



2013 HAWAII UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES
EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY
MATH & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY
JUNE 10TH TO JUNE 12TH
ALA MOANA HOTEL, HONOLULU, HAWAII

TEACHING GENDER, TALKING SEX DURING THE REPEAL OF DON'T ASK DON'T TELL

MELISSA M. MATTHES
US COAST GUARD ACADEMY

Abstract

Key Words: military, don't ask, don't tell policy, sexuality.

Teaching Gender, Talking Sex during the Repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell

What experiences and practices encourage undergraduates to change their minds about deeply held beliefs? For two years, this question assumed a degree of urgency at the US Coast Guard Academy where guiding the transition for the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) was an institutional priority. Consequently, answering the question became a rather daily exercise in how to use classrooms to think with, challenge and eventually aim to transform understandings of DADT among undergraduates.

This essay is a brief snapshot of the various techniques and discussions which animated both the superintendent's task force at the US Coast Guard Academy and classroom discussions in which we **began** to move a modestly recalcitrant undergraduate population toward a more inclusive understanding of gay and lesbian service members. Considered here also are the ethics of a campus social movement in which those most directly affected by the decisions and discussions could not name themselves.

While the paper has a sociological perspective, its theoretical structure is animated by two concerns: first, an insistence that heterosexual undergraduates in this particular environment are more willing to transform their beliefs when they are given permission to narrate their own injuries. And, second a recognition that rhetorical framing is as important as content.