens when people transgress gender lines in various cultures? What are the differences in gender structures among various cultures?)
- Gender and Sexuality (How do gender and sexuality interact? How does sexuality create gender and gender create sexuality?)
- Gender and Sexual Violence (Rape, domestic abuse, and the abuse of children, and the gendered implications of these)
- Gender Roles and the Family (Gender roles and their impact on the family, how family roles are gendered, etc.)
- Gender and Work (The construction of gendered workplaces, gendered work, paid and unpaid labor, etc.)
- Gender Performances (How is gender properly performed? Do performances vary in different settings? Who do we perform for and why?)
- Embodying Gender (The impact of gender on the body: the topics we will cover in class include virginity, sexual rights, and violence, but you may interpret this subject more widely if you wish)

Again, this paper should be 5-6 pages in length, exclusive of the Works Cited page.

**Due: 12/14**