

Eco-Imagining Gender Studies: 3 Parts

Catherine Darrow, Alyssa Slatky, Crystal Sain, Aaron Klass

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/3C2sRmW9DZk>

Introduction:

“I think there are very few examples of people who have exclusively positive and uplifting stories about how they were taught to perform their gender, and actually for most people, their performance of gender or the way in which they were taught to perform gender has been fraught with trauma and discomfort and fear and shame.”

-Ali Hannon

https://medium.com/@jenniferbrown_97699/the-performance-of-gender-improv-and-the-exploration-of-identities-and-norms-with-ali-hannon-890bed2e9bc3

“The links between climate change and gender inequality are widely recognized, yet there has been a systemic failure to integrate gender conversations into climate policy and implementation.”

-Eleonore Soubeyran

This curriculum is for eco-imagining Gender Studies coursework. It is designed to draw attention to the ways that we perform gender in our daily lives, our own relationship to sustainability, and to teach some of the basic skills of improv and embodiment for use in the classroom.

By facilitating the warm up, short form activity, and long form activity, this curriculum will spur conversations about who is in the room, and how we in the room (and our society more broadly) relate to performance, gender performance, and sustainable action.

Women and Queer people have perspectives on gender performance that are informed by lived experience, and by incorporating those worldviews in improvisational activities, and then turning those activities toward the subject of sustainability, participants will come to perceive performances of sustainability in a way that is prompted by the embodied action of improv.

1. Warm Up – *Mapping Ourselves and our Sustainability*

Mapping Prompts

Where are you from in the world?

How sustainable are you?

-In this warm up activity, participants will first be asked to arrange themselves in the space according to where they are from, by using their bodies to create a map, no speaking allowed. Follow up by inviting people to say where they are from.

- Finally, they will be asked to arrange themselves, again without speaking, on the same imaginary line, but the poles will change to represent sustainability and unsustainability. Prompt them to observe their place on the spectrum. Invite anyone who wants to share their reasoning.

In this activity we are focused on identifying who is in the room with us, and on their relationship to their homes, their own gender expressions and relationship to their gender, and their existing mindset around individual sustainability action. It functions as an introduction, and an activity that positions us in the subjects at hand.

2. Short Form – *The Machine Game*

Machine Game Prompts

Machine that builds gender.

Machine that builds sustainability.

Machine that builds sustainable gender.

-In this activity, one at a time, a workshop participant will adopt a repeating movement and sound in order to represent a part of a machine.

-If necessary, a facilitator can create the first part of the machine. Participants should join one at a time. Once five or more people have joined, the facilitator should prompt them to describe their movement and sound in terms of gender. Then the facilitator can move on to the next machine.

-The first machine will have parts that represent pieces of gender performance. The second machine will represent action toward sustainability. And the third will represent action toward sustainable gender constructions.

This exercise is designed to bring in aspects of gender performance and sustainability action in order to begin to call attention to the ways we perform gender in our culture and in our own lives. The workshop participants work together to embody individual parts of a machine in order to better understand the ways that each of us contribute to the construction of gender and the construction of sustainability action. The final machine will call on the participants to creatively unite the parts of the machine that builds gender and the machine that builds sustainability to imagine a machine that builds “sustainable gender” in order to prompt workshop participants to unite these concepts in their lived experiences beyond the workshop. The connections made in this activity between gender performance and sustainability will be carried into the next activity for synthesis.

3. Long Form – “Yes, and”

“Yes, and” Prompts

“No”: Sustainable Gender Reveal

“Yes, but”: Sustainable Wedding

“Yes, and”: Sustainable Beauty Pageant

-In this activity, the workshop participants will be divided in half and prompted to break off into two lines opposite one another.

-At one end of the lines, participants from each line will come together to form a performing pair.

-First they will be asked to work together to plan a Sustainable Gender Reveal Party, but any time one participant offers a suggestion for the event, the other will respond with “No.” This exercise will help participants understand why it is important not to say “No” in improv scenes.

-Next, participants will be asked to work together to plan a Sustainable Wedding, and any time one participant offers a suggestion, their partner will respond with “Yes, but.” This will illustrate the importance of saying “yes” in an improv scene, but discourage the disagreement that “but” represents.

-Finally, they will be prompted to plan a Sustainable Beauty Pageant, and any suggestion will be met with a “Yes, and” response. This will facilitate an ongoing scene, and will illustrate the most important role a scene partner can play in making a scene ongoing and engaging.

This activity is designed to teach the basic skills of scenic agreement that makes improv possible, and to begin to cultivate a sense of the ways participants may encounter gender and sustainability together in life beyond the classroom. It is structured to call attention to possible relationships between gender performance and sustainability.

Conclusion:

At the end of the workshop, come together and facilitate a conversation between participants. If it is helpful consider the following questions:

What came up for you around your own gendered performance?

What surprised you about joining gender and sustainability in conversation?

In what ways might you think about gender in a new light?

In what ways might you think about sustainability in a new light?

What did you notice about the group dynamics at different points during the workshop?

Is there a way that you can incorporate sustainable gender into your life today?

What is a way that you can use your gendered lens to make the world a more sustainable place?

In what ways are you understanding the integration of gender and sustainability that you previously did not?

