

## Question Redesign: Language, Gender, and Sexuality

### **Original Question:**

Semiotically, what does it mean to “recognize gender”? What issues might arise for those who fall outside typical gender categories?

***Redesign #1:** What types of identity features seem the most salient to you when you are considering someone’s gender? Are there signs that might feel like an automatic “tip off”?*

***Redesign #2:** In your performance of gender what gendered signs do you align with? Has there been a time when you have used signs that are outside of the expected gender binary of performance?*

This redesign highlights the importance of tying in students’ experiences to the material at hand. Though most students have some understanding that gender exists on a spectrum and there are many different ways that gender could be expressed and/or performed, some students may never have taken the time to consider their own processes of determination/recognition of gendered signs because this process is thought by many to be quite automatic and natural. The goal of this question is to take a step back and consider what they deem as “natural”, “implicit”, and understand more of the nuance of gendered identities (e.g. what might be read as a masculine sign on one person might be considered feminine on another)

The first redesign has the student picture a time that they were considering someone’s gender, what do they notice, what signs do they look for, what jumps out to them? By stepping into this moment of noticing, the students can zero in on their experiences and pinpoint the process that often goes unanalyzed.

The second redesign has the student examine their own performance of gender. What makes them “manly”, “womanly”, “genderqueer”? What signs do they use to convey their gender to others? Are they easy to understand? Are they purposefully/strategically opaque? This question has a different aim, it has students (who may or may not have ever really considered that their gender HAS been performed) to take note of expressions of their gender that they may actively or passively have been using in their gender performance while also considering the gender ideologies that may have led to their particular performance of gender.