



**University of Guelph
Department of History**

MA Thesis Defence

Student: Aidan Hughes

Date: April 23rd, 2024

Time: 11:00am – 1:00pm

Place: Hybrid (contact histacademic@uoguelph.ca
for location/virtual link)

**“More than Muscle: Steroid Handbooks and Bodybuilding
Subculture, 1981-1989”**

Abstract

Dan Duchaine, the “steroid guru of Venice Beach,” wrote two authoritative how-to guides on steroid use during the 1980s that educated bodybuilders on the muscle-building properties of the drugs. Instead of using empirical data, Duchaine relied on anecdotal information from bodybuilders at Gold’s Gym in Venice to produce the Underground Steroid Handbook in 1981. This guide on steroid use was an immediate hit and catapulted Duchaine to the top of bodybuilding’s steroid community, casting him as the subcultural authority on steroids. Duchaine’s second handbook, Underground Steroid Handbook II (1989), took aim at America’s “anti-steroid propaganda campaign” that had developed over the eight years between the two handbooks. This thesis examines two distinct works of Duchaine to explore the subcultural use of steroids by gym denizens during the 1980s in Venice and explains how steroid users reacted to growing scrutiny in mainstream society from the perspective of bodybuilders.

Advisor:

Dr. Catherine Carstairs

Committee:

Dr. Alan McDougall

Dr. Andrew Hathaway

Dr. Tara Abraham (chair)