GSWS 316-4 DISCIPLINING SEX:
FEMINIST SCIENCE STUDIES AND SOCIO-BIOLOGY

Professor: Dr. Beth Seaton  
Email: eseaton@sfu.ca  
Office: Harbour Centre  
Office hours: TBA  
Lecture: Tuesdays 8:30 – 12:20; HC 2510

Course Description:  
What makes sex sexy? Must one always be a sexual subject? Why are some sorts of sex thinkable, whereas others remain closeted within the ‘unknowable’ or the ‘unthinkable’? What is the role of science in our understanding, knowledge and practice of sex?

Like other forms of intellectual activity, science is produced within historical circumstances, with corresponding societal beliefs and accepted norms that vary across time and place. In this respect, the values and concepts used to understand human sexuality, particularly concepts of gender, maleness and femaleness, influence scientific scholarship and practice.

This course investigates those conceptual and epistemological (or knowledge) premises that support the practice of modern biological sciences within the West. In this respect, it looks at how scientific practice may reproduce androcentric conventions in its research and practice. But it also closely examines the numerous avenues by which ideologies of sex and gender act to form, as they are informed by, our bodies; in which we not only ‘have’ sex and have bodies, but we ‘are’ sexed bodies and are mindful of that conundrum. In sum, this class examines the various ways in which scientific knowledge, social life, sexual life and the life of the human body overlap and interpenetrate. As a third-year class, this course is theoretical in orientation, focusing upon ideas from critical science studies, philosophy and sociology. Students need to be prepared to read theoretical texts and to present a critically engaged research paper at the end of the term.

Educational Goals:  
Students will learn to think critically about key premises from bio-science, sociology, psychology and philosophy that guide common understandings of the body, sexual difference and sexuality and which support intersecting relations of human identity and subjectivity. Students will also learn about the biology and anatomy of the body, especially as both the biological body and the social body combine to produce human identity and subjectivity.

Prerequisite: 30 units. Breadth-Humanities/Social Sciences/Science.
Course Texts and Courseware:
A courseware package will be made available. Many academic articles assigned for this class are available online through the library.

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
Class Participation: 10%
Seminar Presentation – The Body Parts Project: 20%
2 Tests on Key Terms in Disciplining Sex: 15% each
Annotated Bibliography: 15%
Term Paper: 25%