GWS 530: Biology and Gender

General Information:
Instructor: Dr. Caroline VanSickle  
Email: cvansickle@wisc.edu  
Office: 3418 Sterling Hall
Class time: Monday & Wednesday 4-5:15
Class location: B223 Van Vleck
Office hours: Wednesdays 2:00-3:30 pm

Description:
The interaction of biology and gender has several dimensions. One dimension is the scientific importance of sex and sexual reproduction and their role in shaping the evolution and behavior of many kinds of organisms. Another is the historical emergence of women as biologists, from the Victorian absence of female voices to the twenty-first century, a time when women receive a majority of doctorates in biology and biomedical sciences but remain underrepresented at senior levels of these professions. The development of evolutionary biology involved many insights that challenged Enlightenment and earlier views of sex and gender, including the intrinsic value of variation, the mathematical equality of male and female genetic contributions in Mendelian inheritance, and the redefinition of "natural" to what was adaptive in past environments.

Biology is a broad discipline, stretching from molecular biology and biophysics to systematics, field ecology and paleontology. The course will give attention to many of the areas of biology and the way that they have developed over time.

Format and Texts:
The course will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Typically, Monday sessions will present new material and Wednesday sessions will synthesize material. The format is intended to give students a chance to react and incorporate new materials for a deeper shared discussion. All sessions are flexible and in-class exercises and interactions may occur at any time during the course. All assigned readings are all available on Learn@UW. Please download PDFs before class.

Course requirements and grading:
Student grades are based on their performance on three non-cumulative, in-class exams; group preparation to lead discussion one week during the semester; general participation and performance on in-class activities; and a research proposal to be turned in at the end of the semester. Graded material cannot be made up or turned in late. Grades are apportioned as follows:

20% Exam 1.
20% Exam 2.
20% Exam 3.
15% Leading discussion.
10% In-class exercises and participation.
15% Research proposal.
Exams will all include a mixture of short answer (fill in the blank, write 1 sentence, multiple choice, define the term, etc.) and longer essay questions. They will take up one full class period. Make-up exams are not available except in truly extraordinary situations; students should plan now to attend class on exam days.

Groups will lead discussion by completing the week’s readings in advance; co-authoring a 3-page document that explains the significance of the week’s readings and provides discussion questions to be used in class; and leading the class in discussion. Papers are due the Tuesday before discussion by 5:00 pm. Topics will be assigned during Week 2, and the first group will present in Week 4.

All students are expected to complete the week’s readings prior to class on Wednesday. Discussions will sometimes involve in-class activities or written assignments where students are expected to demonstrate their familiarity with the assigned readings. Participation in discussion and attendance in general is mandatory. Absences after the second will negatively affect one’s grade.

Students will select a topic related to biology and prepare a research proposal throughout the semester. This proposal will include a well-researched introduction and background to the topic, a specific hypothesis and methodology to be used, and a theoretical framework that explains how the research incorporates feminist theory.

Extra credit: Up to 1.5% extra credit will be offered at the instructor’s discretion. No other extra credit will be available, and extra credit may not be made up if missed.

The final grade distribution will be as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100%</td>
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<td>88-93%</td>
<td>AB</td>
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<td>82-87%</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>76-81%</td>
<td>BC</td>
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<td>70-75%</td>
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<td>60-70%</td>
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<td>59 and below</td>
<td>F</td>
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All students are encouraged to use office hours and be proactive about their learning experience in the course.

Classroom atmosphere:

Students may use laptops to take notes or refer to PDF readings. They may not use the internet during class. Students who are found to be using Facebook or checking email during class time will lose participation credit for the day, and may be asked to put their laptop away. Students may not use their phones during class and are asked to turn them off or on silent (which is different than vibrate) during the class period.
Course Schedule and Weekly Assigned Readings (due dates are given in bold)

Week 1: Sept 3. Introduction to Course.


Week 3: Sept 15/17. Pre-Darwinian biology.


**Sept 23: Group 1 discussion materials due.**


Sept 30: Group 2 discussion materials due.

Oct 1: Select research proposal topic.


Oct 6: Exam 1.

Extra credit: attend Anne Fausto-Sterling’s lecture at the Wisconsin Symposium on Feminist Biology (Oct 10).


Oct 14: Group 3 discussion materials due.


Week 8: Oct 20/22. Monogamy and models.

Oct 20: Annotated bibliography due.

Oct 21: Group 4 discussion materials due.


**Oct 28: Group 5 discussion materials due.**


Week 10: Nov 3/5. Gender in the field. **Trigger warning for these readings: Includes discussion of sexual harassment**

**Nov 4: Group 6 discussion materials due.**

**Nov 5: Peer edit introduction and background.**


**Nov 10: Exam 2.**

**Nov 18**: Group 7 discussion materials due.

**Nov 19**: Peer edit hypothesis and methodology.


**Nov 25**: Group 8 discussion materials due.


**Dec 2**: Group 9 discussion materials due.

**Dec 3**: Peer edit feminist theory.


**Dec 9**: Group 10 discussion materials due.

**Dec 10**: Research proposal due.


Week 16: Exams week.

**Dec 15:** Exam 3 during final exams period, at 5:05 pm.