1. "About this Module" (This Section Needs a Title)

For centuries, different societies and cultures have been fascinated by the blending of male and female in one body. Although now referred to as intersex, many people still categorize people having these sex traits as “hermaphrodites.” The term, hermaphrodite, originated in Greek mythology and centers around Hermaphrodite, the child of Hermes and Aphrodite. Hermaphrodite was raped by the virgin-huntress and nymph, Salmacis, who prayed to the gods that she and Hermaphrodite would become one. Like Salmacis, the medical establishment is complicit in the sexual abuse of people with intersex variations. Hermaphrodite is one example of humans attempting to explain the concept of a person inhabiting both “sexes” in one body, which has persisted in our collective imaginations as a way of understanding bodies that exist outside of the gender binary. While it is essential to acknowledge the widespread understanding and use of the term 'hermaphrodite' across languages and cultures, this module will employ the term 'intersex' instead. Since language is evolving, this module will also use other terms such as intersex variations, intersex traits, diverse sex traits and variations of sex characteristics.

Critical intersex studies is an emerging discipline that lives at the intersections of biology, queer studies, disability studies, trans studies and poststructuralism. Because of ongoing medical violence, critical intersex studies is constantly informed by global activism that uses human rights mechanisms to address medical pathology and harm. This intersex module is not exhaustive but serves as a primer to understanding the key issues that affect people with intersex variations and how intersex people are engaged in resistance to medical pathology and harm.

Readings for the course are located here:

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