

WOST 297P

Hormones, Body Languages, and the Politics of Life

University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Bartlett 3 / TTh 11:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Fall 2008

Professor: Mary Elizabeth Strunk
Office: Bartlett 387
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10-12 p.m.
Phone: 413-545-5331
Email: mstrunk@wost.umass.edu

→ Course Description and Objectives

The endocrinologist's joke, "We are what we secrete," began as a lighthearted allusion to the chemical messengers that may affect everything from metabolism to mood. This course will consider the "cultural politics" of hormones both inside and outside the body, which means that we will spend the semester developing informed positions on hormones' meaning, purpose, and application. We will ask:

- How did hormones become the cause—and proof—of sex and gender differences?
- How have ideas of "healthy" and "sick" bodies been changed by various hormones therapies?
(And why have women so often been the recipients of those therapies?)
- As hormone technologies enable some people to control their fertility, aging, and gender expression, how do such technologies revive (or revise) long-standing debates over categories of biological sex and the attributes associated with "male" and "female"?
- How have/should hormones technologies affect the way we play sports, do our jobs, and live our lives?
- How do hormones affect the environment and the food we eat?

The first century of hormone research produced not one, but many languages of the body, written by physicians, endocrinologists, sexologists, eugenicists, birth control advocates, psychologists, feminists, and advocates of gay and transgendered rights, among others. Together, we will examine the dissensus of these various discourses. In the process, we will discern how linguistic and cultural practices shape scientific knowledge—and vice versa.

→ Required Texts *(Available at Food for Thought Books and/or on reserve at Du Bois Library)*

- Fausto-Sterling, Anne. Sexing the Body. New York: Basic Books, 2000.
- Ozeki, Ruth L. My Year of Meats. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.
- Multiple e-reserve readings, to be printed out and brought to class.

→ Assignments and Deadlines

Participation	In-class performance and attendance	10%
Quizzes and in-class exercises	TBA on day assigned	10%
Discussion-leading + SPARK post	TBD via individual sign-ups	10%
SPARK revision	Within one week of discussion-leading	10%
Reading response (x3)	Th, 9/25; W, 11/12, T, 12/9	30%
Final Project Outline + Bibliography	Due noon, T, 12/16 (proposal due 11/25)	30%

Total: 100%

→ Reading/Discussion Schedule

W E E K 1 : *Hormones in history and popular culture*

- T Sept. 2** Course overview and introduction
 ___ Handouts: excerpt from Gabriel Lichterman's *28 Days: What Your Cycle Reveals About Your Love Life, Moods, and Potential*; Steinem's "If Men Could Menstruate."
- Th Sept. 4** The Endocrine System (basic overview) / Hormones and "Humors"
 ___ Transcript for "Hormones in the Mind" from The Infinite Mind radio program. Lichtenstein Creative Media, March 20, 2001.

W E E K 2 : *Hormonal times and the so-called sex-hormones*

- T Sept. 9** ___ Vines, Gail. "Hormonal Times: Blood, 'Bad' Behaviour and Biorhythms" and "Hormonal Havoc: Appetite, Stress, and Aggression" from *Raging Hormones: Do They Rule Our Lives?* (U of C Press, 1993): 33-59, 61-84.
- Th Sept. 11** ___ Fausto-Sterling, Ch. 1, "Dueling Dualisms," 1-29

W E E K 3 : *Gender chemistry: Testosterone*

- T Sept. 16** ___ Fausto-Sterling, Ch. 6, "Sex Glands, Hormones, and Gender Chemistry," 146-169.
 ___ deKruif, Paul. *The Male Hormone* (excerpts). (Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1945)
- Th Sept. 18** ___ Dabbs, James McBride, with Mary Godwin Dabbs. "The Animal Within" and "Testosterone, Mind, and Behavior." In *Heroes, Rogues, and Lovers: Testosterone and Behavior*. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000), 3-23; 41-72.
 ___ Sapolsky, Robert. "The Trouble with Testosterone," from *The Trouble With Testosterone* (Scribner, 1997), 147-159.
 ___ Listen: "Life at Zero" and "Infinite Gent" from *This American Life* (August 30, 2002). http://www.thisamericanlife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?episode=220

W E E K 4 : *Gender chemistry: Estrogens*

- T Sept. 23** ___ Fausto-Sterling, Ch. 7, "Do Sex Hormones Really Exist? (Gender Becomes Chemical)," 170-194.
 ___ Angier, Natalie. "Greasing the Wheels" from *Woman: An Intimate Geography* (Houghton-Mifflin, 1999), 177-192.
- Th Sept. 25** **FIRST READING REPOSE DUE**
 ___ Watkins, Elizabeth Siegel. "Physicians, Patients, and the New Oral Contraceptives" and "Debating the Safety of the Pill." In *On the Pill* (JHUPress, 1998), 34-52; 73-102.
 ___ Handout: "The Pill, From a Doctor." *The Times*, Sept. 27, 1965.
 ___ Screening: *The Pill*

W E E K 5 : PMS, postpartum depression, and hormonal contraceptives
--

- T Sept. 30** ___ Joan C. Chrisler and Ingrid Jonston-Robledo, "Raging Hormones? Feminist Perspectives on Premenstrual Syndrome and Postpartum Depression," from *Rethinking Mental Health and Disorder* (Guilford Press 2002), 174-197.
 ___ Martin, Emily. "Premenstrual Syndrome, Work Discipline, and Anger," In *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*, Beacon Press, 2001, 92-112.
 ___ Kathleen O'Grady, "Is Menstruation Obsolete?" *thirdspace*, Volume 2, Issue 1, 2002.
<http://www.thirdspace.ca/articles/ogradey.htm>
 ___ www.mum.org

- Th Oct 2** **Guest lecture by Sara Aierstuck, Nurse Practitioner, University Health Services**
 ___ "The Pill May...Ruin Your Relationship"
http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/health/article4516566.ece
 ___ <http://www.managingcontraception.com/qa/index.php?go=qa>
 ___ Handouts TBA

W E E K 6 : Cycles, fertility, egg donation, and DES

- T Oct. 7** ___ Berkson, D. Lindsey, DES excerpt, *Hormone Deception* (McGraw-Hill, 2001)
 ___ See SPARK page links on egg donation
 ___ Screening: *A Healthy Baby Girl* (1995)
- Th Oct. 9** **ETHNOGRAPHIC ACTIVITY** on menstruation / hormonal contraception / fertility
 ___ Oudshoorn, Nelly. "The power of structures that already exist." In *Beyond the Natural Body: An Archeology of Sex Hormones* (Routledge, 1994), 138-151.

W E E K 7 : Menopause and hormone replacement therapies
--

- T Oct. 14** NO CLASS-MONDAY SCHEDULE
- Th Oct. 16** ___ Wilson, Robert A. *Feminine Forever* (excerpts) (M. Evans and Co. Inc., 1966).
 ___ Watkins, Elizabeth. "From the 'Neutral Gender' to 'Feminine Forever.'" In *The Estrogen Elixir* (JHUP, 2007), 32-51.

W E E K 8 : Theorizing menopause, hormone replacement, and sex identity
--

- T Oct. 21** ___ Martin, Emily. "The Woman in the Menopausal Body." In *Reinterpreting Menopause: Cultural and Philosophical Issues*, edited by Paul Komesaroff, Philippa Rothfield, Jeanne Daly (Routledge, 1997), 239-254.
 ___ Houck, Judith A. "'What Do These Women Want?': Feminists Respond to *Feminine Forever*, 1963-1980" (209-228); "Epilogue: Menopause at the Turn of the 21st Century" (229-239). In *Hot and Bothered: Women, Medicine, and Menopause in Modern America* (Harvard, 2006)
 Optional/recommended: ___ Gullette, Margaret Morganroth. "Menopause as Magic Marker." In *Declining to Decline: Cultural Combat and the Politics of the Midlife*. (University Press of London, 1997), 98-116.

- Th Oct. 23** Screening: *Middle Sexes: Redefining He and She* (2006)
 ___Fausto-Sterling, Ch. 2, "'That Sex Which Prevaileth'," 30-44

W E E K 9 : *Intersexual identities*

- T Oct. 28** ___Fausto-Sterling Ch. 3, "Of Gender and Genitals: The Use and Abuse of the Modern Intersexual," 45-76
 ___Preves, Sharon E. "Stigma, Secrecy and Shame" and "Seeds of Change." In *Intersex and Identity: The Contested Self*. (Rutgers, 2003), 60-86; 87-127.

- Th Oct. 30** Library Day. Meet in the first-floor lobby of Du Bois Library.

W E E K 10 : *Sexing the brain: subverting and reasserting sex roles through hormones*

- T Nov. 4** Screening: *TransGeneration* (2006)
 ___Fausto-Sterling, Ch. 4, "Should There Be Only Two Sexes?" 78-114;
 and Ch. 5, "Sexing the Brain: How Biologists Make a Difference," 115-145.
 ___Handouts: Gould, Louis, "X: A Fabulous Child's Story," and Loren Cameron's "Portrait of a Man"

- Th Nov. 6** Oxytocin / Sexing the Brain
 ___Taylor, Shelley, "The Origins of Tending." In *The Tending Instinct: Women, Men, and the Biology of Our Relationships* (Times Books, Henry Holt, 2002), 16-34.
 ___Strunk, Mary, "Nature Makes You Nurture: The Muddled Sexual Politics of the 'Cuddle' Hormone and Why Oxytocin is the New Estrogen"

W E E K 11 : *Steroid hormones in sport*

- T Nov. 11** NO CLASS –VETERANS DAY HOLIDAY

- W Nov. 12** **SECOND READING REPOSE DUE**
 (Tues. schedule) ___Screening: *Bigger, Stronger, Faster**

- Th Nov. 13** ___ Sokolove, Michael. "The Lab Animal." *New York Times Magazine*, 18 January 2004, 28-33, 48+.

W E E K 12 : *Growth hormones*

- T Nov. 18** ___ Rothman, Sheila M., and David J. Rothman. "The Price of Growth." In *The Pursuit of Perfection: The Promise and Perils of Medical Enhancement* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003): 168-207

___Hall, Stephen, "The Short of It," NYT, 10/16/05,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/16/magazine/16growth.html>

- Th Nov. 20** ___Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, Ch. 1-4, 1-83.

W E E K 13 : <i>Final project proposals</i>
--

T Nov. 25 **PROJECT PROPOSALS DUE to Prof. Strunk’s email by noon.**
 NO CLASS. Individual appointments to discuss final project.
 Finish reading *My Year Of Meats* over Thanksgiving Break.

W E E K 14 : <i>Hormones, food, and the environment, part 1</i>
--

T Dec. 2 ___Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, Ch. 5-12, Epilogue, 85-361, plus endmatter.
 ___Pollan, Michael. “Power Steer.” *New York Times Magazine*, 31 March, 2002, 44+;

Th Dec. 4 ___Langston, Nancy “Gender Transformed: Endocrine Disruptors in the
 Environment” in *Seeing Nature Through Gender* (129-166)

W E E K 15 : <i>Hormones, food, and the environment, part 2</i>
--

T Dec. 9 **THIRD READING REPOSE DUE.**
Guest speaker Jill Ebbott, Holistic Health Counselor, Brookline, MA
 ___Handouts TBA

Th Dec. 11 Course review. Proposal assessments.

Final Project Outline and Annotated Bibliography due at NOON on Tuesday, December 18.
--

→ Course Structure

If you’ve taken women’s studies courses in the past, you already know that the field of “women’s studies” actually contains numerous crosscurrents and ongoing debates across interdisciplinary boundaries. So it will be with this class, which draws on the work of scientists, historians, theorists, anthropologists, journalists, essayists, policy makers, and activists to help answer the driving questions in our general inquiry into hormones biological, synthetic, and environmental. Taken together, the readings will help you to weave together many different strands of thought, drawing connections and contrasts among multiple perspectives and analytical approaches.

Ours will be a classroom of open minds – and one that honors the sensitivity and privacy of the issues we may discuss. I expect that each of you will help build a classroom environment based on trust, confidentiality, and community, while also challenging each other in intellectually rigorous discussions. It is your job to prepare yourself to think critically, to articulate ideas clearly, and to listen attentively and respectfully to your classmates, who may have perspectives quite different from your own.

Most of our meetings will be run seminar-style, which means that they will be based largely on class discussion and interactive learning exercises bracketed by a pair of short lectures. We may occasionally jumpstart our discussions with a pop quiz. Therefore, you must come to class having read and having read *well*.

→ Readings

Reading well means taking detailed notes on all of the readings assigned *and* the occasional guest lecture and film. (You will also be “reading” these, after all, and not merely taking them in as forms of passive entertainment.) Your course notes are invaluable. They greatly enhance comprehension and also elevate the level of our class discussions. (When you are reading for multiple classes, you know how essential notes are for

jogging your memory about a particular text under discussion.) A set of reliable reading notes also makes writing the reading responses far, far easier than it would be if you had conjure a set of articles from memory or re-enter the readings “cold.” In our class meetings, we will frequently parse specific sections of what we have read, so **you must always bring to class the text or articles to be discussed that day.** * A Note on E-reserve articles: As course readers have become more and more expensive, e-reserves are now the most economical way to assemble readings for class. **You are required to print out all e-reserve articles so that you can bring them to class.** If you do not have access to a printer, OIT will print them out for you for a fee. If you find yourself having a problem with this system, you must let me know BEFORE the day that readings are due.

→ Participation / In-class work

Your class participation grade will be based on your performance on the quality of your participation, which includes bringing to class good observations and questions, plus your participation in SPARK-based discussions. Being absent or late to class will adversely affect your grade. You may not miss screenings or guest lectures without the prior permission of the professor or without a serious reason for doing so. **Students with three or more unexcused absences will automatically have their grades lowered by one letter grade.**

→ Discussion-leading and Pre-class SPARK post

Each student will sign up to be a discussion leader for one class session. This will involve analyzing and critiquing the assigned readings 48 hours before they are due and **preparing the first draft of a short essay, which will be posted on SPARK.** (A description of the essay and essay revision appears below.) Occasionally, discussion leaders will be working in pairs on the same set of readings. You are encouraged you to confer with your student partner to find engaging ways to collaborate through your written work. (For example, student partners may choose to use the readings to debate an issue in print; or they may simply split the reading assignments between them.) Email your draft essay to Professor Strunk by **no later than 10 a.m. on the day before the discussion** is to take place. Prof. Strunk will append comments and will post the essay to SPARK. The rest of the class will read the essay ahead of class time.

→ Essay / Revised SPARK Post

The SPARK essay is an opportunity for you to reflect upon, explore, and apply new ideas from the course readings. **Note that this is NOT merely a summary or opinion paper.** Rather, the SPARK essay should contain some sort of argument regarding BOTH (a) an author’s method of framing an issue; and (b) how an issue or inequality might best be addressed and why. This 2-page (maximum) paper should specifically cite and engage with a specific portion of one or more of the readings. At the end of the paper, include at least two questions for further discussion and/or further research. You do not need to know the answers to these questions. They should be questions provoked by the writing of the essay. **This is a two-stage assignment.** You will submit a strong first draft ahead of our class discussion, and this version will be posted to SPARK for your classmates to read before class. After the discussion, you will revise and re-submit the assignment to Professor Strunk. (As insurance against missing a deadline, it’s always a good idea to cut-and-paste your paper’s text into the body of the email, just in case there is a problem with the attachment.) The SPARK essay may provide fodder for your final project.

→ Quizzes

Quizzes are unannounced. They are designed to test and reinforce your comprehension of the assigned readings.

→ Reading responses

The Reading Response prompts will be handed out in class. Each is worth 10 percent of your grade.

→ Ethnographic Activity (October 9)

This will be a student-driven collaboration and an opportunity for us to theorize the role of hormones in gendered social hierarchies, with specific attention to the cultural politics around menstruation and hormonal contraception.

→ Final Project Proposal and Bibliography

As the culmination of a semester's work, each student will submit a well-researched proposal for a final project — a formal analytical piece written with a specific publication/audience in mind. This final assignment is worth **30% of your grade**, and must include each of the following:

- 1) The Proposal (written as a “pitch letter” or letter of inquiry to a target publication. The proposal should explain what your article will do, why you are qualified or well-informed enough to write it, and how the content will be relevant to the publication's readers.)
- 2) The Annotated Bibliography (2-3 pages; you should have a *minimum* of 8-10 sources)
- 3) The Outline (2-3 pages indicating the research strategy, structure, and tone of your piece)

→ Special Opportunities

Occasionally, the issues we cover in this class will overlap with topics that you are studying in your biology, history, political science or [fill-in-the-blank] classes. Content related to WOST 297 may also appear in the news or in contemporary political debates, or they may be the subject of popular culture-mediated critiques. I encourage you to be on the lookout for such intersections, and to share them with the class when appropriate. We are lucky to be in the Five College area, in which we could attend a special lecture or event just about every night of the week. On our SPARK site, I'll keep a running list of events that are relevant to this class. Please feel free to notify me of any such events or student opportunities that I might have missed.

→ Deadlines

Turn in all written assignments on the due date. Except with prior approval of the professor or in the case of extreme emergencies, **late assignments will not be accepted.**

→ Do I Need to Proofread?

The answer is yes. Sloppy writing detracts mightily from your argument. We all make honest mistakes. But it is disrespectful to submit hastily prepared work to your professor and peers.

→ Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty (knowingly helping another student to cheat). You can review University's official policy on academic honesty here: <http://www.umass.edu/umhome/policies/honesty.html>.