

**Gender and Science**  
**Final Essay Assignment**  
**Due: April 24, 2024**  
**Via Canvas**

**For this assignment, you have three options:**

**OPTION 1: Restoring the Narrative Assignment**

Throughout this semester, we have focused on how access to information and the construction of knowledge shapes various fields of science. Very often, this knowledge reflects power structures and privilege; those who have access and power use them to claim authority on a subject and over others. This assignment offers you the chance to do some research into some scientists whose work has not received the credit it deserves because of their social position or identity.

In this assignment, you will be asked to research the life and work of an individual whose contributions to science deserve more attention. While traditionally such projects focus exclusively on cis-women scientists, this assignment also encourages you to think about how different aspects of identity, including sexual orientation, country of origins, or indigeneity, influence how their work is received and remembered. In writing about this person, you will be asked to share some details of their life and work, emphasizing the importance of their contribution(s) to science, and why those contributions have gone underrecognized. You will conclude by explaining how including this person in the history and study of science can benefit the field and those who work in it.

For example, were I to write this essay, I might begin:

“Despite never having access to a university education, Bertha Parker Pallan Cody was a unique and influential American archeologist. She was also the first female archeologist of Abenaki and Seneca descent. Her work demonstrates that the training of Primarily White Institutions is not an exclusive qualification for a career in science, and that indigenous knowledge can often be just as, if not more important. This essay will consider Cody’s career, noting the ways in which she was overlooked by her white employers and colleagues, and shed light on her contributions to archeology. I will conclude by arguing that Cody’s resolve, creativity, and wisdom make her an inspirational figure worthy of consideration in science classes.”

In 3-5 pages (1,200 – 1,500 words), you should

- Identify the person you would like to discuss
- Provide a brief but thorough description of their life and contributions to science
- Explain why those contributions don’t get the credit they deserve
- What you hope people in the future learn from your person.
- This essay should make use of at least three (3) sources that are not encyclopedia entries. The quality of your sources will be considered in the evaluation of this assignment.
- Please don’t talk about Marie Curie or Rosalind Franklin, if that’s ok.

## OPTION 2: Op-Ed Essay

The goal of this essay is to answer the question:

Why is it important to consider issues of gender and sex in the study of science?

How you choose to answer this question is up to you. What is necessary is that you choose a specific example to support your argument from any branch of science, and any time period. This is an essay that is geared toward a general audience (not specifically people in our class, gender scholars, or scientists), so your goal is to be persuasive, rather than technically proficient.

For example, were I to write this essay, I might begin:

“Even though most studies focus on how women have been excluded from the history of science and modern scientific research, I argue that it is just as important to conduct more accurate, comprehensive research on all gendered and sexed bodies. As Sarah Richardson shows in her article “Sexing the X—How X Became the “Female Chromosome,” in addition to sustaining “hypotheses of dubious empirical merit,” about women’s health, the sexing of chromosomes also impacts the way scientists think about “her derelict brother that is the Y” (Richardson, 910-911). I want to emphasize that the gendered biases, especially around genetic research, has harmful effects on all bodies, and that we need to focus on ways to overcome these biases by considering issues of history, language, and culture.”

In 3-5 pages (1,200 – 1,500 words), you should

- State whether you think it is important to consider gender and/or sex in the study of science (you are welcome to argue it is *or* is not important—the quality of your argument is the most important factor here).
- Offer two or three concrete points in your argument. Example: This is important because of the following three points which I will explain in more depth...
- Provide one example from any branch of science to support your argument. This can be a story from a book, a scientific study, a film or podcast, a person, etc. You are welcome to use material from our syllabus.
- Write persuasively for a general audience. It might help to imagine that you are writing a piece for *The Pitt News*.

Please note: You may include photos, links to web sites, and film clips as part of this essay.

### **OPTION 3: Un-Essay**

This “un-essay” will consist of you working individually to create something that represents what you learned in this class—it can be a drawing, a poem, a piece of knitwear, a model, a sculpture, a musical composition...the sky is the limit, so long as you create it yourself. You will be asked to provide a description of approximately 300-500 words in which you talk about your creation, why you chose to create it, and how it reflects your engagement with the class.

Some examples that have been created in past Gender and Science Classes:

- A short film adaptation of one of the science fiction stories provided in Canvas
- A model of a double helix using macarons
- A recording of a modern dance
- A song dedicated to Rosalind Franklin

#### **General Information:**

- The examples provided above are purely suggestions. Please feel free to choose any example or topic that interests you. The goal is to let you express your own thoughts and what you have learned in this course, not to be “right”.
- Bridget is more than happy to help you find a topic to discuss if you need it.
- You are welcome to submit a draft of the paper before the due date. Just let Bridget know ahead of time.
- If needed, an extension can be arranged. Grades are due for this class on May 1, so it would be ideal if you can turn your assignment in before this date. However, we can work something out if you cannot make that date. Bridget would rather read work that you are proud to submit than papers that you finished. Just be in touch.