

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

PhD PROPOSAL PRESENTATION

Meghan Gosse

Title:

Living with vaginismus: Relationships, identities, and intimacies

Abstract:

Vaginismus is a sexual pain disorder characterized by muscle spasms of the pelvic floor muscles that can result in significant sexual and psychological impairments. To date, vaginismus has primarily been studied by medical and clinical researchers, and has been under-explored in sociology and related disciplines. Vaginismus is relevant from a social science perspective, however, because of the personal, relational, and social implications of the condition and because certain aspects of vaginismus are socially and contextually produced. Adopting a critical feminist approach, this research asks two main questions: How do individuals experience vaginismus and how does living with the condition affect their sense of self and their sexual and intimate relationships? In order to explore these questions, the study will draw on two key sources of data: A discourse analysis of users' posts on the subreddit, "vaginismus: overcoming the condition," which operates as an online community for individuals living with vaginismus, and semi-structured interviews with individuals who have vaginismus. This study will explore in depth the processes and effects of medicalization and unpack how living with vaginismus can shape identity, practices of intimacy, and relationships. It has the potential to challenge and expand our current understanding of how chronic pelvic pain, identity, sex, and intimacy intersect and influence one another.

Friday, March 30th, 2021

12:00-1:00 p.m.

TEAMS invite to follow