

# **Intersexuality: An Interdisciplinary Exploration**

## **A Course Syllabus**

### **INSTRUCTOR**

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### **DESCRIPTION**

This course is an interdisciplinary exploration on social, medical, biological, and political issues surrounding intersexuality and the lives of intersex people. First, students will learn basic biological facts about intersexuality as well as the current treatment protocol on intersex conditions. Second, students will read about the patient centered reform movement by intersex people as well as among medical professionals. Lastly, students will learn to critically analyze medical, academic, and pop culture texts written about intersexuality from the patient centered point of view. The course centers around discussions on readings, but also incorporates lectures, films, and guest speakers.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

After completing this course, students will:

1. Have a broader awareness of intersexuality as a lived experience rather than merely a theoretical standpoint.
2. Develop critical perspectives on the way that the medical profession defines, approaches and intervenes in the lives of intersex people.
3. Be able to critically analyze medical, academic, and popular culture texts about intersexuality from the patient centered point of view.

### **MAIN TEXTS**

Dreger, A. 1999 . *Intersex in the Age of Ethics*. Hagerstown, MD: University Publishing Group.

Koyama, E. and Intersex Society of North America 2001 . *Introduction to intersex activism: A guide for allies* booklet . Available from Intersex Society of North America.

## **REQUIRED READING/MATERIALS**

### **1. Introduction (Week 1)**

In class: presentation and film.

Suggested reading: Koyama, E. and Intersex Society of North America 2001 . *Introduction to intersex activism: A guide for allies*. p.3 11.

### **2. Biology of Sex Differentiation: Intersex as a Biological Reality (Week 2)**

Fausto Sterling, A. 2000 . *Of gender and genitals: the use and abuse of the modern intersexual*. Chapter 3 in *Sexing the body: Gender politics and the construction of sexuality*. Basic Books. p.45 77.

In class: guest lecture by Dr. Lisa Weasel from PSU Biology Department.

### **3. Medical Interventions: Intersex as a Social Emergency (Week 2-3)**

Donahoe, K., Schnitzer, J., O'Neill, J. 1998 . *Ambiguous genitalia in the newborn*, in Rowe, M., Grosfeld, J, et al. *Pediatric Surgery*, St. Louis, MO, Mosby Yearbook. p.1797 1818.

In class: presentation by a guest lecturer and a film. **Note:** this film, *Surgical treatment of ambiguous genitalia in female children* by Hurwitz, R., Applebaum, H., and Muenchow, S. (1990) is the actual medical training video designed to teach medical students how to “treat” intersex conditions. Because it briefly shows graphic images of surgical procedures on infants, you may choose not to view this film. However, I feel that it is important to see this in order to understand exactly what it is that we are talking about here.)

### **4. Intersex People Speak: Intersex as a Lived Experience (Week 3 - 5)**

Students will select 2 3 articles from the list below, and report to the class.

Morris, M. 2001 . *The missing vagina monologue*. *Soujourner*, March 2001. p. 19 21, 28.

Moreno, A. 1999 . *In Amerika they call us hermaphrodites*. p.137 140 in Dreger.

Chase, C. 1998 . *Affronting reason*. Atkins, D. ed. *Looking queer: image and identity in lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgendered communities*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth. p.205 220.

Devore, H. 1999 . *Growing up in the surgical maelstrom*. p.79 82 in Dreger.

Hawbecker, H. 1999 . *Who did this to you?* p.111 116 in Dreger.

Kaldera, R. 2000 . *Do it on the dotted line*. *Fireweed: A feminist quarterly of writing, politics, art & culture*, v. 69, Summer 2000. p.46 50.

In class: guest lecture by "Zachary," an intersex individual living in Portland, and *Hermaphrodites Speak!*, a documentary film created by intersex people.

## **5. Reform Movement within Medicine: Intersex as a Human Variety (Week 5-6)**

Dreger, A. 1999 . *Notes on treatment of intersex*. p.8 9 in Koyama and Intersex Society of North America.

Wilson, B. and Reiner, W. 1999 . *Management of intersex: a shifting paradigm*. p.119 136 in Dreger.

Dreger, A. 1999 . *From the age of gonads to the age of consent*. p. 5 22 in Dreger.

Melton, L. 2001 . *New perspectives on the management of intersex*. *The Lancet*, v. 357, issue 9274. p.2110.

## **6. Patient-Centered Critique of Texts about Intersex: Examples (Week 7)**

Students will select two sets from a. through d. and report to the class.

a.

Marion, R. 2000 . *The curse of the Garcias*. *Discover*, 21 12 , 42.

Groveman, S. 2000 . *Letter to Dr. Robert Marion*. AIS Support Group UK. 2 page document.

b.

Fausto Sterling, A. 1993 . *The five sexes: Why male and female are not enough*. *The Sciences*, March/April 1993.

Fausto Sterling, A. 2000 . *The five sexes revisited*. *The Sciences*, July/August 2000.

c.

Gender Identity Research and Education Society 2000 . *Medical management of intersexed infants*. Press release from GIRES. 1 page document.

Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome Support Group UK 2000 . *A Position Statement Concerning GIRES*. Press release from AISSG UK. 2 page document.

d.

Koyama, E. 2001 . *How intersex issues are being taught*. From Koyama, E. and Weasel, L. *Teaching intersex issues: A guide for teachers in Women's, Gender and Queer Studies*. Available from Intersex Society of North America. p.2 8.

## **7. Patient-Centered Critique of Texts about Intersex: Praxis (Week 8-9)**

Students will select two items from below and write critiques.

Corpron, C. and Lelli, J. 2001 . *Evaluation of pediatric surgery information on the internet*. *Journal of Pediatric Surgery*, v.26 no.8. p.1187 1189.

Hausman, B. 2000 . *Do boys have to be boys?* *NWSA Journal*, vol. 3, 2000.

National Organization for Women 2001 . *Freedom of choice for intersex girls: A girl's right to choose*. Resolution at the annual NOW convention. 1 page document.

Enslar, E. 2000 . *The Vagina Monologues* selections .

Public Broadcasting Service 2001 . *Sex: Unknown* film . PBS NOVA Series.

## **8. Becoming Allies to Intersex People (as time allows)**

Koyama, E. and Intersex Society of North America 2001 . *Introduction to intersex activism: A guide for allies*. p.2 10.

In class: guest lecture by Diana Courvant, the founder and director of local non profit Survivor Project; a video lecture “History’s role in intersex movement” by Alice Dreger.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING METHODS

**1. Journals** 30 total . Students will write short 2 3 pages informal journals on topics raised in the readings during weeks 2 thru 9. Journals are due on Thursdays of each week.

**2. Class participation** 20 . Attendance is essential, as much of the course is based on discussions. Attempts will be made to allow each students to share their input.

**3. Community education project** 25 . Students will identify a community member who should be knowledgeable about intersex issues, be it a school teacher, a nurse, a priest, or just a friend who is expecting a baby soon, and discuss issues and controversies learned in the course. Then students will write a 3 4 page report on the discussion. Community education project should be completed by the end of the seventh week.

**4. Critique** 25 . Students will write a short 3 4 pages papers critiquing at least two of the medical, academic or popular culture texts provided, from patient centered perspective learned in the course. The papers will be graded on the basis of the student's ability to interpret the text and apply critical perspective to it. Critique paper is due by the finals date.

Guidelines for specific writing assignments will be provided.

Grades are given based on percentage of the total number of points possible, using the standard percentage breakdown A for 90 100 , B for 80 89 , C for 70 79 , D for 60 69 , and F for 0 59 .