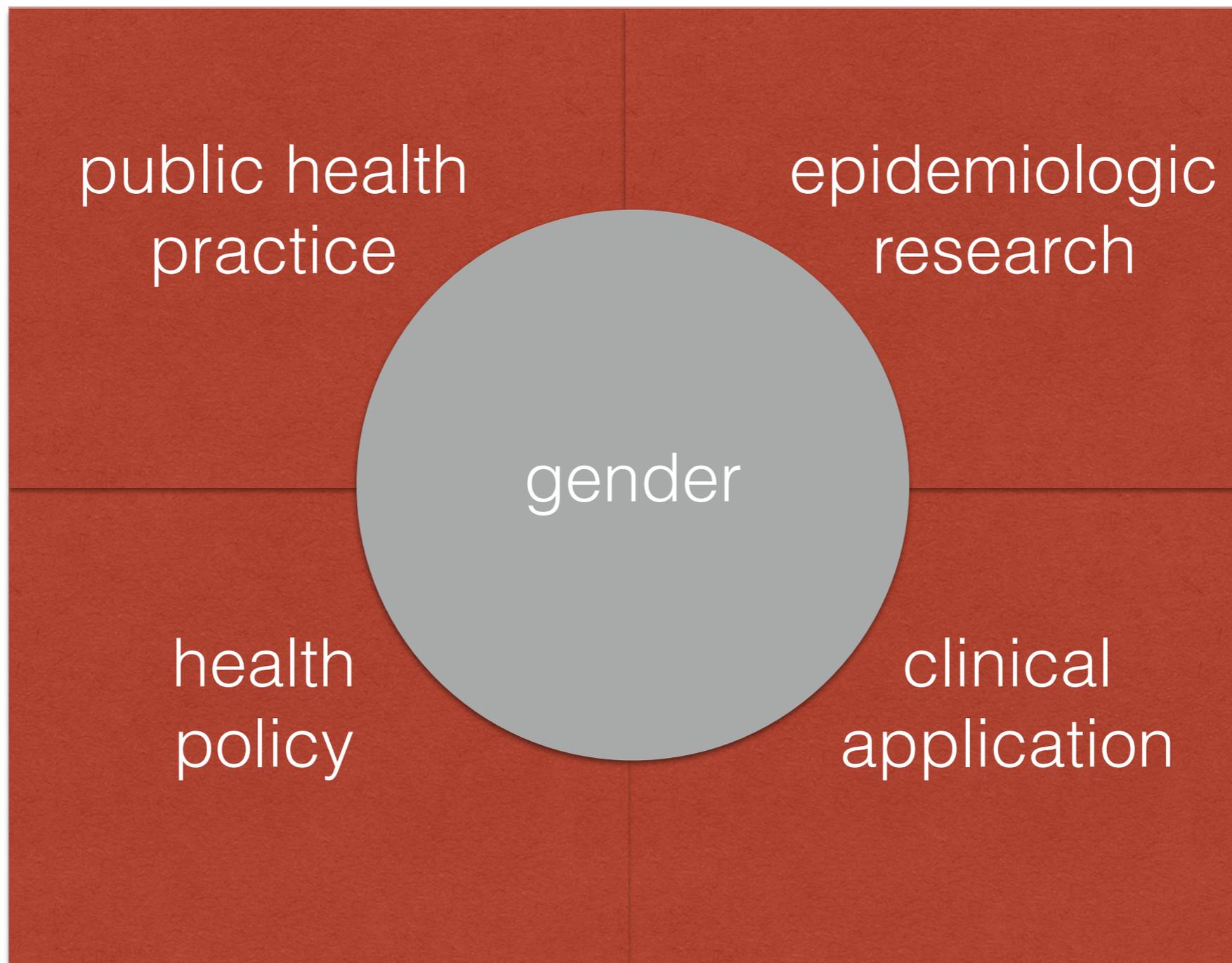


WGS.151
Gender, Health, & Society
Professor Brittany Charlton

Course Overview



Health

Clinical application/medicine

- Science of curing and preventing disease on an **individual level**

Public health

- Science of curing and preventing disease on a **population or community level**

Epidemiology

- Root word: epidemic (not epidermis)
 - Epi (“upon”) + demos (“the people”)
- Study of the **distribution** and **determinants** of disease in humans
- **Application** to control health problems
- Create **knowledge** to improve population health; **prevent unnecessary suffering**

Health Policy

- Law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive, or voluntary practice of governments and other institutions **related to health**

Public Health and Medicine

Medicine

- Primary focus on individual
- Emphasis on diagnosis and treatment, care for the whole patient
- Well-established profession with sharp public image
- Uniform system for certifying specialists beyond professional medical degree
- Numeric sciences increasing in prominence, though still a relatively minor part of training
- Social sciences tend to be an elective part of medical education
- Clinical sciences an essential part of professional training

Public Health

- Primary focus on population
- Emphasis on prevention, health promotion for the whole community
- Multiple professional identities with diffuse public image
- Variable certification of specialists beyond professional public health degree
- Numeric sciences an essential feature of analysis and training
- Social sciences an integral part of public health education
- Clinical sciences peripheral to professional training

Historic Public Health Milestones

- Cholera
- HPV, Pap tests, & cervical cancer
- Smoking & lung cancer/heart disease
- Prenatal folate & neural tube defects

Objectives

1. Describe differences between **gender, sex-linked biology,** and **sexuality** as well as critically evaluate their use in health research, social and behavioral sciences, and health policy
2. Evaluate the **breadth of research** and **research methods** in the study of gender and health
3. **Apply theoretical and methodological constructs** learned in class to a range of health issues, taking into consideration additional social determinants including social class and race

Disciplines and Conceptual Frameworks

Week 1

- Biology, History, and Conceptual Frameworks

Week 3

- Gender Analysis

Week 8

- Sex-based Research

Research Methods

Weeks 2, 4, 6, 7

- Design Strategies
 - Characteristics, strengths, and limitations of each study design
 - Focus on trial, cohort, case-control designs

Week 3

- Measures of Disease Frequency and Association
 - Incidence, prevalence
 - Relative and absolute measures of association

Weeks 6 and 10

- Interpretation of Studies
 - Alternative explanations for study findings
 - Chance, bias, confounding
 - Effect modification
 - Association vs. causation

Examples

Week 2

- Cardiovascular Disease
- Hormone Therapy

Week 4

- Pregnancy and Birth

Week 5

- Sexually Transmitted Infections

Week 6

- Abortion

Week 7

- Sexual Orientation
- Mental Health

Week 8

- Gender Identity and Expression

Week 9

- Contraceptives

Week 10

- Mental Health

Deliverables

1. Class Participation
 - A. Discussion Leaders
2. Weekly Reading Reflections
3. Testimony/Opinion
4. Final Project
 - B. Write Up
 - C. Oral Presentation

Expectations

1. Office Hours
2. Electronic Devices
3. Texts/Readings

Ground Rules

Respect, safety, and language

Biology

Sex-linked biology may seem clear

- Yet so much variety

Sex can be determined by

- Social interactions in certain fish
- Incubation temperatures for some reptiles
- Diet quality in mice



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Biology

Linguistic and scientific muddiness harmful

- Genetic factor on Y chromosome incorrectly called the “sex” rather than “male” determining factor
- Result: lack of research on female development

Biology

Intersex

- Hypospadias
 - Various causes (testosterone metabolism)
 - Urethra does not run to penis tip
- Turner Syndrome
 - Females lacking 2nd X chromosome (X0)
 - Infertility (ovaries underdeveloped); lack secondary sex characteristics
- Klinefelter Syndrome
 - Males with extra X chromosome (XXY)
 - Infertility; breast development

Conceptual Frameworks

Theories can seem dry and arcane but without

- Poorly conceived hypotheses
- Inadequately interpret findings
- Generate incomplete/wrong answers

Requires abstract thinking

Allow us to tell stories

Early Conceptual Frameworks/Theories

Many early frameworks/theories

- Miasma
 - Corrupted air
 - Putrid, organic matter from decaying filth (excrement, rotting food)
 - Solution: clean up filth
- Contagion
 - Invisible poisons (non-living, non-reproducing)
 - Direct person-to-person contact via
 - Solution: restrict/quarantine
- Germ theory
 - Diseases are caused by microorganisms
 - Louis Pasteur

Explaining Cholera

Miasma vs Contagion

Observations unexplained by both

- Miasma
 - Failure of quarantine
 - Simultaneous eruption of cases in different neighborhoods
- Contagion
 - Disease migrated with sick people
 - Outbreaks frequently starting in port towns
 - Persistently filthy neighborhoods only sporadically experiencing epidemics

Conceptual Frameworks

Contemporary theories

- Biomedical model
 - “Real” causes: biophysical agents, genes, “risk factors”
 - Exposure largely consequence of individualistic characteristics and behaviors
 - Reductionist
- Health and human rights
 - Presumes all people born free and equal
 - Provides a universal frame of reference for deciding questions of equity and justice
 - Defines what governments can/cannot do to us and should do for us
- Psychosocial
 - Both behavioral and endogenous biological response; stress
- Political economy of health
 - Economic and political determinants; institutions, no biological constructs
- Ecosocial theory
 - Integrates social and biological reasoning
 - More systemic integrated approach capable of generating new hypotheses

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