GSWS 316-4 Disciplining Sex: Feminist Science Studies and Socio-Biology
(B-Hum) (B-Soc) (B-Sci)

Professor: Dr. Elizabeth Seaton
Email: eseaton@sfu.ca
Office: Harbour Centre
Office hours: TBA
Lecture: Tuesdays 17:30 - 21:20; HCC 1315

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.

Course Texts and Courseware:
Reading will be on Canvas

Cell Phone and Laptop Policies: Cell phones and other means of electronic communication are distracting. Please turn your phone off and secure it out of sight for the duration of the class. Laptops are allowed for note-taking purposes only.

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism – or using and claiming another’s ideas and/or writing as if it were your own – is a serious offence of academic dishonesty and it will be addressed in a serious manner. You will be caught if you plagiarize. I take plagiarism very seriously and I will enforce Simon Fraser University’s penalties for academic dishonesty to the full extent.

Prerequisite: 30 units. Breadth-Humanities/Social Sciences/Science.
Course Evaluation and Assignments:

**Class Participation: (10%)** Based upon attendance, productive engagement in class discussion, actively reading the course material and critical engagement with student presentations.

**Seminar Presentation – The Body Parts Project: (15%)** Each week, we will hear one presentation (comprised of no more than 4 students) which will offer an informative discussion of one aspect of the body (e.g.: genitals, brain, skin, etc.). This ‘Body Parts Project’ is assigned on a weekly basis in conjunction with the topic of that date’s readings and lecture. Mindful of the creative tensions between body and sexual / social self, the presentation will address the physiological, anatomical and biological aspects of that body part, as well as its social meaning and value. In other words, (and as an example), The Body Parts Project will not only describe how the muscles and fascia of the head and face function in such a complex fashion, but it will also offer a critical sociological analysis of how a primary role of such functioning is gendered expression (or social communication). Each presentation will be accompanied by a bibliography and an outline that clearly indicates the responsibilities of each participant. Each section of the presentation (physiological and sociological) should not run more than 15-20 minutes, for a total presentation of 45 minutes. The contributions of each participant will be evaluated individually as part of a greater whole.

**2 Short Tests on Key Terms in Disciplining Sex. 15% each.**

**Annotated Bibliography: (15%)** This annotated bibliography is intended as preparation for the term paper. Choosing a topic central to the concerns of the course, you will research the field in order to discover the most valuable sources pertinent to its analysis. You will then prepare an annotated bibliography of the 6-10 most relevant books or articles on the subject. This specialized bibliography will contain an annotation of approximately a paragraph for each entry. The entry will briefly describe the thesis (or arguments) of the article, book or book chapter, the methodologies used in determining the validity of the thesis, and the work’s conclusion. Students should also attempt to describe the utility of the work for their own research. *The annotated bibliography will begin with a short description of your research topic and its analytic aims.*

**Term Paper (30%)**: While the choice of topic of this paper is open (as long as it’s visibly relevant to the concerns of the course), this essay is held to the expectations of an academic research paper. In this respect, it shall have a clear argumentative structure, with introductory exposition, a well-developed thesis statement (which includes the methodology as well as the aims and objectives of the paper), and it will include substantial reference to scholarly writing on the body. I expect this paper to be analytic, rather than descriptive. (It will investigate a problematic, rather than describe an existing social phenomenon). The paper will be 10-12 double-spaced pages in length, be written in 12 pt. font, and confirm to APA style of citation. (For example, see [http://webster.comment.edu/apa/apa_index.htm](http://webster.comment.edu/apa/apa_index.htm)).