I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

How do we account for the many similarities and differences within and between human populations? Axes of human “difference”—sex, gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, nationality, etc.—have profound consequences. These differences shape not only group affiliation and identity but are often correlated with colonial and national histories, with organization of societies such as socioeconomic status, professions, work mobility, as well as stereotypes about personal traits and behaviors. Debates around questions of nature and nurture have raged on for several centuries. The biological sciences have been very important in the history of differences. Scientists have contributed to bolster claims that differences are determined by our biology—such as research on sex and racial differences, notions of the “gay” gene, math abilities, spatial ability, etc. Conversely, scientists have also contributed to critiquing claims of difference—claims of the existence of “race” and racial differences, claims about differences amongst sexes, genders and sexualities. How do we weigh these claims and counterclaims?

In this course, we will explore both popular and academic writings - their understandings, debates and critiques of “difference.” We examine these categories systematically to evaluate claims of difference. We will begin with a historical overview of biological studies on “difference” to trace the differing understandings of the “body” and the relationship of the body with identity, behavior and intellectual and social capacity. We will then examine contemporary knowledge on differences of sex, gender, race, class, and sexuality. We will use several case studies to explore how scientific and experimental knowledge is produced. What is good data? How do we “know” what we know? The course will take up a range of claims about difference, their purpose and their consequences to examine what these studies of “difference” can tell us – exploring both what they tell us and what they do not. Using literature from biology, women’s studies, and science studies, we will examine the biological and cultural contexts for our understanding of “difference.” The course will give students the tools to analyze scientific studies, to understand the relationship of nature and culture, science and society, biology and politics.
II. COURSE READINGS


E-Reserves: Articles available online through library electronic reserves. Enter — Briggs as instructor or Womensst 285 in listed courses and enter the password: biology

SPARK: We will use SPARK throughout the course. Surprise extra credit assignments, news and information and discussion questions will be posted on SPARK throughout the course. Once you register for the course, you will automatically be added to the course on SPARK.

You will use your OIT username and password to sign into the course SPARK and access course information. Please contact OIT if you have any problems. Every student needs to be familiar with the site and check it regularly (https://spark.oit.umass.edu/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct).

Many important announcements and assignments will be posted there and you are responsible for this information.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

☐ You must be registered for both the lecture and discussion section. Attendance at BOTH is required and mandatory.

☐ Reading assignments must be completed by the class period for which they were assigned. Unannounced quizzes will give you credit for having done so. There will be 10 of these over the semester, and we will drop two, giving you the opportunity to have two absences—or simply bad days—without penalty.

☐ For an absence to count as excused, you must submit an official certification as well as a 2-page summary of the week’s readings.

☐ You are responsible for knowing when assignments are due and handing them in on time. Dates of major writing assignments are in this syllabus. Other assignment details will be given in your discussion sections. Absence from these sections on the day the assignment is due is no excuse for not handing in the assignment on time. It is each student’s responsibility to find out about assignments from someone in your discussion group or from your Teaching Assistant.

☐ Discussion sections will provide the opportunity to talk critically and analyze issues and topics. You will be expected to have completed and thought about all of the readings for each class.

☐ Videos and guest lectures are part of the class material and students are responsible for knowing the material.

We will follow all university policies on issues of Academic Honesty, Grading, Attendance, Examinations, and Absences due to Religious Observance.
Written Assignments and Exams

Midterm Exam: One midterm exam on March 9 in discussion section

Two short exercises/writing assignments (3-4 pages) due Feb 17 and March 30 by 5:00PM on SPARK

News clippings: This course deals with materials that are very relevant to our times. We encourage you to bring newspaper articles/clippings, stories for the news program, radio and television programs, movies, and blogs as well as conversations with friends and family. You should post these on the discussion board on SPARK. During the semester each student must present at least 2 relevant links before the midterm and two after the midterm. In addition you should comment on someone else’s posting at least twice before and after.

Final project: You will be assigned to a group with 4-7 other students. Each group will produce a website about gender, medicine, and science. The topics addressed in this class are often ripped from the headlines and the blogosphere. Ideas about "scientifically" established differences between women and men, people of color and whites, gays and straight people are prevalent in popular culture—from websites to blockbuster movies to magazines. For example, it surely matters to struggles for racial equality that for the past three centuries, most Europeans and Anglo-Americans have believed that African Americans as a group are less intelligent than whites. Similarly, questions about women's fitness for certain jobs have often hinged on the belief that PMS makes women unreasonable and unable to make responsible decisions. For this website, you will be invited to address questions that matter in a relevant forum—that is, you are invited to put up a live website, not just drop something into the grading machine. The site can speak to questions addressed by the course, and/or those that exceed the course material but are relevant to it. So your site might attempt to answer questions like the following: Are women's brains different from men's? Is there a gay gene? Does abortion cause trauma? Are we really ruled by our hormones? Does testosterone make men more aggressive? Are there racial differences in intelligence? Does psychiatry tell us important things about war?

Discussion groups are integral part of the class. Attendance and participation in discussion sections are factored into the final grade. Two unexcused absences or more will result in your grade being marked down. Non-attendance will result in an “F.” If you have an excused absence, you must submit a two-page reflection paper based on the readings assigned for that week. The paper is due the next class day.

Extra Credit Events: Throughout the semester we will post extra credit events. Attend an event and write a 1-2 page summary of the event for 2% extra credit.

Grades

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion section</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written assignments</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Quizzes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra Credit</td>
<td>Up to 6%</td>
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Discussion Sections
Discussions sections on Friday are not optional or add-ons. They are designed to be an integral part of the course and to provide an opportunity to clarify issues in your readings and lectures. We expect you to have completed and thought about all of the readings for that week and to be ready to engage in meaningful dialogue. In addition to their strictly academic function, sections are also places where students may talk about the ways in which the topics we address in this course may have touched their lives. Attendance and participation in discussion groups will be 20% of the course grade.

Academic Honesty
Academic dishonesty destroys trust and the good-faith work of teaching and learning. Students who get stressed about their grades or having enough time to complete an assignment are sometimes tempted to cheat—to download sections of a paper from the Internet, to borrow quotes or ideas from other students or published sources. Don’t. It’s not worth it. Chances are good you will be caught and will fail the assignment or the course. (See the UMass policy on sanctions and procedures on Academic Honesty, http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/#D) Cite all your sources, all the time.

Helping someone else cheat is an offense as serious as cheating yourself. Although it is always appropriate to discuss the course material and assignments with each other, inside and outside class, it is not appropriate to collaborate on the writing of actual sentences, except in assignments specifically identified as group projects.

If an instructor finds that a student has violated the University’s Academic Honesty Policy, the instructor has the right to lower the student’s grade, or even to fail the student for the course. Students have the right to appeal such a grade penalty by an instructor. The University Academic Honesty Board, which must be notified by instructors of any grade penalty, reviews all student appeals. The Board may sustain or recommend modification of the penalty given by the faculty member, or may recommend sanctions exceeding those originally given, such as suspension or expulsion from the University. The Board may also recommend sanctions for offenders who have committed multiple violations of the Academic Honesty Policy but who have not appealed the faculty members’ decisions.

Accommodation Policy Statement
If you have learning or other disabilities, it is my goal and that of the Disability Services to ensure that you have reasonable accommodations that minimize the impact of that disability on your learning or your ability to demonstrate what you have learned in the context of assignments. It is your choice whether to disclose the nature of your disability to me; you can simply access services through Disability Services (http://www.umass.edu/disability/current.html) and ask me to work with that office to provide appropriate accommodations. However, you do need to let me know that you will need accommodation at or near the beginning of the semester, well in advance of any assignments. If we agree on a modified timeline for the completion of assignments or alternative formats, you are still responsible for completing assignments in a timely way and attending class.
**Ground Rules**

Despite the size of this class, we are concerned about the quality of your experience. To that end, we will try to foster as much active participation in the course as is possible. Lectures will include time for questions as they arise, and discussion sections have been designed to continue the dialogue. Make use of office hours to continue class discussions, clarify confusions or to discuss any other problems you are having with the course. Because of the class size and the nature of the subject matter, it is necessary to set some ground rules:

□ This class is **50 minutes** and we expect you to remain for the entire period. Latecomers and those who begin to pack 5 minutes before the class period disrupt the class for everyone.

□ Make up exams will only be given to students who have an exam conflict, a medical or unavoidable excuse. Ignorance of this rule will not constitute a valid excuse.

**Email, Office Hours, Appointments**

We do want to hear from you, and one of the things we like about email is that it encourages students who we might not hear from otherwise to be in touch. However, we also hate feeling like a hostages to full inboxes. In order to keep the good parts of email and minimize the bad, we propose the following general guidelines:

-- If your question is, “What happened in the class I missed,” ask a classmate.

-- If your question is long and involved, come to office hours.

-- If your question is technical (when is that paper due? I’m having trouble getting the readings..)– read the syllabus, first, then email Josefa.

-- You don’t need an appointment to come to office hours; just show up. And do come; otherwise we’re just sitting there hoping someone will visit us.

-- If you want to meet but office hours don’t work for you, we will be happy to schedule an alternative time to meet if you can show us in your schedule that you have another class scheduled at that time or have a conflict with your job.
Week-by-week schedule

The “naturalness” of gender difference really, really matters to us: pink and blue children
Monday, 1/23—course overview

Wednesday 1/25: the readings and video content for today can be found online by following the URLs provided:


4) a young girl complaining about gendered marketing and toys: [http://pinkisforboys.wordpress.com/](http://pinkisforboys.wordpress.com/)


8) Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes Revisited” The Sciences, Jul/Aug2000: [http://www.neiu.edu/~lsfuller/5sexesrevisited.htm](http://www.neiu.edu/~lsfuller/5sexesrevisited.htm)

**Brains, Crania, Intelligence**


Wednesday 2/1-- TEXT Wassman, “Evaluating Threat, Solving Mazes, and Having the Blues,” ch. 4, GSD.

**Science Producing Racial Difference**


**Last Day to Add/Drop**

Wednesday, 2/8—


Monday- 2/13

Biological Determinism/Social Constructionsim
Wednesday-2/15

Monday-2/20- No class President’s Day

Wednesday-2/22
1) TEXT Spanier and Horowitz, “Looking for Difference,” ch. 3, GSD

Sociobiology and Rape
Monday-2/27

Wednesday-2/29 E-RESERVES Thornhill and Palmer, "Why do Men Rape?" A Natural History of Rape and Jerry Coyne and Andrew Berry, "Rape as Adaptation," Nature 404 (March 2000): 121-122

Animal Obsessions
March:
Monday-3/5
1) TEXT Lynda Birke, “Telling the Rat What to Do,” GSD, ch. 5;
2) TEXT Angela Willey and Sara Giordano, “Why do Voles Fall in Love,” GSD, ch. 6.

Wednesday-3/7
1) TEXT Ebeling and Spanier, “What Made Those Penguins Gay?” GSD ch. 7
The Body: Our Changing Conceptions
Monday-3/12

Wednesday-3/14

Spring Break March 19-23

Genes
Monday-3/26
1) E-RESERVES Anne Fausto-Sterling, “Genes and Gender,” in Myths of Gender, pp. 61-89.

Wednesday-3/28
1) TEXT Lesley Rogers, “Sex Differences are not Hardwired,” ch. 2, GSD

April
Monday-4/2

Wednesday-4/4

Reproduction
Monday-4/9
Wednesday-4/11

Monday-4/16- no class, Patriot’s Day

Sex and Getting Hormonal
Tuesday-4/17- Monday schedule is followed, class meets
1) Anne Fausto-Sterling, “Hormonal Hurricanes,” in Myths of Gender.

Wednesday-4/18

Medical and Anthropological Interventions
Monday-2/23
1) TEXT Iain Moreland, “Intersex Treatment and The Promise of Trauma,” in GSD, ch. 8.

Wednesday-2/25
2) TEXT Shirlene Badger, “The Proportions of Fat in Genetics Obesity Research,” in GSD, ch. 11.

May 3—Final Group Project Due