

GS-340 SEX AND SCIENCE: DUTCH MEDICINE AND INTERSEX

IES Abroad Amsterdam

DESCRIPTION: Western gender-critical thinkers such as philosophers, sociologists and anthropologists have been studying the ways in which gender ideologies influence the male/female, nature/culture and mind/body dichotomies in scientific and medical knowledge. Their critique was directed at the unaccounted use of the heterosexual viewpoint as a natural fact, overlooking and marginalizing those who fall out (voluntarily or involuntarily) of the male/female dichotomy. Although gender, sexuality and binary thinking will be discussed in the broad sense during this course, focus will be on so called intersex variations; people born with both male and female sex characteristics in different variations. Some are visible at birth, others become apparent in a later stage in life.

In medical publications intersexual variations are known as “disorders of sex development”, “(pseudo)hermaphroditism”, or “intersex”. In this course we will close-read the Dutch (and Western) medical case studies of “patients” with atypical sex anatomies. We will zoom in on how intersex became a medical problem, that was supposed to be cured with surgery, hormone replacement therapy and withholding of medical information. Subsequently, with the help of international academic critics, we will make a (discourse) analysis of sex and gender ideologies that informed medical practice in the Netherlands from 1940 up until now.

Looking closely at both the original Dutch medical texts and the international scholarly endeavors that deconstructed medical knowledge as contingent and situated, this course provides students with a toolkit to develop their own ways of challenging gender dichotomies in science and medicine. Dutch biomedical case studies on intersex will be studied as well as efforts to deconstruct these assumptions.

To reach an understanding of how the scientific and medical discourses on sex and gender influence lived experiences of people with intersex conditions, we will view and discuss personal stories of this group along with analyzing the medical viewpoints.

CREDITS: 3**INSTRUCTOR:** Nina van den Berg Msc**LANGUAGE OF PRESENTATION:** English**PREREQUISITES:** None, although an open mind comes in handy

METHOD OF PRESENTATION: Once a week. Lectures, student presentations, viewings of documentaries and class discussions on the readings.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Midterm 1 - 20%
- Midterm 2 - 20%
- Final Paper - 20%
- Presentation and participation – 40%

Midterm 1 (March 28)

Write a discourse analysis (500w) of one of the medical or scientific texts. Who is it written by and with which audience in mind? Which “truths” do you find in regards of gender (binary) and sexuality? Analyze the language used in the text and discuss the implications of this discourse. Add the used (pages of an) article with your annotations! Hand in via email as a PDF with double spacing, add name, title and wordcount + link to used source. Name the file [First Name Last Name – Discourse Analysis]

Midterm 2 (April 25)

Write an essay or review (500w) on the voices of people with intersex conditions as found in their publications or in documentaries. Elaborate on your doubts and fascinations. Treat it like qualitative data and perform an initial analysis using course literature to back up your argument. Hand in via email as a PDF with double spacing, add name, title and wordcount + link to used source. [First Name Last Name – Midterm 2]

Final Paper (May 28 (Hand in proposal by May 14)

Write a short research paper or essay (1500w) employing knowledge learned in the course on by answering a research question making use of scientific knowledge (literature, 3 academic sources minimum). During the last meeting all papers will be shared via presentations (no need to use powerpoint!) during a setting that is used in academic conferences. Hand in via email as a PDF with double spacing, add name, title and wordcount + link to used source. [First Name Last Name – Final Paper]

Evaluation criteria Essays:

- Insightfulness: Translation of theoretical insights, richness of empirical and theoretical materials
- Depth of analysis: argumentation, analytical ability and originality in the integration of theory and empirical information
- Style and language: structure, layout in sections, and paragraphs, bibliography, citations and paraphrasing, design and layout, respecting word limit

Presentation and participation

Every class will start with a presentation on one of the readings by two students (in a duo). Discuss the author(s) and context, the main argument and the content of the reading. Afterwards lead a discussion with your own discussion points for the group.

In the very last class we will simulate an academic conference setting. Each student will present their paper, the question that is posed and the conclusion.

The grade will be composed of the presentations and your over-all participation in the course (coming to class well prepared and engaging in discussions, asking questions and sharing your own insights etc.)

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- understand the (biological) background of different intersex experiences;
- gain insight into the history of intersex in the Netherlands in an international context;
- analyze and deconstruct how scientific and medical regimes impact experiences of intersex people, as well as societal views on sex/gender;
- describe how medical and social scientific disciplines produce different knowledge on gender in the Netherlands, and how dominant discourses are being affirmed (or not);
- present their findings in an academic way (through group discussions, written documents, and oral presentations).

INSTRUCTOR BIO: Nina van den Berg MSc completed the bachelor's program of Cultural Anthropology at the UvA which included a minor in gender and sexuality. Their interest for these topics, both personally as academically, led Nina to the Master *Gender and Sexuality*, a track offered by the Graduate School of Social Science, which they completed in 2012. Afterwards Nina did a six month internship as a researcher for a documentary maker working on a film on female sexuality. In 2013 they traded sexuality for sustainability and has been working as a project manager for a sustainable organization that operates in Zuidas, the Amsterdam business district, but remained closely tied to the gender and sex department of University of Amsterdam; Two years in a row Nina taught a newly designed course on sexual variation. They is also a board member for the Mosse Foundation and organizes lectures and talks on topic related to gender, sexuality and activism. Email: nina_vd_berg@hotmail.com; telephone: 00316 1907 9418

CONTENT: find latest information on the sessions on Moodle, including topic, readings and more.

Documentaries: The Gender Game (2023), The Boy Who was Turned into a Girl (2000), Hermaphrodites with attitudes (1996), Dear passengers (2019), No box for me (2019) Interfaceproject.org (blog posts)

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Class Attendance

Since IES Abroad courses are designed to take advantage of the unique contribution of the instructor and the lecture/discussion format is regarded as the primary mode of instruction, class attendance is mandatory and will be taken for every class. In addition, students are expected to be on time for classes, course-related excursions, and tests. Some courses include mandatory trips outside of regular class hours, i.e. on weekends. Students will be made aware of the specific dates of such trips well in advance and are required to attend.

Irregular attendance may result in a lower grade in the course, and/or disciplinary action. If a student misses a class without an excuse, this will lead to a deduction of their final grade of one-third of a letter grade for every additional unexcused absence (for example, A- to B+).

Absences will be authorized for the following reasons:

- Health issues (including a doctor's note);
- A recognized religious holiday traditionally observed by the particular student;
- A grave incident affecting family members;
- Conflicting academic commitments, only when communicated well in advance;

Any other absences (such as missing an alarm or missing a flight) are unexcused.

Additionally, arriving **more than 10 minutes** late to class may count as an unauthorized absence.

What to do if you are going to be absent

In any case where you are not going to attend class or are expecting be late, **you must notify your professor**. Please **note, it is not sufficient to send a message with a friend or notify your professor after the class has started.**

Please keep in mind that IES courses meet only twice a week rendering your attendance at each lesson even more important.