WS 316-4: Disciplining sex: Feminist science studies perspectives on sex and sociobiology (B-Hum, B-Soc, B-Sci)

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Since Ann Oakley's 1972 distinction between sex-as-nature and gender-as-culture, a central concern of feminist theorizing has been the development of a distinction between sex and gender, with what might arguably be termed a strategic emphasis on the latter term in the pair:

Feminist theory defines sex only as the biology of a person – whether he or she is anatomically male or female. A central task in contemporary feminist theory ... is to distinguish conceptually between sex and gender so that expectations of sex [now, more properly, gender] roles can be altered if they are not perceived to be biological. (M. Humm, 1995, The dictionary of feminist theory)

However, during the same period, from the early 1970s to the early 2000s, theorizing in evolutionary biology and neuropsychology have been more focussed on sex than on gender, in relation to such things as selection and fitness, energy, strategies, and cognitive and affective differences. As a result, the two bodies of knowledge – feminist theorizing on gender, and biopsychological theorizing on sex – seem close to unbridgeable.

In this course, we will explore the usefulness of tools that have been developed within feminist science studies in building such bridges, through discussion of a series of readings on such topics as bioepistemology and situated knowledges, normal science and the pursuit of difference, and gambling for existence.

Course text:


Readings on reserve at the library

Evaluation:

Attendance and participation 10%
Analysis Papers (2, 1000-1200 words each) 30%
Midterm examination 30%
Application Paper (2000-2200 words) 30%

Prerequisites: 30 credit hours

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