

**RICE UNIVERSITY**  
**Center for the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality**

**THE POLITICS OF VULNERABILITY: SUBJECTS, BODIES, COMMUNITIES**

**Friday, February 5, 2010**

**5:30pm – 6:30pm, James A. Baker III Hall, Kelly International Conference Facility**

**Public Lecture:**

**Steve Epstein**, Professor of Sociology and John C. Shaffer Professor in the Humanities,  
Northwestern University

*Discussing the Undiscussable: HPV Vaccination, the Politics of Non-Knowledge, and the Limits of Queer Biocitizenship*

How do medically marginalized groups bring invisible or stigmatized topics into the domain of public debate? How do they promote scientific investigation of socially undiscussable threats? In recent years, the little-known disease of anal cancer, causally linked to the sexual transmission of human papillomavirus (HPV), has been reconceptualized as a health threat for gay men. A small group of researchers and gay health advocates has used the publicity surrounding new vaccines against HPV (now given to adolescent girls to prevent the development of cervical cancer) to bring anal cancer into the light of day. The barriers that they confront reveal not only the gendered and sexualized coding of organs and diseases, but also the limits of inclusion of gay men in the ranks of biomedical citizens.