

**Philosophy 3334: Philosophy of Biology
Spring 2020, Long Paper Assignment #6**

Instructions: Write an argumentative paper on some topic relevant to our discussion of biology and sex in class. The paper should be between roughly 1200 and 1500 words. If you double space and have natural fonts and margins, this would be about 4-6 pages.

ALTERNATIVELY, you may, if you wish, write two shorter papers of 600-800 words. For example, one shorter paper on why more men go into physics and another shorter paper on the distinction between sex and gender.

Your paper(s) should discuss some of the assigned papers or videos we had for class. You may wish to read additional material that was not assigned, however, this is not necessary and not expected. But if you want to do that, I would be happy to help you find relevant readings. Several things that our authors reference or that I think would be helpful are already on the website as 'extra readings'.

Due Date: All work for the class, including this final paper, must be turned in by To maintain a quick pace, you would want to upload this paper into Blackboard by before Sunday, May 10th 11:59pm.

While I normally prefer to grade papers anonymously, I feel that this semester it is best if I am able to easily track who is turning in work when and grading anonymously slows this process down immensely. So please go ahead and put your name on your paper.

Grading: This paper will be worth 16 points (16% of your final grade).

References: All sources used in the writing of your paper must be properly referenced. Now that you are writing a longer paper dealing with issues discussed in multiple places in our class, it is more important to be careful in this regard. "Properly referenced" does not mean that there is any particular format that I care about, but it does mean that if you say "according to Symons" or have a formal or informal quote referring to something one of our authors wrote, I should be able to very easily find exactly what they did say. So page numbers are essential for example. And if you use the words of an author or even their direct ideas, you should say it is from them. To not say so is to imply they are your words and so this would constitute plagiarism.

Topic:

You may choose to write about any topic relevant to biology and sex. The most natural thing to do (and probably the easiest) is to take two of our authors who disagree on some point, explain each of their views carefully, and then critically join in the debate by giving a further argument in favor of one of them and/or against one of them.

For example, here are some natural topics:

- 1) We know from multiple studies that there are some cognitive differences on average between males and females. But these traits vary widely within sex and overlap quite a bit between the sexes (see my slides on this for example). So is it valuable to talk about a “male brain” or a “female brain”? Are these “essential differences”? Or is it deeply problematic to use terms like this?
- 2) Is thinking about evolution important for understanding human sexual behavior? How? When studying human behavior, when is it appropriate to study humans in the same way we would study animals and when would that be inappropriate?
- 3) Does the reason that more men get PhDs in physics than women have more to do with biology or with culture?
- 4) Are transgendered women “really” women? If men and women are actually different kinds of people, what makes them different? What about intersex individuals of various kinds?
- 5) Is it ever important for society (or anyone) to distinguish between male and female? For example, in sports competitions? In various spaces such as bathrooms or prisons? If so, how should this distinction be made and why? (Maybe it is different for different purposes for example – you don’t have to talk about every purpose, just the one (or ones) you are interested in).

If you are not sure if your chosen topic is relevant, ask me.