

Overview

- ☒ Dr. Clemens' textbook *Introduction to Women's & Gender Studies* offers a compelling, comprehensive, and accessible overview of topics, terms, and issues that students today will need as a foundation in understanding the complexity and nuances of women's and gender studies. The cover is inviting and signals a great deal of inclusivity, inviting readers in to a positive framework of learning about and gaining a greater understanding of this interdisciplinary subject.
- ☒ Dr. Clemens has gone to great lengths to give proper attribution to previously published work through Learning for Justice, Facing the Future, and appropriate sources.
- ☒ An overview on "PA-ADOPT" and "OER" is much appreciated for readers otherwise unfamiliar with terms such as "retain," "reuse," "revise," "remix," and "redistribute." The explanation behind the purpose of the PA-ADOPT project signals attentiveness to those faculty and students served by "all regional and primarily undergraduate institutions" in southeastern PA. The author's biography is thorough and establishes a sense of credibility that faculty and students can trust in her experience and expertise. It is most encouraging to note: "Her entire 25 years of teaching have been dedicated to ensuring all students are heard and valued." Thus, this text signals Dr. Clemens' commitment to both the theoretical and practical aims of the WGS discipline.

Purpose

- ☒ Dr. Clemens is clear in presenting the purpose of this text early on in the "Some Notes for Teachers" section: "This book is meant to provide a foundation for students to learn the terms and concepts in women's and gender studies. What is missing is the voices of people within the field writing about the topics, voices that should be part of the course discussion. For this reason I have added suggested readings at the end of some sections." By emphasizing this text as foundational, she makes the text more approachable and manageable for teachers and students alike.
- ☒ She astutely notes any perceived "gaps" regarding "voices of people within the field writing about the topics." As an instructor of WGS myself, I am clear on this point but I wonder if those new to teaching—and particularly to teaching WGS—would understand it fully. **Suggestions:** (1) Adding a bit more detail (1-2 sentences) on what such voices look like and how they would prove helpful would be beneficial for users of the text to then see why the suggested readings are valuable. (2) A brief rationale (again, 1-2 sentences) on why/how this link ([Exploring Global Issues: Social, Economic, and Environmental Interconnections, Second Edition - Teacher Guide \(wwu.edu\)](#)) was chosen would also be helpful for instructors.

Audience

- ☒ Overall, Dr. Clemens is highly attuned to the needs and expectations of her audience (i.e., students and faculty within the PASSHE system and other state universities). Many, though certainly not all or even a majority, of these students are first-generation college students; they may also arrive at college academically underprepared or lacking in confidence with approaching college. This text presents rigorous and comprehensive material while not overwhelming students with unnecessary academic jargon. Instead, units and topics are presented clearly with a fine balance of definitions, tables/illustrations, multi-modal resources, firsthand accounts, research, and culturally relevant discussions. I will make note of this clear approach in each of the subsequent sections. **Suggestions:** NONE

Notes for Students

- ☒ Readers will appreciate how the author and text empowers them to be active “participant[s] in a conversation” and to approach the text “less as a passive recipient of knowledge.” Attention to students with learning disabilities or challenges is given immediately in this section by way of Dr. Clemens noting how “You will find written content alongside videos and podcasts meant to reinforce the concepts in that section. Transcripts for all of the audio text can be found in the appendix.” Appropriate trigger warnings are also given early on here with ample resources such as The Trevor Project provided.
- ☒ **Suggestions:** (1) It may be helpful here to define/explain “Table Talk.” (2) *List of Key Concepts*—It may be helpful here to define each of the key concepts, preferably the same way those definitions appear later in individual sections. Having this short list at the onset of the book, however, may prove useful for quick reference. Readers should appreciate this thorough, though not overwhelming, list of such concepts.

Notes for Teachers

- ☒ Teachers should appreciate Dr. Clemens’ emphasis on the premise that “the human always takes precedence over the content, and so I emphasize self care and try to remind students to be gentle with themselves as they learn to question everything about themselves and their surroundings...”
- ☒ The list of suggestions to “ensure students know that their safety is my priority” signals a strong commitment to ethical pedagogy and a respectful approach to teaching students who undoubtedly come from various backgrounds. For example, Dr. Clemens’ modeling of the “pronoun survey” is a highly practical and accessible exercise for faculty and students alike to set the groundwork for a learning environment where “students know I care about their identities.” Even at this early point in the text, students and faculty will note how Dr. Clemens shares outside resources (i.e., GLSEN) alongside each pedagogical suggestion.

- ☐ The rationale for “trigger warnings” by way of Dr. Clemens’ previous research and publication on this topic is greatly appreciated, particularly as this practice continues to be debated in our broader culture and, at times, even within academia.
- ☐ Dr. Clemens is also attentive in this section to the uses of this text in an online class. As she effectively explains: “I have a zoom background from an equity organization on at as I am greeting students in online classes. I find backgrounds to be distracting, so I turn it off once I am beginning the day’s class. I want students to be greeted with a new affirming background every day. It Gets Better offers a bunch of free ones (you might have to turn on the mirroring feature in zoom for a few of these, I found). Human Rights Campaign offers more.” Not only does this suggestion signal inclusivity, but it also helps faculty who may not be too familiar with technology.
- ☐ **Suggestions:** NONE

Organization (Table of Contents)

- ☐ The Table of Contents offers a complete overview of topics, questions, and issues germane to Women’s and Gender Studies. Subsections are also appreciated. For example, within the section on “Gender,” the Table of Contents clearly highlights related considerations (which appear in italics) such as *Have You Ever Been Invited to a “Gender Reveal Party”?* Most of the major sections indicate these subsections, with the exception of “Intersectionality” and “Gender Equity.” **Suggestions:** (1) Include two to three subsections under these larger sections to be consistent with the rest of the Table of Contents. (2) Additionally, although the page numbers are listed in the Table of Contents, they do not appear in the rest of the text (at least not in my version).

Gender

- ☐ Readers will appreciate the clear and concise definitions of terms that can appear ambiguous, complex, and even daunting. The term “gender” is a great example of such a term, and readers will be able to apprehend its meaning by way of understanding “what the term sex means in the context of identity—because sex and gender are not the same, even though people confuse the terms.” Acknowledging such widespread confusion should help ease readers’ initial anxieties about such terminology.
- ☐ The “genderbread person” is an excellent (and fun) illustration to better comprehend gender identity, gender expression, anatomical sex, sexual attraction, romantic attraction, and sexual orientation.
- ☐ The narrative by Gavin Grimm is a welcome voice for students to better understand and personalize the subject of transgender individuals. Such a narrative works well in standing alone from the rest of the text, and I believe readers will appreciate how it is offset from the rest of the book with a purple background.
- ☐ The section on pronouns is robust and compassionate with its aims to “ensure everyone’s identity is recognized” by growing more familiar with such pronouns.

The link to “neopronouns” is particularly welcome since even faculty well versed in WGS may not know what these mean.

- ☐ Dr. Clemens carefully distinguishes “gender” and “sexuality” by explaining: “While this text does not address sexuality, it is important for readers to know that even though these two terms are commonly conflated, they are not the same thing. For a thorough look at the terminology of sexuality, please review the lecture below.” Thus, she is clear with readers about this text’s limitations (in fact, an entire text can and should be devoted to sexuality alone), yet nevertheless offers a useful model of a lecture on “Navigating LGBTQ+ Terminology.”
- ☐ The inclusion of “gender reveal parties” signals a great awareness of this cultural phenomenon that students and faculty are undoubtedly aware of, though may not have critically questioned. With a fun approach by way of the satirical video about gender reveal parties, Dr. Clemens helps us probe this subject with questions such as “Are they revealing gender? Or are they actually revealing the baby’s sex?”
- ☐ Inclusivity: Dr. Clemens’ commitment to inclusivity reverberates throughout this text. One crucial message is particularly welcome here: “Bodies are differently-abled, are of different races, genders and sizes. Feminist practice fights beauty norms and remembers that all bodies matter.” Through the accompanying illustration image from “Disabled and Here,” students will begin to see themselves in and through the world.
- ☐ **Suggestions:** (1) Provide a caption or short description of the “Gender Revolution Trailer” so readers know why that resource is useful here, particularly with regard to explanations of “cisgender,” “transgender,” and “intersex” which appear directly under that link.
(2) Provide a caption or short description of “Baby X” and Lois Gould as situated within the broader context of “biological essentialism,” “gender norms,” and “social construction theories of gender.”
(3) When discussing nature vs nurture as it relates to sex and gender, my students strongly recommend the book *As Nature Made Him* by David Reimer. Although Dr. Clemens’ text is rife with suggestions for additional readings, this one may be worth adding in the section on “Gender.”
(4) The overview of beauty norms could stand alone and apart from the subsection on “Femininity,” particularly since Dr. Clemens identifies gender norms often associated with femininity and then advertising/media representations with beauty.
(5) Do images/illustrations need to be labeled as “Figure 1,” “Figure 2,” etc.? May be helpful for quicker reference in class discussions.
(6) In the section on “Masculinity,” I recommend including the trailer to or a clip from the documentary “The Mask We Live In” since students seem to gain a lot from that source. I think it would also support Dr. Clemens’ attention to the term “toxic masculinity.”
(7) I appreciate the “Questions to Consider” and “Suggested Readings” under the subsections. However, not each subsection (namely Femininity and Masculinity)

includes such discussion questions; including one or two for these particular subsections would be useful.

Intersectionality

Suggestions: (1) My main suggestion centers around the organization of this section. Here is what I recommend:

- (A) Start with “Why is it important to consider and listen to many different voices in women’s, and gender studies? What happens when some voices, especially the voices of people of color (or BIPOC), are ignored?” Then proceed to Intersectionality 101 and the link to “Learning for Justice.”
- (B) Next, move to Kimberle Crenshaw but provide more context to her design and use of the term “intersectionality” since I imagine many readers will not be familiar with her name and/or may associate her exclusively with the controversies surrounding CRT. Is it possible to then move the link to her Ted Talk up so that it appears before the link to “Learning for Justice” and to Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman?” performed by Kerry Washington? (It *may* be useful to invite students to see how this term is so controversial with headlines such as “The Intersectionality Wars.” This source might prove useful, even just as a suggested reading: [Intersectionality explained: meet Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term - Vox](#))
- (C) Next, include your section on Sojourner Truth. I recommend devoting an equal amount of content to Truth as you do to Crenshaw and Lorde in this section.
- (D) Finally, include your section on Audre Lorde. The quote from “There Is No Hierarchy in Oppression” works perfectly here!

Gender Equity

- ☑ This section provides a thorough overview of what gender equity is, how it functions, and what consequences it produces. Specifically, the statistics offered at the onset help to fully illustrate subsequent sections and emphasize how “people of all genders can face gender inequity.”
- ☑ In particular, the definition of “patriarchal societies” is particularly helpful at the onset of this section, too, because it frames the ways in which the text further investigates via “legal, political, and economic power.”

Suggestion: (1) when referring to “sustainability efforts worldwide,” I would first define what that means since it could suggest a variety of different meanings.

Gender and the World

- ☑ Readers will appreciate how this section emphasizes the urgent need for “people of all genders [to] be included in solutions and decision-making for improved economic, social, and environmental well-being.”
- ☑ The discussions on masculinity, femininity, eating disorders, and gender-based violence are thorough and build well on one another in this order.

- ☐ “Environment and Gender” along with the “Green Belt Movement” are my favorite sections in this part of the text because they are usually glossed over in WGS syllabi. However, from my experience, this topic resonates with students today who are increasingly committed to issues surrounding the environment, climate change, sustainability efforts, etc.

Suggestions: (1) In the section “Economy and Women,” perhaps clarify the importance of a cow here—“Without an officially recognized job, it is nearly impossible to secure credit to do something like buy a cow or start a small business.” Readers outside of and with little knowledge of rural economies may be confused on this point.

(2) In one sentence or a short caption, perhaps provide context for and define “incels” near the section for the podcast “What is an INCEL?” Also provide context for the #metoo movement near that podcast.

Gender Inequity Throughout History

- ☐ Students and instructors alike will appreciate this thorough overview of crucial turning points in history, such as the gain of voting rights, access to property, shifts in gender roles away from “the cult of true womanhood,” and labor rights. Examples such as the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire vividly illustrate the necessity to keep gender and employment at the fore of contemporary discussions.

Suggestions: (1) The section on “Reproductive Rights” could use more development, with particular emphasis on the overturning of Roe vs. Wade and the effects which women must grapple with today. I’m then wondering if the section on “Maternal Health” should be moved closer to “Reproductive Rights” or even included within it.

(2) Regarding that section on “Maternal Health,” readers will appreciate the global context Dr. Clemens provides. However, I also recommend strongly emphasizing the high maternal mortality rate which the U.S. contends with and which celebrities such as Serena Williams have spoken out against due to the acute effect on women of color.

Gender Issues in Today’s Society

- ☐ **See #2 above
- ☐ The section on “Human Trafficking” offers a comprehensive analysis of how violence and power are perpetrated against young, vulnerable populations. Dr. Clemens highlights Rwanda which provides a compelling example of such issues.

Gender Gaps

Suggestion: (1) At the end of this section, there is a question under “Questions to Consider” regarding equity—“What strategies for supporting gender equity make the most sense to you?” I think this question would be better placed at the end of the next section “Pathways to Gender Equity” once students have the opportunity to consider that information.

Pathways to Gender Equity

- ☐ As readers come to the end of this text, they most likely will be asking themselves: “What can I do?” Dr. Clemens has provided a rich overview of resources here for students and faculty alike to take action and apply the knowledge they have gained from this text.

Suggestion: (1) Perhaps move the reference to *The Mask You Live In* to the section on masculinity under “Gender” earlier in the text.

Supporting Gender Equity

- ☐ The highlighted section “What Can You Do?” provides a manageable and approachable list for students to navigate the complex problems presented by gender in this text. In particular, I appreciate the way this list concludes with an emphasis on “self-care” as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and students grapple more and more with mental health issues. This gentle reminder works to support them as humans, students, and activists.

Appendix

- ☐ Thorough and helpful to readers and faculty wishing to gain more information about aforementioned sections of the text.

Final Concluding Remarks

- ☐ I cannot emphasize enough how thorough and helpful this text proves for students new to WGS, as well as to those looking to expand their knowledge base on topics which fall outside of popular discourse, such as maternal health, gender-based violence, and sustainability efforts. My only suggestion is to specifically include a section on feminism, perhaps in the history section to highlight first-wave feminism, second-wave feminism, etc. This section could include not only key figures, but also objectives, goals, and outcomes achieved. Since students gravitate towards social media platforms such as TikTok, it may be worth including short TikTok videos that define feminism, address and refute myths surrounding feminism, and highlight its applicability to young adults today. This text was a pleasure to review, and I have no doubt students and faculty will find the text accessible and informative!