

Anthropology 2240
Impact of Material Aspects of Life on Gender and Social Inequality
Summary of Theses and Orienting Questions

Weeks 7-8: Foraging

Orienting Questions

- Is gendered division of labour universal? Natural?
- Are all types of economic systems prone to social and power differences? With women subordinate to men?
- Do egalitarian societies actually exist?

Thesis

- Gender roles exist to create an efficient food collection system
- Ideologies of gender inequality do not exist

Week 8-9: Horticulture and Pastoralism

Orienting Questions

- Who takes on the primary tasks in food growing and animal raising societies?
 - Do the seeming stereotypes of woman the grower and man the herder hold up?
- How do family structures change in these societies and what impact does that have on social equality?
- How is matrilineality related to mode of production and what advantages does it give to women?

Thesis

- Inequality starts here
 - Related to property surpluses, increasing sedentism
 - Gender becomes a significant marker for roles people play
- But ideologies of inequality don't have to start here
 - Variation exists
 - Much is dependent on the type of descent and other cultural factors

Week 9: Agriculture

Orienting Questions

- What is the connection between agricultural and industrial modes of production and gender inequality?
- Do all stratified societies subordinate women?
- Where do ideas about social difference come from?
- Should some people (women, poor) in stratified societies EXPECT to be inferior to others?

Thesis

- Social stratification is dependent on ideologies of inequality
- Wealth and status differences are critical to determining who has power in society
 - More so than gender
 - In fact, gender may be less important for determining roles and position because higher ranked women and men will always be better off
- Questions of gender inequality are always affected by questions of power and status

Week 10: States

Orienting Questions

- What is the connection between capitalism and the control of women's labour?
- Are states (industrialism) really that much different from all other forms of political organization?
- Do women have power in states? Over what? Whom?
- Don't states offer the possibility of gender equality?

Thesis

- The state formalizes ideas about gender and social inequality