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Historical Perspectives on Gender, Race and Medicine PAS 1 Selective, Spring 2003

This selective explores how medicine and the natural sciences have assigned difference and divided people into races and sexes, as well as some of the consequences of those divisions. Students will be introduced to the concept of social construction of difference.

Objectives: Students will explore the relationships between culture and medical knowledge, and learn how value-laden categories such as male and female or black and white can become embedded in medical thought and practice. They will develop skills of critical thinking about those categories and how they are presented, providing the opportunity for reflection on the students' own experiences. We will consider recent historical examples that continue to shape patient-practitioner interactions in the present.

April 9 Defining Sex and Race

Susan Lawrence and Kai Bendixen, "His and Hers: Male and Female Anatomy in Anatomy Texts for U.S. Medical Students, 1890-1989" *Soc. Sci. Med.* 35 (1992), pp. 925-34.
Emily Martin, "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed A Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles" *Signs* 16 (1991), pp. 485-501.
David C. Humphrey, "Dissection and Discrimination: The Social Origins of Cadavers in America, 1760-1915", *Bulletin NY Academy of Medicine* 49 (1973), pp. 819-27.

Study Questions:

How do cultural values get encoded into scientific texts? How do definitions of "normal" organize medical thinking and medical training? Who decides what is "normal"? How do new technologies relate to ideas about race and gender?

April 16 The Terrible Experiment

Susan L. Smith, "Neither Victim nor Villain: Eunice Rivers and Public Health Work", *Journal of Womens History* 8 (1996) pp. 95-113.
Susan Lederer, "The Tuskegee Syphilis Study in the Context of American Medical Research", *Tuskegee's Truths*, ed. Susan Reverby, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000, pp. 266-270.
Eunice V. Rivers, et al, "Twenty Years of Followup Experience in a Long-Range Medical Study", *Public Health Reports* 68 (1953), pp. 391-95; reprinted in *Tuskegee's Truths*, pp. 125-131.
Vanessa Northington Gamble, "Under the Shadow of Tuskegee: African Americans and Health Care", *American Journal of Public Health* 87 (1997), pp. 1773-87.

Study Questions:

How can we understand the tragedy of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study in historical terms? Are some ethical precepts timeless? Were the study's designers and implementers merely villains? How can we understand Nurse Rivers' role in perpetuating the study?

April 23 Dealing with Ambiguities

Suzanne J. Kessler, "The Medical Construction of Gender: Case Management of Intersexed Infants", *Signs* 16 (1991), pp. 3-26.

Begin working in small groups for final presentations.

Study Questions:

How do cultural values become embedded into medical practices? Why was the surgical management of genital ambiguities so appealing to parents, surgeons and researchers? What assumptions about gender roles shaped their experiences?

April 30 A Historical Document

Susan L. Smith, "White Nurses, Black Midwives, and Public Health in Mississippi, 1920-1950", *Nursing History Review* 2 (1994) pp. 29-49.

All My Babies (training film from the 1950s).

Continue working in small groups for next week's presentations.

Study Questions:

How can we analyze a film as an historical document? What can this source tell us about the experiences of patients? Of practitioners? How did racial stereotypes shape health-care in the South?

May 7 Finding Race and Gender

Students will present the results of their group work. Each group is responsible for presenting a primary source (an excerpt from a text book, a lecture, or other first-hand account) and an analysis of the ways in which gender and/or race is presented or constructed in the source.