

Baldy Center for Law & Social Policy
University at Buffalo Law School



All welcome to a New Faculty Guest Lecture
Cosponsored by the UB Gender Institute

Thursday, June 18, 2009

12:30 – 2:00 pm 509 O’Brian

Lunch available from 12:00, RSVP to 645-2102 or AMazurek@buffalo.edu



Theoretical Perspectives on Body Modification Practices: Agency, Culture, and Cosmetic Genitoplasty

Samantha Kwan

Sociology, University of Houston

Although still numerically uncommon compared to other forms of cosmetic surgery, rates of female genital cosmetic surgery (FGCS) have risen in recent years. Professor Kwan’s presentation examines these elective procedures, particularly aesthetically motivated labiaplasty, i.e., surgical procedures that reduce or make “symmetrical” the labia minora. She will address this new phenomenon in light of feminist theories on cosmetic surgery that examine, on the one hand, hegemonic cultural ideals, false consciousness, and the male gaze, and, on the other, women’s autonomy and agency. She will also highlight both the disconnections and parallels between FGCS and these traditional theories, discuss the social significance of this new form of cosmetic surgery, and suggest lines of future empirical inquiry.

Samantha Kwan, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Sociology and a Women’s Studies Faculty Affiliate at the University of Houston. She conducts qualitative research in the areas of gender, body, and health, focusing on how cultural and social structures shape women’s physical and emotional wellbeing. Her current work examines contested meanings about the fat body, Christian weight loss programs, cosmetic surgery, and organizational image norms.

New Faculty Guest Lecture Awarded to Professor Mary Nell Trautner, UB Sociology

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