Gender Roles and Gender Bias

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Objectives

The purpose of this lesson is to discuss the accepted gender roles of women and examine Gloria Steinem’s “What Would It Be Like if Women Win” to address what the Second Wave of Feminists were advocating for during the 1960’s and 1970's.

Procedures

Opening the Lesson— Quote/Discussion

Post the following quote for the students to read and then discuss:

"The history of American women is about the fight for freedom, but it's less a war against oppressive men than a struggle to straighten out the perpetually mixed messages about women's roles that was accepted by almost everybody of both genders."
~ Gail Collins

What are the “mixed messages about women’s roles”?  
How are some ways that men accept these roles?  
How do some women accept these roles?

After students discuss the quote show the “Job Switching” episode of “I Love Lucy”.

For homework, ask the students to reflect and answer the following questions:

Overall, how does this episode confirm or reinforce gender roles?  
Why do the women (Lucy and Ethel) want to get a job?  
How do the men (Ricky and Frank) react at first when they accept the challenge to stay home?  What are their attitudes to what their wives do at home?  
What kinds of jobs are offered to the women at the employment office?  
What difficulties do the men encounter as they complete household chores?
Developing the Lesson— Reading Assignment and Analysis

Assign Gloria Steinem’s “What Would It Be Like if Women Win” (Same excerpt used during NEH Seminar found on Oncourse)

After students have read give them the following questions to consider and complete a one or two-page analysis for the document.

• State a thesis that sums up your reaction.

• Record something about what you find interesting about the document in the context of this course. You should not just just write a summarization of the source, but analyze the words and phrases found in the document.

• Ask yourself what assumptions does the author make?

• Does the document contain surprises?

• What questions might a historian ask of the document?

• This is a formal writing response. Avoid the first person and use of questions in your analysis. You may use quotes to support your answers.

Concluding the Lesson— Answering Essential Questions

Students should be able to answer the following essential questions at the conclusion of the lesson. Questions can be answered during a large discussion or small group discussions.

What are the goals of Steinem and the Modern Feminists?
How does Steinem answer/address her own statement, “Women don’t want to exchange places with men?”
Does the “I Love Lucy” episode reinforce Steinem’s statement?
Are their any similarities or differences between the document and television episode?
How does gender bias hurt both women and men?