

# The Scientific Study of Sex and Gender

IDIS 391 (The Social Impact of Science: U1)  
Women's Studies WOST 391

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Office Hours: Monday 10:00 – 11:30  
Wednesday 10:00 – 11:30  
Thursday 10:00 – 11:00  
Tuesday & Friday by appointment only.

If none of these times are convenient for you, other times can be arranged by appointment. Please feel free to call me.

Class time: Thursday 1:00 – 3:30

Class room: 103 PPHAC

## Course Description:

This interdisciplinary course focuses on the distinction between and intersections of sex and gender. Students will learn how to evaluate critically the theoretical and methodological assumptions made by psychologists and biologists with respect to sex and gender. We will discuss some important research claims and theoretical models that have both reinforced and challenged the sex/gender binary. We will explore historical and contemporary issues related to concepts of normalcy and the construction of masculinity and femininity. We will consider issues such as determinist theories of women and men's natures; sociobiology and related feminist critiques, and the role played by medical technology in influencing sexuality.

## Course Requirements

### **Gender Identity Analysis:**

In this gender identity analysis you are to discuss and describe your own gender identity development with respect to three of the following socializing agents: parents, siblings, peers, education, religion, and the media. This 3-5 page analysis is due February 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **Boys Don't Cry Paper:**

Boys Don't Cry (1999) is an independent, low-budget film based on the life and death of Brandon Teena, born Teena Brandon, a transgendered youth in Nebraska. Thematically, *Boys Don't Cry* seems to be "about" identity transformation, sexual ambiguity, androgyny/transsexuality, violence, and intolerance. Write a paper on what you think the film says about the relationships between these topics? Support your claims with evidence from the film. This paper is due on March 29<sup>th</sup>.

### **Discussion Leader:**

Each individual will have the responsibility for guiding our class discussion on a specific reading assignment. Guiding the discussion does not mean that you talk the entire period, although it might mean that you give a brief review or summary of the material or conduct an in-class activity (e.g., a survey, a poll, a small-group exercise, a video clip, etc).

The Discussion Leader will submit a write-up that includes: (i) an outline of the reading you are responsible for, (ii) a one-paragraph (single-spaced) summary of the "take-home" messages of the reading, and (iii) discussion questions that could be used when you lead the discussion. Your questions should be no more than 3 lines long.

### **Response Papers:**

You are required to submit three response papers this semester. Response papers are your chance to decide whether or not you agree with a particular text and to figure out why. Response papers should be 2 pages typed. Response papers are due on the day we cover the readings to which you are responding. Your response papers should address the following, although not necessarily in this order and not necessarily individually:

## Response Papers continued

1. **Key Premises of the Reading:** What is the main point of the reading? How does the author support the main point? What evidence is offered? What assumptions about sex and gender are being made in the reading?
2. **Context of the Reading:** How does the reading relate to the other readings this week – is it saying the same thing? Something different? How does the reading fit with class discussions? Your own experiences? Material from other courses?
3. **Your Stand on the Reading:** Do you agree with the ideas in this reading or do you think it's just bulllocks? Why? What makes you feel this way – class discussions? Your own experiences? Material from your other courses, reading, or your job/career?

You are not to submit a Response Paper for the topic you lead a discussion on. You must submit your first two Response Papers on or before: February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **On Being Male, Female, Neither or Both Paper:**

The author of a New York Times article entitled “On Being Male, Female, Neither or Both” concluded her comments with the following statement: “The definition of sex was (and is) still up for grabs.” In our post-modern world, we have become accustomed to the malleability of gender identity and sexuality. We are also aware that individuals undergo sex reassignment surgeries, but by and large we assume that transgender people are transitioning from one discrete category to another. Queer activists certainly challenge this assumption, preferring to envision sex, gender, and sexuality on a continuum, but these days even scientists don't concur about a definitive definition of sex. Should sex be defined chiefly by anatomy? Chromosomes? The body's ability to reproduce and respond to hormones? If the boundaries of biological categories can be contested, what are the implications for culturally constructed ideas about gender identity and sexuality? Due April 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Class Participation:**

Because the discussion of readings is a major component of this course, you will be graded on your preparation for and involvement in class. This approach asks that you engage fully with the material and explore your own beliefs about the class material. *Your participation grade is based on the quality of your own original comments and on your ability to listen to others' comments and respond. Participation means listening AND speaking.* Although I set the grading criteria, you assign your own participation grade daily. As part of your participation grade, I expect you to complete the readings before you come to class.

## Class Participation continued

In this class, we will discuss issues that are highly controversial. These can often be emotional topics about which many people hold strong beliefs and values. We all come from different perspectives on these issues. It is likely that we will disagree with each other. I welcome and encourage lively discussion, as they are necessary for true learning to occur. Indeed, much of this course will center on discussion. However, disagreements should not take the form of personal attack. That is absolutely unacceptable. One of the goals of this course is to challenge you to think deeply and critically about these issues, not to change your mind. All points of view are welcome in this class, but comments made must be respectful of others in the class.

Your participation grade is derived partly from (1) any in-class activities we do (which may include free-writing, pop quizzes, small-group projects, show-and-tell, reactions to film/TV/music clips, etc) and (2) from my own judgment about your commitment to full participation in the course.

### **Pop Quizzes:**

I reserve the right to give "pop-quizzes" if I get the impression that you are not keeping up with the class material on your own.

## Course Evaluation

Your course grade will be based upon your performance on the following course requirements:

Response Papers	30
Discussion Leader	15
Gender Identity Analysis	10
Boy's Don't Cry Paper	10
MFN Paper	15
Class Participation	20
	100%

All assignments are due at the beginning of class.

## Required Readings

(MJB) Bailey, M.J. (2003). *The Man who Would be Queen: The Science of Gender-Bending and Transsexualism*, Joseph Henry Press, Washington, DC.

(RL) Lippa, R. (2005). *Gender, Nature, and Nurture*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey.

(RR) Additional readings will be distributed in class or placed on reserve in Reeves Library. You should print the readings, read and review them before the day scheduled for discussing them, and bring them to class on the days they are assigned. Reserve readings may be modified or updated throughout the semester.

## Course Schedule

1/18 Introduction to Scientific Study of Sex and Gender  
(An overview of the course)

1/25 Masculinity and Femininity  
(Definitions, Male/Female Dichotomy, Measurements, and Androgyny)

### Readings:

(RL) Chapter 1 & 2

2/1 Theories of Gender and Gender Identity  
(Development and Roles Violations)

### Readings:

(RL) Chapter 3 pgs 104 -118  
Chapter 5

(MJB) Chapters 1 & 2

Open Meeting for Students 1-2 pm

2/8 Biological Variables and Prenatal Development  
(Development of the Body and the Brain: Organization)

Readings:

(RL) Chapter 3 pgs. 81 -104

Gender Identity Analysis Due

2/15 Disorders of Sexual Development  
(Inter-sexed, Early Exposure to Hormones; and Sex Reassignment)

Readings:

(RL) Chapter 4

(MJB) Chapter 3

(RR) Reiner, W.G. & Gearhart, J.P. (2004). *Discordant sexual identity in some genetic males with cloacal exstrophy assigned to female sex at birth*, The New England Journal of Medicine, 333-341.

2/22 Gender Identity Revisited  
(Intersexuality - Identity Differentiation)

(RR) Fausto-Sterling, A. (1993) *The five sexes: Why male and female are not enough*, The Sciences, March/April, 39-44.

(RR) Zucker, K.J. (1999). *Intersexuality and gender identity differentiation*, Annual Review of Sexual Research, 1-69.

3/1            Sexuality  
(The full spectrum)

Readings:

(MJB)        Part II Chapters 4-7

(RR) Gallo, V. Robinson, P.R. (2000). *Is there a "Homosexual Brain" ?*, *The Gay and Lesbian Review*, 12 – 15.

(RR) Rust, P.C. (2001). *Two many and not enough*, *Journal of Bisexuality*, 1(1); 216 – 229.

(RR) Schwartz, P. & Rutter, V. (1998). *Sexual desire and gender, The Gender of Sexuality*. Thousand Oaks, CA; Pine Forge Press. 174 – 196.

3/8            Recess – No class

3/15          The Social Construction of Sexuality

(RR) Seidman, S., (2003). *The Social Construction of Sexuality*, Introduction and Chapters 4 &5.

\*3/20        Attend the TBTN March and Rally at 11:30

3/22        Film: Boys Don't Cry

3/29        Transsexuals  
(The Early Years, MTF, and FTM)

Readings:

(MJB)        Part III Chapters 8 – 11

(RR) Gagne, P. Tewksbury, R., & McGaughey, D.(1997).

*Coming out and crossing over: Identity formation and proclamation in a transgender community*, Gender & Society, 230- 249.

(RR) O'Hartigan, M.D. (1993). *Changing sex is not changing gender*, Sound Out, 20.

Boys Don't Cry Paper Due

4/5 Transsexuals  
(Transition and Surgery)

(RR) Brown, M.L. & Rounsley, C.A. (1996). *True Selves*, Chapters 5 (Therapy) and 9 (Medical and Surgical Options).

4/12 On Being Male, Female, Neither or Both  
Paper Presentations

4/19 Film: TBA  
Trustee Meeting

4/26 Closure and Evaluations