

Course Description:

What would it look like for the domestic spaces of our co-ops to be places of radical gender equality? How can we challenge the gendered aspects of labor in our cooperatives? How can we use our cooperative homes as incubators for new ways of expressing gender in the domestic sphere and new ways of conceptualizing domesticity, family, and care? In this course we will talk about the way gender intersects with the divisions of labor in our co-ops, invisible labor, emotional labor, co-ops as support systems for family structures beyond the nuclear family, and other topics as suggested by workshop participants. We will strategize about how to have conversations about gender in our cooperatives.

Class Outline

1. Introductions – 5 minutes
2. Game – “The Co-Op Machine” – 15 minutes
 - Participants will break into small groups
 - We will do a version of the Theater of the Oppressed game “The Machine of Rhythms,” except in this version each “machine” is a task or event that happens in our cooperatives.
 - One person in the group starts the machine by standing at the front and performing a repeated motion. Another participant joins in with a coordinating motion and so on.
 - We will reflect in a brief discussion about what the tasks were and how we felt about doing them.
3. Whole group discussion – Domesticity and Gender in our Cooperatives – 25 minutes

Questions:

- What role does the domestic sphere serve in sustaining our lives and livelihoods and offering a space for relationship-building?
 - Is the domestic sphere political or apolitical?
 - How does the domestic sphere of the cooperative home fulfill some of the same functions of other family domestic spheres, such as the nuclear family or the extended family?
 - How does gender determine people’s roles in domestic spaces in our society?
 - Are performances of domestic tasks in cooperatives gendered in a different way or in the same way as those in non-cooperative domestic spaces?
4. Brief history lesson via powerpoint – alternative models for domestic organization – 10 minutes
 5. Small group discussion – 25 minutes
 - What opportunities do we see for challenging gender norms of domesticity in our cooperatives?
 - What challenges do we experience when it comes to gender with regard to the work and performance of roles in our cooperatives?
 - What ideas or resources can we offer each other?
 6. Share from our discussions, synthesize statements of purpose – 10 minutes