

**WOMEN`S STUDIES 285**  
**INTRODUCTION TO THE BIOLOGY OF DIFFERENCE**  
**SPRING 2016**  
Mon, Wed 2:30-3:45  
ILC N111

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Are women's brains different from men's? Are women really ruled by their hormones? Why do trans people need to get a psychiatric diagnosis before they can access hormones or surgery? Are there racial differences in intelligence? How is forensic science contributing to mass incarceration, and is it racist? This general education course (which fulfills the U/SI requirements) looks at how meanings of gender and race are influenced by popular conceptions of biology and medicine. It explores controversial topics such as gender difference in brain anatomy, genetic models of intelligence, hormones, and the medical and psychiatric models of trans\* bodies and minds.

Ideas about "scientifically" established differences within and between humans have profound consequences. These differences shape not only group affiliation and identity but are often correlated with colonial and national histories. Using materials ranging from web sites to blockbuster movies to magazines, we will explore how the ways popular culture answers these questions affect what we think we know about gender and race. 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. We will explore the scientific debates over these beliefs, and the ways they are carried into popular culture.

#### **Course Requirements and Grading**

5 in-class writing assignments—25% (6 given at unannounced times; lowest grade dropped)  
2pp paper—15%—due 2/8/16  
Midterm exam—15%—3/9/16  
5pp paper—20%—due 4/4/16  
Final project—25%—5/3/16

Paper assignments will be posted to Moodle. Give yourself enough time to take advantage of help from the WGSS writing tutor! (Appointments available M-Th by request, as well as regular office hours). All papers will be due before the class meeting and should be submitted to the online drop box in Moodle. Any extension of these deadlines must be negotiated ahead of time.

### **Required Texts**

There are no required books. E-reserves (and all URLs or PDFs listed) will be available in Moodle.

### **Day-To-Day Business of the Course**

This is not a class where students sit passively and listen to the “sage on the stage.” Even though we’re a large-ish class, we’ll talk to each other, have conversations, do projects. If you are debating whether to bring a digital device (a computer, tablet, smart phone) to class, do. If you don’t have one, don’t worry about it; it’s not a requirement. We’ll work together in groups to answer some questions. Do bring your best skills—a sense of humor, curiosity, ideas, sociability, and an openness to changing your mind.

The politics of difference—race, gender, sexual identity, religion, and others—does not always engender good conversation or thoughtful engagement—in fact, the usual image of the conversation includes screaming, threatening, and barely suppressed hostility. That is not what we are about here. Universities provide us the privilege and pleasure of reading together and learning from each other. Our job in this class is to create an intellectual community, one in which all are enriched by each others’ readings. We will be discussing weighty, critical issues, which is why we need each other’s help to think as well as to try to understand how the reading can (or fails to) speak to our situation in the world. This imposes on each of us the responsibility of coming to class with the reading done, speaking up about our insights and questions, and listening respectfully to each other (which is not to say always agreeing). Students are encouraged to bring questions, make counterarguments, and voice politically unpopular positions in class. While intellectual and moral passion, as well as lively disagreement (including with the instructor) are valued, ad hominem and ad feminam attacks will not be tolerated, nor will slurs or disparagement of any group.

At six random, unannounced times during the semester, you will be given an in-class writing assignment. If you happen to be absent on one of these dates, that grade will be dropped. There’s no need to bring a note or an excuse; everybody gets at least one “free” absence. If there is some reason why you will have a lot of excused absences, talk to one of the instructors and we will find an accommodation.

### **Title IX and Mandated Reporting**

WGSS classes are a place where issues of sexual violence and other sexual misconduct are discussed as a matter of course. It’s not a taboo subject, and feminists have long worked to develop theory and activism around sexualized violence, including rape, dating violence, 3

child sexual abuse, and the like. If you want to discuss your own personal experiences of sexual violence in a class, we don't consider that a "report" covered by Title IX (although if you want faculty help and support in reporting sexual violence, we are here to help you do that). Other available resources on campus for addressing sexual violence include both confidential and non-confidential resources—non-confidential resources will keep your concerns private but will report your concerns to the Title IX coordinator, or, the Dean of Students Office who will provide you with different options to assist you. Confidential resources will keep your concerns confidential and will provide you support, assistance in addressing safety concerns as well as other services such as providing you with an advocate. The resources can be found at [www.umass.edu/titleix/](http://www.umass.edu/titleix/).

### **Names and Pronouns**

There is a long history of dialogue and activism around how we address one another, with respect to both names and pronouns. Students should be referred to by the name they prefer, and with the proper pronunciation, by faculty and other students. I will gladly honor your request to address you by the name you prefer and gender pronouns that correspond to your gender identity. Please advise me of your name's proper pronunciation, and any name or pronouns not reflected by the record in Spire early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

### **Academic Integrity, University Policies, Disability Accommodations, Late Papers**

Academic dishonesty destroys trust and the good-faith work of a course. 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](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.

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 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.

All students are required to have a UMass email account, which will be used for all correspondence for this course. That and registration for this course will also provide access to Moodle, which we will use for supplementary course materials, e-reserves, extra credit opportunities, and to turn in assignments.

## READING SCHEDULE

\*\*\*Some of the reading pdfs may require the password 1234 to access\*\*\*

### Week 1: Introduction

1/20 W: First Day of Class

#### Anatomy

### Week 2: Female, Male, Gay, and Autistic Brains

1/25 M: Rebecca Jordan-Young, Chapters 1 and 7, *Brain Storm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences* (2011).

1/27 W: Angela Willey, et al., "The Mating Life of Geeks: Love, Neuroscience, and the New Autistic Subject" (2015).

### Week 3: The Science of the Savage

2/1 M: Stephen Jay Gould, "American Polygeny and Craniometry Before Darwin: Blacks and Indians as Separate, Inferior Species," *The Mismeasure of Man (Revised and Expanded)* (1996).

2/3 W: Laura Briggs, "The Race of Hysteria: 'Overcivilization' and the 'Savage' Woman in Late Nineteenth Century Obstetrics and Gynecology" (2000).

### Week 4: Race and IQ

2/8 M: Brent Staples, "The Scientific War on the Poor," (editorial) *New York Times* (1994).  
Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein, "Race, Genes, and IQ—An Apologia," *New Republic* (1994).

**FIRST PAPER DUE (2 pp)**

2/10 W: Mark Nathan Cohen, "An anthropologist looks at 'race' and IQ testing," *Race and Intelligence: Separating Science from Myth* (2002).

### Week 5: Queerly Embodied: Trans\*

2/15 M: NO CLASS (Holiday)

2/16 T (MONDAY SCHEDULE): Joanne Meyerowitz, "From Sex to Gender," *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality* (2004).

2/17 W: Dean Spade, "Mutilating Gender," *The Transgender Studies Reader* (2006).

**Week 6: Conceptual Confusion: What is Race/Nation (Is it Religion)? What is Gender? Is It Sex? Sexuality?**

2/22 M: Sandra Harding, "Science and Inequality," and "Thinking about Race and Science," *Science and Social Inequality: Feminist and Postcolonial Issues* (2006).

2/24 W: Lise Eliot, "Under the Pink or Blue Blankie," *Pink Brain, Blue Brain* (2009).  
Ms. Magazine article on the J.Crew (non)incident (2011)  
Fox news article on the J.Crew incident (2011)  
Youtube video: "Riley on Marketing" (2011)

**Genes**

**Week 7: Genes (X and Y)**

2/29 M: Dorothy Roberts, Ch. 1: "The Invention of Race," *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business are Re-Creating the Science of Race* (2012).

3/2 W: Sarah S. Richardson, "Sexing the X: How the X Became the 'Female Chromosome'" (2012).

**Week 8: Genes for Race?**

3/7 M: John Dupré, "What Genes Are and Why There Are No Genes for Race," *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age* (2008).

Dorothy Roberts, Ch. 3: "Redefining Race in Genetic Terms," *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business are Re-Creating the Science of Race* (2012).

Eric Michael Johnson, "On the Origins of White Power," *The Primate Diaries* (blog) (2014).

3/9 W: Kimberly Tallbear, "Native-American-DNA.com: In Search of Native American Race and Tribe," *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science* (2013).

NAISA Council Statement on Indigenous Identity Fraud

**MIDTERM EXAM**

**March 12–20 Spring Break**

**Week 9: Criminality, Forensics, and Darwinian Accounts of Rape**

3/21 M: Dorothy Roberts, Ch. 11: "Genetic Surveillance," *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business are Re-Creating the Science of Race* (2012).

3/23 W: Randy Thornhill and Craig T. Palmer, "Why Men Rape," *A Natural History of Rape: Biological Bases of Sexual Coercion* (2001).

Jerry Coyne and Andrew Berry, "Rape as Adaptation" (2000).

## Reproduction

### Week 10: Eugenics, Disability, and Sterilization

3/28 M: Michael Rembis, "Introduction" and Ch. 1: "Segregation of Mental Defectives as a Preventive of Crime, Immorality, and Inefficiency," *Defining Deviance: Sex, Science, and Delinquent Girls, 1890-1960* (2011).

3/30 W: Leslie Reagan, Introduction: "Epidemics, Reproduction, and the Fear of Maternal Marking," *Dangerous Pregnancies: Mothers, Disabilities, and Abortion in Modern America* (2012).

### Week 11: The Racialized Politics of Fetal Harm

4/4 M: Michael Dorris, "Chapter Six," *The Broken Cord* (1990).

Jane Erikson, "Doctors Mislabel Defects: Fetal Alcohol Misdiagnosed," *Arizona Daily Star* (1995).

### **SECOND PAPER DUE (5 pp)**

4/6 W: Mindy Fullilove and Anne Lown, "Crack 'Hos and Skeezers: Traumatic Experiences of Women Crack Users" (1992).

Wendy Chavkin, "Cocaine and Pregnancy—Time to Look at the Evidence" (2001).

Barry Zuckerman, et al., "Cocaine-Exposed Infants and Developmental Outcomes: 'Crack Kids' Revisited" (2002).

### Week 12: Race and Infant Mortality

4/11 M: Khiara Bridges, Ch. 4, *Reproducing Race: An Ethnography of Pregnancy as a Site of Racialization* (2011).

4/13 W: Leith Mullings and Alaka Wali, Ch. 6, *Stress and Resilience: The Social Context of Reproduction in Central Harlem* (2001).

## Hormones

### Week 13: PMS and Other Forms of Female Insanity

4/18 M: NO CLASS Patriots' Day (university holiday)

4/20 W: Anne Fausto-Sterling, "Hormonal Hurricanes: Menstruation, Menopause, and Female Behavior," *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women and Men* (1995).

### Week 14: Menstruation

4/25 M: Chris Bobel, "From Convenience to Hazard: A Short History of the Emergence of the Menstrual Activism Movement, 1971-1992." (2008).

Chris Bobel, "'Our Revolution Has Style': Contemporary Menstrual Products Activism 'Doing Feminism' in the Third Wave." (2006).

4/27 W: (LAST DAY OF CLASS) Developing a website

Thursday 4/29—Thursday 5/5: Final Exam Period

5/3 T: **FINAL WEBSITE PROJECT DUE**