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.

**REQUIRED READING/MATERIALS**

1. **Introduction (Week 1)**

   **In class:** presentation and film.


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


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

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


   **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.


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)


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.


b.  

c.  

d.  

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

Students will select two items from below and write critiques.


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