GSWS 316-4: Disciplining Sex: Feminist Science Studies and Socio-Biology
Breadth-Humanities/Social Sciences/Science

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Office hours: TBA
Lecture: Mondays 13:30 – 17:20; AQ 4150

Course Description:
How many sexes are there? Are sex differences determined by the brain, by hormones, by genes, by genitals, by social environment, by some combination of these factors, or by something else entirely? Is sexuality a product of nature, nurture, or both? Is biological sex fixed or can it change over time? What are the values, assumptions, and beliefs that shape these questions and what is at stake in the answers we provide?

This third-year course critically examines the social, material, political, and technological intersections of science and sex. It asks: What do we know about sex and sexuality, what don’t we know, and how do we come to know (or not know) it? Drawing together readings and media from biology, anthropology, philosophy, history, feminist and indigenous science studies, queer theory, critical race theory, and the literary and performing arts, we will explore a range of questions, including (but not limited to): What is the biology – as a scientific matter and as bodily matter – of sex and gender? What can (or can't) animals such as promiscuous primates or monogamous voles tell us about human sex, gender, and sexuality? How are scientific values such as objectivity, discovery, or universality engaged in producing and naturalizing gendered, classed, or racialized differences? What other approaches to thinking and doing sex exist within and beyond the sciences, and how might they alter, challenge, or subvert dominant regimes of knowledge production about sexual difference? How do the social contexts and meanings of categories such as monogamy, masculinity, or asexuality shape scientific research questions and practices? In turn, how does scientific research influence our understandings and experiences of these categories and the people (or animals or plants or bacteria) who fall into with them? What role do technologies such as hormones, PET scans, or vibrators play in shaping our definitions and experiences of our bodies’ sex?

Educational Goals:
After successful completion of this course, students are expected to:
• Convey an understanding of the social, historical, and political dimensions of scientific knowledge production;
• Analyze the connections between biology and society at individual, institutional, and global scales
• Articulate in verbal and written form how sex and sexuality act as generative sites of knowledge, power, and governance
• Act as critical consumers and producers of knowledge about sex as a practice, identity, materiality, and concept, particularly as it intersects with other formations of subjectivity and difference such race, gender, class, and ability

Course Texts and Courseware:
All course materials will be made available online through canvas and the library.

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
• Participation: 10%
• Discussion Questions/Lab Notebook: 25%
• Implosion Group Project: 20%
• Twenty Sex/Gender Questions Exercise: 15%
• Final Project: 30%

Prerequisite: Prerequisite: 30 units.