WS 316-4: Disciplining Sex: Sex, Gender and Technology (B-Hum, B-Soc, B-Sci)

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Course Description:
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 an emphasis on the latter term:

“Feminist theory defines sex only as the biology of the person—whether he or she is anatomically male or female. A central task in contemporary feminist theory...is to distinguish between sex and gender so that expectations [based on sex] can be altered if these are not perceived to be biological (M. Humm, 1995, *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*)

This course examines the relationship between sex, gender and technology in a global context and assesses the impact of new technologies and whether these serve to enforce or challenge traditional views of gender and gender roles. We will look at technologies that blur and complicate distinctions between the sexes and/or alter traditional views of gender and gender roles, and examine such topics as abortion and contraception; eugenics and sex preselection; new reproductive technologies and artificial wombs; public pregnancies and medical surveillance; the ethics of surrogate motherhood; metaphors of women’s bodies in medical conceptions of menstruation and menopause; bodily narratives and rape; men, masculinity and re-creating “the second sex” in reproduction; Viagra and the pharmaceutical manufacturing of male sexuality; breast cancer narratives and the medical reconstruction of femininity; cosmetic surgery, race, and the medical erasure of differences; female and male genital cutting and culture; and transgendering and sex reassignment surgery. Class time will consist of discussion, small group work, and film clips.

Course Texts and Courseware:

Other articles, short fiction and poetry will be posted on Webct.

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
Attendance and Participation: 15%
Midterm: 25%
Short Papers (2, 1000 words each): 30%
Long Paper (2000 words each): 30%