



Gender and Empowerment in Development Practice

Spring 2026

In-person, 3 credits

Wednesdays, Periods 2-4 (8:30-11:30) Turlington Hall 2322 (TUR2322)

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Office Hours: Tue 10-11 AM / THUR 10-11 AM, or by appointment

Course Description

This course examines the concepts, and associated practices, related to gender, women's agency and empowerment, and men's involvement. Gender and social issues are widely perceived as part of wellbeing and sustainability goals. Given the many traditional and modern practices, knowledges and norms that privilege 'masculinity' and place women in an inferior position, increasing women's agency and power and involving men in a process of normative change are widely regarded as preconditions for greater gender and social wellbeing. However, there are contrasting views and approaches, in both research and practice, on what constitutes women's agency and empowerment, how individual and collective empowerment are linked to societal change, and what works best.

This course will encourage students to develop analytical and practical skills for reflecting on, and contributing to, such themes in theory and practice, in the context of efforts and initiatives aimed at enhancing wellbeing and sustainability. After reviewing the key underlying concepts, we will examine the main debates on women's agency and empowerment, masculinities and men's involvement, gender issues, and transformative/systems change concepts found in the literature and on-the-ground experiences. We will then review practical and innovative methods and tools used for analyzing gender relations and assessing and measuring progress. Students will compare distinct contexts within and across regions, especially in Asia, Latin America or Africa, and analyze how local realities interface with wellbeing and sustainability initiatives and actors.

The course is suitable for graduate students involved with wellbeing and sustainability issues, or any social or interdisciplinary science, evaluation science, conservation, women's studies, area studies, etc. who aim to deepen their knowledge on how gender considerations affect both research and practice. It is highly recommended that students have taken previous coursework in gender or social issues or have some relevant field expertise.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Discuss and critique the main theories and approaches for explaining gender (in)equality and its impact on wellbeing and sustainability.
- Critically discuss prevailing assumptions underlying past and current wellbeing and sustainability interventions.
- Identify what has (or has not) changed in gender and wellbeing and sustainability in the last ten years.
- Discuss differences across time and geographical areas, using a comparative regional perspective, especially between the regions of Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Assess and apply different frameworks and approaches to assess women's agency and empowerment.
- Locate and interpret gender and wellbeing and sustainability indicators by using examples from monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework, identifying the pros and cons of qualitative and quantitative methods; and the pros and cons of WEAI-type surveys (including A-WEAI, pro-WEAI, WELI).
- Demonstrate the capacity to work in groups to develop, facilitate, and conduct activities around gender and wellbeing and sustainability in and out of the classroom.

Course Overview and Purpose

The course aims to provide students with the opportunity to:

- Strengthen their knowledge of key theories and concepts of gender and social wellbeing, agency, empowerment, and gender transformative change.
- Critique assumptions underlying wellbeing and sustainability practice, while appreciating the challenges from integrating gender considerations into practice.
- Learn from comparing and contrasting different contexts/regions.
- Enhance both analytical abilities and practical skills, including qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection, measurement, and analysis.
- Develop an in-depth understanding of the role of extension in supporting gender-focused initiatives.

Course Prerequisites

None

Textbooks, Learning Materials, and Supply Fees

Required readings consist of journal articles, book chapters, policy reports, videos and various online resources. These are fully listed in the weekly pages on UF Canvas E-learning site and available under Modules section (for download or through a website link or through UF library reserve system). We encourage students to be active readers and share compelling publications with peers and instructors of the class.

Instructor Interaction Plan

Classes consist of lectures, class discussions and a variety of individual and group hands-on activities – with an emphasis on experiential and peer learning and flipped classroom approaches. Students' contributions are essential for the success of this approach. Students are expected to read the materials before class, submit the assignments by the deadlines, and come to class prepared for critical, cooperative, and collegial discussions and activities.

Technical Support

UF Computing Help Desk & Ticket Number: All technical issues require a UF Helpdesk Ticket Number. The UF Helpdesk is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/> | 352-392-4357

Weekly Course Schedule

The instructors reserve the right to make changes to this schedule during the semester.

The content of this syllabus may change according to the students' interests.

Week	Date	Topic
Unit 1: Key concepts		
1	1/15	Introduction
2	1/22	Women, gender and social issues across the globe: Past and present
3	1/29	Women's empowerment under scrutiny: Critiques and evolution
4	2/5	Beyond individual approaches: Family/household, Collectiveness and Community
<i>Unit 1 Assignment due Sunday Feb 2</i>		
Unit 2: Contested issues and practices		
5	2/12	Women and economies
6	2/19	Women, ecology and sustainability
7	2/26	Women, health, and bodies

8	3/5	Women, leadership and authority *Mid-semester feedback and reflection Guest speaker: <i>TBD</i>
<i>Unit 2 Assignment due Sunday Feb 23</i>		
Unit 3: Applied research approaches, tools and assessment		
9	3/12	Different on-the-ground initiatives and organizations with varied approaches in different contexts Disparities in access and control (resources, information, technology, income, time, poverty) Guest speaker: <i>TBD</i>
10	3/19	<i>Enjoy Spring Break – No class</i>
11	3/26	Quantitative approaches
12	4/2	Qualitative approaches Guest speaker: <i>TBD</i>
13	4/9	The challenges of assessing women’s agency and empowerment Guest speaker: <i>TBD</i>
<i>Unit 3 Assignment due Sunday April 6</i>		
Unit 4. Lessons from class projects and sharing		
14	4/16	Lessons from gender, agency, empowerment and wellbeing and sustainability projects
15	4/23	Course and content reflections 3-minute student presentations and conclusions
<i>Unit 4 Assignment due Sunday April 26</i>		

Grading Policy

Course grading is consistent with [UF grading policies](#).

Course Grading Structure

The description of activities provided below are a brief explanation of what is required for class. Detailed assignment instructions along with specific requirements and grading criteria will be provided on the Canvas course website.

Assignment Type	Point Value	Percent of Final Grade
Weekly assignments		
Engagement and participation in class activities. You will be graded on your class participation, engagement in class discussion (drawing on concepts and examples discussed in class materials), and contribution to group activities.	10	10% of your total grade
Weekly postings. On most weeks, you will be assigned <i>either</i> a discussion <i>or</i> a self- reflection. <i>Discussions</i> will be submitted to the Canvas discussion board and are meant to demonstrate your understanding of class material and promote class learning. You may be encouraged to comment on other postings as well. <i>Reflections</i> are designed to help you and I monitor your learning during the semester. Reflections focus on “Ah- ha moments,” questions, observations, and experiences. Reflections are (usually – the instructions will be provided each week) confidential and will be seen only by the instructors. Weekly postings should be submitted to Canvas by 11:59pm by Friday AFTER class. You do not need to submit posts every week. You will need to post only 9 during the semester (including the last one that is worth double points).	15	15% of your total grade
Unit assignments: There are four learning units, with one assignment at the end of each unit. They are intended to elicit your knowledge of the unit material and develop your ability to apply some of the skills learned. These are:		
Unit 1 Proposal for semester project (see Unit 4). In preparation for the semester project (see below), you will write a proposal that includes a justification (including how your activity will advance our understanding of gender, agency, empowerment), the relationship to class topics and ideas, and a preliminary literature review (including key literature from class).	15	15% of your total grade
Unit 2 Critical analysis of a practical case using a specific framework. Applying what you learn in class about gender analysis and emergent classification frameworks for gender and women’s agency and empowerment in wellbeing and	15	15% of your total grade

Assignment Type	Point Value	Percent of Final Grade
Weekly assignments		
sustainability projects, students will select a project or program and conduct an analysis to explore and determine its agency, empowerment and transformative potential [Group Assignment].		
Unit 3 CHOOSE ONE based on your interest as a researcher (Women's agency and/or empowerment data exploration) or practitioner (Impact evaluation exercise). Secondary data exploration: You are to locate, interpret and compare information (qualitative and/or quantitative) on gender, women's agency and/or empowerment from an existing database/source or project/initiative of any kind. Impact evaluation: You are to develop an impact evaluation plan for a (given or hypothetical) gender-related project	15	15% of your total grade
Unit 4 Semester project. In the last part of the semester, students will conduct a project of their choice, either a short research piece, data collection/analysis, or a critical assessment of a specific methodology. I will provide some options for you, or you can propose your own project. The purpose is to apply concepts, ideas and methods learned in the course according to personal interests but could also include participation in one of the ongoing research projects undertaken at the University of Florida.	30	30% of your total grade

Grading Scale

Grade	Points	Percentage
A	94-100	94-100
A-	90-93	90-93
B+	87-89	87-89
B	83-86	83-86
B-	80-82	80-82
C+	77-79	77-79
C	73-76	73-76
C-	70-72	70-72
D+	67-69	67-69
D	63-66	63-66
D-	60-62	60-62
S	<60	<60

More information on grading policies can be found at:

[UF Graduate Catalog](#)

[Grades and Grading Policies](#)

Requirements for class attendance, make-up exams, assignments and other work are consistent with university policies. Excuses for missing a class test or a deadline for assignments will only be accepted if appropriately documented and due to illness, serious family circumstances, religious holidays, and other reasons approved by the University. You should give me prior notice whenever possible.

Academic Policies and Resources

Academic policies for this course are consistent with university policies. See <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

Campus Health and Wellness Resources

Visit <https://one.uf.edu/whole-gator/topics> for resources that are designed to help you thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally at UF.

Please contact [UMatterWeCare](#) for additional and immediate support.

Software Use

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Privacy and Accessibility Policies

Instructure (Canvas)

- [Instructure Privacy Policy](#)
- [Instructure Accessibility](#)

Zoom

- [Zoom Privacy Policy](#)
- [Zoom Accessibility](#)

Additional information

Non discrimination

It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that different backgrounds and experiences are viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of differences. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. Any ill-mannered conduct will not be tolerated in discussions, assignments, or any other classroom interactions.

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here](#).

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” [The Honor Code](#) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Software Use

All faculty, staff, and students at the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see the [Notification to Students of FERPA Rights](#).

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care:

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: counseling.ufl.edu/cwc, and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)

Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or police.ufl.edu.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu.

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling.

Library Support Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints

Campus On-Line

Students Complaints