

Department of Sociology  
Boston College  
**Spring 2003**

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Thursday 3-5:30-3 p.m.

**HEALTH, GENDER, AND THE BODY (SC 506.01)**

The seminar examines the field of health and illness, with special emphasis on medicine's role in gendering the body. We begin by examining several concepts in medical sociology related to embodiment (medicalization, patient experience, and narratives of illness). We then turn to emerging areas where changing bodies is a central focus of theorizing and research, exploring three topics comparatively: 1) cosmetic surgery in the E.U. and the U.S.; 2) infertility and its treatment in contrasting global contexts; and 3) the management of inter-sexuality in 19<sup>th</sup> century France compared with the contemporary U.S. Through the examples we explore relationships among individual agency, institutional power, the growth of medical technology, and cultural constructions of gender.

Required texts:

- 1) Davis, K. *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*. NY: Routledge, 1995.
- 2) Foucault, M. *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite*. NY: Pantheon, 1980.
- 3) Kessler, S.J. *Lessons from the Intersexed*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1998.
- 4) Inhorn, M.C. and Van Balen, F. (eds). *Infertility Around the Globe: New Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and the Reproductive Technologies*. Berkeley CA: Univ. of Calif. Press, 2002.
- 5) Weitz, R. (ed.) *The Politics of Women's Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance, and Behavior*. NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998.

COURSE OUTLINE

**I. The Social Nature of Health, Illness, and the Body**

**Class 2: Medicalization of the body: the social construction of gender in medicine**

Judith Lorber, "Believing is seeing: Biology as ideology," in Weitz.

Catherine Kohler Riessman, "Women and medicalization," in Weitz.

Sandra Lee Bartky, "Foucault, femininity, and the modernization of patriarchal power," in Weitz.

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Recommended:

Deborah R. Gordon (1988). "Tenacious assumptions in western medicine," in M. Lock and D.R. Gordon (eds). *Biomedicine Examined*. New York: Kluwer, 19-56.

Peter Conrad and Joseph W. Schneider (1992). *Deviance and Medicalization: From Badness to Sickness*. Expanded edition. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press

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## II. Social Organization of Medicine: Contexts of Medicalization

### **Class 3: Becoming providers: cultural authority and professional dominance; professional socialization: the biomedical view of the body.**

Paul Starr (1988). "The Social Origins of Professional Sovereignty," in *Social Transformation of American Medicine*. NY: Basic Books.

Frederic W. Hafferty (1988). "Cadaver stories and the emotional socialization of medical students," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 29:344-356.

Elliot G. Mishler (1981). "Viewpoint: Critical perspectives on the biomedical model." In E. Mishler et al., *Social Contexts of Health, Illness, and Patient Care*. NY: Cambridge Univ. Press.

NOVA Video: So you want to be a Doctor?

Recommended:

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Donald F. Chambliss 1996). *Beyond Caring: Hospitals, Nurses and the Social Organization of Ethics*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Frederic W. Hafferty (1991). *Into the Valley: Death and the Socialization of Medical Students*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press. .

### **Class 4: Becoming patients: the embodied experience of illness; the illness narrative**

Susan E. Bell (1999). "Narratives and lives: Women's health politics and the diagnosis of cancer for DES daughters." *Narrative Inquiry* 9(2):1-43.

Kristin Langellier (2001). "'You're marked': Breast cancer, tattoo and the narrative performance of identity." In J. Brockmeier and D. Carbaugh (eds.) *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self, and Culture*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Alan Radley and Diane Taylor (2003). "Remembering one's stay in hospital: a study in recovery, photography and forgetting." *health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Health, Illness and Medicine* 7(1):pp?

Gareth Williams (1984). "The genesis of chronic illness: Narrative reconstruction." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 6(2):175-20.

Recommended:

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Susan E. Bell (2000). "Experiencing illness in/and narrative." In C.E. Bird, P. Conrad, A.M. Fremont (eds.), *Handbook of Medical Sociology*, fifth ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Kathy Charmaz, (1991). *Good Days, Bad Days: The Self in Chronic Illness and Time*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press.

Lars-Christer Hyden (1997). "Illness and narrative." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 19(1):48-69.

Catherine Kohler Riessman (2003). "Performing identities in illness narrative: Masculinity and multiple sclerosis." *Qualitative Research* 3(1):pp?

Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*. New York: Free Press, 1951, Chapter 10.

### **Class 5: interaction between doctors and patients; professional and patient narratives; clash of cultures—voice of medicine and voice of the life world**

Anne Fadiman (1997). "Take as Directed" in *The Spirit Catches You and the Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. (Chapter 5).

Cheryl Mattingly and Mary Lawlor (2001). "The fragility of healing." *Ethos* 29(1): 30-57.

Katharine Young (1989). "Narrative embodiments: Enclaves of the self in the realm of medicine." In J. Shotter & K. J. Gergen (eds.), *Texts of identity*. Newbury Park CA: Sage.

Recommended:

Clark, J.A. and E.G. Mishler (1992). "Attending to patients' stories: Reframing the clinical task." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 14: 344-370.

Mattingly, C. (1998). *Healing Dramas and Clinical Plots: The Narrative Structure of Experience*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Mishler, E.G. (1984). *The Discourse of Medicine: Dialectics of Medical Interviews*. Norwood NJ: Ablex.

## **III Gendering the Body in Medicine: Three Exemplars**

### **Classes 6 & 7: Cosmetic surgery**

Kathryn Pauly Morgan, "Women and the knife: cosmetic surgery and the colonization of women's bodies," in Weitz.

Eugenia Kaw, "Medicalization of racial features: Asian-American women and cosmetic surgery," in Weitz.

Kathy Davis (1995). *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*. NY: Routledge.

Kathy Davis (1997). "My body is my art," in K. Davis (ed.), *Embodied Practices: Feminist Perspectives on the Body*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage,

### **Classes 8, 9, 10: Infertility and reproductive technologies: global comparisons**

Marcia C. Inhorn and Frank van Balen, eds. (2002). *Infertility Around the Globe: New Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies*. Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press.

Elizabeth F.S. Roberts (1998). "'Native' narratives of connectedness: Surrogate motherhood and technology." In R. Davis-Floyd and J. Dumit (eds.), *Cyborg Babies: From Techno-Sex to Techno-Tots*. NY: Routledge.

Gillian M. Goslinga-Roy (2000). "Body boundaries, fiction of the female self: An ethnographic perspective on power, feminism, and the reproductive technologies." *Feminist Studies* 26: 113-140.

Recommended:

Emily Martin (1991), "The egg and the sperm: How science has constructed a romance based on stereotypical male-female roles," *Signs* 16: 485-501.

Katha Pollitt, "'Fetal rights': A new assault on feminism," in Weitz.

Charis M. Cussins (1998). "Ontological choreography: Agency for women patients in an infertility clinic," in M. Berg and A. Mol (eds), *Differences in Medicine: Unraveling Practices, Techniques, Bodies*. Durham NC: Duke Univ. Press.

### **Classes 11-12: intersexed infants and transgendered adults**

Michel Foucault (1980). *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth Century French Hermaphrodite*. NY: Pantheon.

Suzanne J. Kessler (1998). *Lessons from the Intersexed*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press.

Recommended:

Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000). *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. NY: Basic Books.

## **IV. Revisiting Biomedicine and the Body**

### **Class 13**

Kathy Davis (1997). "Beyond modernist and postmodernist readings of the body." In K. Davis (ed.), *Embodied Practices: Feminist Perspectives on the Body*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Other readings to be assigned.