GSWS 316-4: Disciplining Sex (B-Hum) (B-Soc) (B-Sci)

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Course Description:
Over the past two decades, the body has been discovered to be as much social construct as biological ‘fact’. This class examines the various ways in which social life, sexual life and the life of the human body overlap and interpenetrate. Of particular interest are the numerous avenues by which ideologies of sex and gender act to form, as they are informed by, the body, but these investigations are by no means the exclusive purview of the course. Additionally, we will consider key issues in the modern sociology of sex, the self and the body: in which we not only ‘have’ bodies, but we ‘are’ bodies and are mindful of that conundrum. Beginning then with Descartes’ highly influential mind/body dualism, we will move to the invention of ‘oppositely sexed’ bodies; the social regulation and disciplining of ‘bodies’; the reflexive ‘habits’ of the body; the social and spatial embodiments of identity; and the management, tailoring and performance of bodies as individual ‘projects’. As a third-year class, this course is theoretical in orientation, focusing upon ideas from both philosophy and sociology.

Learning Outcomes:
Students will learn to think critically about the key premises from medicine, sociology, philosophy and psychology which guide common understandings of the body and sexuality and which support intersecting layers of oppression.

Course Texts and Courseware:
A Courseware package will be made available at the bookstore.

Course Evaluation and Assignments: (Details see page 2)
Class Participation: (10%)
Seminar Presentation – The Body Parts Project: (20%)
Pop Quiz on Key Terms in Disciplining Sex: (20%).
Annotated Bibliography for Term Paper: (15%)
Term Paper: (35%)

Prerequisite: Prerequisite: 30 units
Class Participation  (10%)
While participation is usually based upon attendance and participation in class discussion, this mark is also reflective of students’ responsibility for reading the course material.

Seminar Presentation – The Body Parts Project:  (20%)
Each week, a maximum of 3 students will be responsible for presenting an informative discussion on one aspect of the body (eg: eyes, brain, legs, skin, etc.). This ‘body part’ is assigned on a weekly basis in conjunction with the topic of that date’s reading and lecture. Mindful of the creative tensions between body and sexual / social self, the presentation will include both physiological and sociological analysis. In other words, (and as an example), it will not only describe how eyes see, but will offer answers as to why are they so important as gendered social communicators or as “windows on the soul”. Each presentation will be accompanied by a bibliography and an outline that clearly indicates the responsibilities of each participant. (The contribution of each participant will be evaluated individually as part of a greater whole).

Pop Quiz on Key Terms in Disciplining Sex  (20%).

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  (35%)
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).