To XY and Beyond:  
Sexual Difference and Sexuality in the History of Science  
FRS 151, Fall 2008

Prof. Angela N. H. Creager
Office hours, Monday, 1:00-3:00 p.m.
Department of History, 125 Dickinson Hall

Course Description

This seminar will examine how biologists, physicians, sexologists, and other researchers have sought to explain sexual difference and sexuality in scientific terms. Rather than focus on current perspectives, we will examine the succession of theories and approaches that have been proposed during the past three hundred years, seeking to understand each on its own terms and in its own time. Topics will include the emergence of a two-sex model in the early modern period, nineteenth-century medical interest in hermaphroditism and sexual inversion, explanations of sex determination in terms of chromosomes and hormones, the study of animals and their mating patterns (in species from *Drosophila* to chimpanzees) with analogy to human sexual behavior, and twentieth-century understandings of sexual orientation, intersexuality, bisexuality, and transsexuality. We will pay attention to how ideas of sexual identity and expression have changed over time, and compare how meanings vary according to discipline. For example, we will see how and under what conditions researchers have differentiated between the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality. Our readings will also trace how scientific conceptions have shaped popular understandings of what it is to be male or female, straight or gay—as well as how cultural notions and norms have influenced researchers. The seminar will draw together scholarship in history of biology and medicine, feminist theory, and LGBT studies, with an aim to help students think historically about both science and culture.

Course Requirements

We will read both primary sources, most by physicians and scientists from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and secondary sources, most by contemporary historians and theorists offer interpretations of past developments and perceptions. The seminar portion of the grade will be based on the quality and vociferousness of one’s contributions to discussion and several short responses to the readings posted on Blackboard prior to class. Two short mid-term papers will be assigned during the fall. The final paper (15 pages, due 3 p.m. Dean’s Date, Jan. 13, 2009; extensions only through Dean’s Office) will be more open-ended; students are expected to engage the scholarship on sex and science analytically, choosing a topic of interest related to the course theme or materials.

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<th>Requirement</th>
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<td>1st paper</td>
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<td>2nd paper</td>
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<td>Final paper</td>
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<td>Seminar participation</td>
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Readings and Class Schedule

Please note that assigned readings must be completed before the seminar session. Readings marked by an asterisk are from required books available at Labyrinth. These books are also on 3-hour reserve in Firestone Library. The other readings can be found on the Blackboard site for FRS 151 under E-Reserves.

**Week 1.** (9/11) Introduction to the Seminar

**Week 2.** (9/18) Sexuality as a Historical Problem

**Week 3.** (9/25) Perceptions of Sexual Difference from the Greeks to Early Modern Europe: The Emergence of the Two-Sex Model

**Weeks 4.** (10/2) The Two-Sex Model’s Misfits: Inverts and Hermaphrodites


Library Session with Dr. Elizabeth Bennett, 2-6-F Firestone, 3:00-4:20 pm

**Week 5. (10/9) Freud’s Theory of Sexuality**


**October 13, 2008 First Paper Due, 3 p.m., 127 Dickinson Hall, “To: Creager” box**

**Week 6. (10/16) Sexual Behavior Surveyed: Kinsey**


**Week 7. (10/23) Gender Trumps Sex?: Gender Identity and Transexuality**


**Fall Break (10/30)**

**Week 8.** (11/6) Hormones and Chromosomes

**Week 9.** (11/13) Sexuality in Cross-Cultural Perspective

**Week 10.** (11/20) Transgenderism
Viewing of excerpts from 20/20’s “My Secret Self” and “Transgenerations,” followed by mock talk show panel in which each student acts as a scientist or researcher we have studied and explains transgender behavior from his or her perspective.

November 26, 2008 Second Paper Due, 3 p.m., 127 Dickinson Hall, “To: Creager” box

Thanksgiving holiday (11/27)

December 3, 2008 Joanne Meyerowitz speaking for the Modern America Workshop, Department of History, “‘How Common Culture Shapes the Separate Lives’: Sexuality, Race, and the History of Social Constructionist Thought.” 12:00-1:20 pm, 210 Dickinson Hall

**Week 11. (12/4) Primatology and Sociobiology**

**Week 12. (12/11) Humans and Creatures: Comparative Understandings of Sex**

January 13, 2009 Third Paper Due, 3 p.m., 127 Dickinson Hall, “To: Creager” box