

GENDER and NEUROSCIENCE

Workshop and masterclass

Workshop	22 May, 10.00-18.00 University of Amsterdam	Masterclass	23 May, 10.00-14.30 Radboud University
	<i>Morning:</i> Bushuis, room F 0.22 Kloveniersburgwal 48		Gymnasion, room GN 7 Heyendaalse weg 141 Nijmegen
	<i>Afternoon:</i> University Theatre, room 101 A Nieuwe Doelenstraat 16		

This workshop and masterclass will explore questions of sex / gender and sexuality in the brain. Despite growing counter-evidence, there is a general consensus, both in popular and scientific publications, that human brains come in a male and a female variety, and that this difference is hardwired. A well-established and ongoing tradition of feminist critique counters such theories of binary difference, typically by deconstructing the division between nature and culture that consistently underpins such research.

Productive dialogues across disciplinary borders prove that neuroscience and feminist theory are not antithetical. They can meet over issues such as the (neuronal) embodiment of power mechanisms, including possible ways to intervene in these processes. Feminist scholars, collaborating with or situated within neuroscience, explore alternative research questions, models and methods that avoid the reproduction and reinforcement of binary sex differences and shift the focus of empirical inquiry towards these shared concerns.

Over the course of two days, we will explore these possibilities further. We start from a conceptualization of gender informed by feminist theory that conceives of gender as a multi-level, complex, and ever-changing social system of differentiation in which power plays an important role. Given this concept of gender, what room is there for doing experimental neuroscientific work on sex / gender and sexuality?

Workshop

During the workshop, three speakers will be presenting their work and engaging in discussion with each other and the public.

Speakers:

Rebecca Jordan-Young is a sociomedical scientist whose research includes social epidemiology studies of HIV/AIDS, and evaluation of biological work on sex, gender and sexuality. Her book *Brain Storm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences*, is a comprehensive critical analysis of research purporting to demonstrate that hormone exposures in utero "hardwire" the brain to be either masculine or feminine in sexuality, skills, and interests.

Anelis Kaiser is currently a research fellow at the Department of Psychology, Institute of Psychology, University of Bern, Switzerland. Her primary research interests include the neurocognition of language, sex and gender differences in neuroscience, feminist neuroscience as well as inter- or transdisciplinarity between science and gender studies. In 2010, she initiated and organized, together with Isabelle Dussauge, the International Network *NeuroGenderings: Critical Studies of the Sexed Brain*. The network will organize its third international conference in 2014

[<http://www3.unil.ch/wpmu/neurogenderings3/>]. Publications include “Re-conceptualizing Sex and Gender in the Human Brain” (*Journal of Psychology* 220 (2): 130-136, 2012) and a special issue of the *Journal Neuroethics* entitled “Neuroscience and Sex/Gender” (*Neuroethics* 5 (3), 2012).

Hanna Fitsch is a sociologist interested in science and technology studies (with a focus on neuroscience), visualization and aesthetics, and feminist theory. She completed her PhD at the Technical University of Berlin in 2012. In her dissertation she conducts a critical examination of the visual logic of the apparatuses of fMRI, in order to trace what these images make visible and thus sayable through transformation and standardization. Publications include “(A)e(s)th(et)ics of brain imaging. Visibilities and sayabilities in functional magnetic resonance imaging” (*Neuroethics* 5 (3), 2012), and “What comes around goes around. Visual Knowledge in fMRI and its Implications for Research Practice” in Grit Höppner, Sigrid Schmitz (eds), *Gendered Neurocultures: Feminist and Queer Perspectives on Current Brain Discourses*, Vienna: Zaglossus (in press).

Schedule:

10.00-10.30	welcome coffee, tea
10.30-12.00	Rebecca Jordan-Young
12.00-14.00	lunch break
14.00-15.30	Anelis Kaiser
15.30-16.00	coffee break
16.00-17.30	Hanna Fitsch
17.30-18.00	Roundtable / closing words
18.00	drinks

Registration:

The workshop is open to all students, PhD candidates and university staff, but space is limited to 30 participants. Please register by emailing in advance to a.v.kleinherenbrink@uva.nl

Masterclass

In the masterclass two junior researchers will present their research projects at the intersection of sex, gender and neuroscience. Senior researchers from different disciplinary fields will comment on the projects, followed by discussion with all participants.

Participating senior researchers: Rebecca Jordan-Young, Julian Kiverstein (cognition philosophy), Iris van Rooij (cognitive science), Veronica Vasterling (gender theory & philosophy) and others.

Schedule:

10.00-10.30	welcome coffee, tea
10.30-10.45	introduction by Iris van Rooij & Veronica Vasterling
10.45-12.00	presentation Annelies Kleinherenbrink & discussion
12.00-13.00	lunch break
13.00-14.15	presentation Carlotta Cogoni & discussion
14.15-14.30	wrap-up

Registration:

The masterclass is open to scholars from all relevant disciplines, from master to post-doc level. Space is limited to 15 participants. To apply, please send a short motivation and a bio (max. 300 words) to v.vasterling@ftr.ru.nl before May 15.

Requirements & credits

All participants in the masterclass are required to familiarize themselves with the following readings:

- Jordan-Young, R. Homunculus in the Hormones. In *Gender in Science and Technology: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Ilona Horvath and Waltraud Ernst Eds). Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript-Verlag / Columbia University Press. 2014, pp. 111-128.
- Jordan-Young, R. and R. Rumiati (2012). Hardwired for Sexism? Approaches to Sex/Gender in Neuroscience. *Neuroethics* 5: 305-315.
- Fine, C., Jordan-Young, R., Kaiser, A., and Rippon, G. Plasticity, plasticity, plasticity ... and the rigid problem of sex. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, November 2013 17(11): 550-551.
- Kaiser, A. (2012). Re-conceptualizing "Sex" and "Gender" in the Human Brain. *Zeitschrift für Psychologie* Vol 220 (2): 130-136.
- 5. Fitsch, H. (2012). (A)e(e)th(et)ics of Brain imaging. Visibilities and Sayabilities in Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging. *Neuroethics* 5: 275-283.

All texts are obtainable from Veronica Vasterling upon registration.

Participants can earn 1 ECTS by writing a short report in which they address two questions on the readings (500 words max), to be submitted to v.vasterling@ftr.ru.nl before 19 May.

Organizers

Institute for Gender Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen
 Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition, & Behaviour, Radboud University
 Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam