

## HIS 535 –THEME SEMINAR

### “BODY POLITICS”

Professor Nancy Tomes

Tuesday - 6:30-9:20pm    SBS N-318

This course will explore the diverse ways that medical knowledge about the human body has been deployed in the exercise of “biopower,” to use Foucault’s term. We will use his concept of biopower as starting point to explore the historical construction of categories such as natural/unnatural, normal/abnormal, able/disabled, and healthy/diseased. We will explore how those changing categories have aligned with the exercise of political and cultural power over gendered bodies and minds. Our goal is to understand the changing dynamics of medical authority in the past: how it was constituted, accepted, resisted, and subverted. Besides Foucault, we will sample the work of other theorists, including Judith Butler’s new book, *Who’s Afraid of Gender?* We will read in common five or six works of history, such as Melissa Stein, *Measuring Manhood: Race and the Science of Masculinity, 1830-1934*, Susan Burch and Hannah Joyner, *Unspeakable: the Story of Junius Wilson*, Susan Reverby, *Examining Tuskegee: the Infamous Syphilis Study and Its Legacy*, and Richard McKay, *Patient Zero and the Making of the AIDS Epidemic*. (I will revisit this list of common readings once I see who’s in the seminar.) In addition to the common readings, seminar members will be given the chance to explore and share readings relevant to their specific interests.

Although my own specialization is in U.S. medicine from 1800 onward, I am eager and willing to work with people interested in other localities and time periods. The main writing requirement consists of writing a review essay (7-10 pages) and an annotated bibliography on a topic of the participant’s choice. **Enrollment in History MA or PhD Program or Permission of Instructor.**