

Essay Question 13: Constitutiveness and the Material (Unit 7)

What are the arguments for everything being, and not being, discursively constructed?

What is your own position here?

Essay Question 15: Binaries, Binary Thinking, Gender and Sexuality (Unit 7)

Consider the question of *binaries* (e.g. hetero/homosexual, male/female). Explain how discourses such as 'Compulsory heterosexuality' (Rich, 1976; see also Sunderland, 2004) can work to help *construct* a gender binary. In what sense can such binaries be seen as 'fictitious'?

Notes:

- *diversity* within members of a given group is likely to be greater than differences between groups
- *similarities* between the groups are likely to be more numerous and salient than any differences between them
- 'binary thinking' continues, perhaps especially as regards gender. Cynthia Nelson suggests that this is at least in part because of the binary way in which sexuality is thought about (see Nelson's Unit B4.3 Extension section entitled 'Considering Sexual Identities Potentially Significant to Anyone').
- Other writers - Butler, Cameron, Hollway – have similarly proposed that the primary binary opposition is that of homo/heterosexuality, and accordingly that it is dominant discourses of heterosexuality (e.g. Adrienne Rich's 'Compulsory heterosexuality') which create the *gender* binary.

Essay Question 16: Identifying Gendered Discourses in a 'Densely Populated' Text (Unit 7)

Find a text (written, or spoken but transcribed) which exemplifies many gendered discourses. Identify and name as many discourses as you can. Then identify

- competing and dominant discourses
- cases of 'manifest intertextuality'
- cases of interdiscursivity

Essay Question 17: CDA and Post-structuralism (Units 7, 8)

In what ways are CDA and post-structuralist approaches to language both similar and different? Which do you feel is the most appropriate theoretical framework for gender and language study? Is it indeed possible to answer this question? To what extent does the appropriacy of each approach depend on the research question(s) and/or data in question?

Start with these three references:

Baxter, Judith (2003) *Positioning Gender in Discourse*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fairclough, Norman (2003) *Analysing Discourse*. London: Routledge.

Wetherell, Margaret, Taylor, Stephanie and Yates, Simeon (2001) *Discourse as Data*. Milton Keynes: Open University/Sage.

Essay Question 18: Written *vis á vis* Spoken Texts (throughout, but definitely Unit 10)

In the early days of gender and language study, the concern tended to be with spoken language rather than written texts. Why do you think this was? How can the study of written texts be said to have enhanced the study of gender and language?