

POL361 Gender and Politics – Topic 1: What is Gender?

Part 1.

As part of their Seminar Preparation, you were asked to watch a few short videos of gender reveal parties (available on YouTube) and read some of the comments users make. You could also have a look at "[The Ultimate Planning Guide for Planning a Gender Reveal Party](#)" compiled by Pampers, a well-known brand of nappies.

Answer the following question: What do you think is going on?

Part 2.

Refer to the following core reading: R.W. Connell (2009) "The question of gender," in *Short Introductions: Gender in World Perspective*. Cambridge, Polity Press, pp. 1-12.

In groups/pairs, answer the following three questions.

- 1) When do you notice gender? Use examples drawn from the chapter or from your own experience.

Once you have "noticed" gender, Connell tells us that "These facts form a pattern; they make sense in terms of the overall gender arrangements, which this book will call the '**gender order**', of contemporary societies."

- 2) Think of an example that describes the gender order of contemporary societies, or how gender arrangements operate. How does this help up us understand gender?
- 3) According to Connell, why is thinking of gender in terms of difference problematic? How should we think of gender? Do you think this move away from difference is helpful? Why/Why not?

Part 3.

In groups/pairs, look at the following paintings from the Qajar Iran (1794 to 1925). How would you describe the people portrayed?

Now, refer to the following texts (N.B. you had to choose ONE).

- Afsaneh Najmabadi (2006) Beyond the Americas: Are Gender and Sexuality Useful Categories of Historical Analysis?, *Journal of Women's History* 18(1), pp. 11-21.
- Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí (2002) Conceptualizing Gender: Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies. *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women* 2(1), pp. 1-9.

1. What argument does the author make?
2. How do they justify their argument?
3. Look at the paintings again, what can you "see" now?



<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O97147/portrait-of-fath-ali-shah-oil-painting-abdullah-khan/>

Portrait of Fath 'Ali Shah
Oil Painting
1797-1834 (made)



Amorous couple, early nineteenth century