

Sociology of Sexuality

Sociology 255

Spring 2020

Tuesday/Thursday, 3:30-4:45

Lubar S263

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Office Hours Tuesday/Thursday 2-3:00

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Pronoun: he/his/him or ze/zir/zim



About the Course

We have been trained to think of sexuality as something governed by biology—eternal and ahistorical. Many college courses teach about human sexuality as a matter of physiology, covering the menstrual cycle, the mechanics of erection, the months of pregnancy. This is not one of those classes.

In this course, we will look at sexuality from a sociological perspective. This means we will study how social forces shape sexual beliefs and behaviors. We will see how sexuality varies widely in how it is understood and how it is practiced—both over time and between different societies. Sexuality has a history, and we will explore that history. We will also examine the most fundamental assumptions about sex. How many sexes are there? What does it mean to “have sex?” What are genitals for? Who is sexually desirable? Is sexual desire a good thing, or something dangerous?

We will come to see that the way we have been trained to think about sexuality is flawed, reflecting ideologies and myths that we will learn to recognize and dispel. And we will see how shifting ideas about what is “natural” and “proper” sexuality relate to power. Control over ideas about what constitutes “good sex” relates to the power of institutions

(like the profession of medicine and religious organizations), and the power of people (including European colonists, slaveholders, middle-class Victorian housewives, feminists, and college students).

We will begin by addressing how sexuality and other phenomena that are often considered “natural” (such as eating and breathing) are shaped by social construction. We will then look at sexuality from the perspective of cultural history, examining the evolution of the sexual identities and practices that are familiar to us today. We will also examine specific topics in contemporary sexual theory and social practice—including intersex issues, sexual identity development, and the impact of the internet on sexuality.

Course Texts

The texts assigned for this course include two books and supplemental readings. The supplemental readings are available on the course Canvas site. The books, available from your favorite online retailer, are listed below. It is fine to get an older edition used, but if you do, please be aware that the page numbers listed in the syllabus may not match up to those in your older edition, and the text itself may vary.

John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman. 2012. *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America, 3rd Edition*. University Of Chicago Press.

Jonathan Ned Katz. 2012. *The Invention of Heterosexuality, 3rd Ed.*. University of Chicago Press.

Course Assignments

For logistical reasons, it is typical for instructors of large lecture classes to rely only upon multiple-choice exams to determine course grades. While this is understandable, I believe it does students a disservice: it encourages passive rote memorization of facts rather than conceptualization, and gives few opportunities for critical thinking or intellectual creativity. For this reason, in addition to two scantron exams, this course requires you to write short papers. It is my hope that this will assist you in sharpening your analytic and writing skills, which are important goals of college education. There will be a total of four writing assignments, each worth 50 points; you will be required to turn in three of them. The fourth may be handed in for extra credit—if turned in on time, for a maximum of 50 points, if turned in later, for half credit. The maximum number of points you can receive for your paper grade will cap at 150.

In addition to the writing assignments, there will be two multiple-choice examinations. Each will cover one-half of the subject matter of the course; the second examination is not a cumulative final, and is administered on the last day of class.

On the days that papers are due, we will have a guest lecture or view a video. Attending these presentations is obligatory and questions about them will appear on the examinations. For the February 25 video only, rather than watching the video in class, you

will watch it on YouTube at your convenience, and take a quiz worth 10 points to demonstrate you watched it.

In addition to individual work, I will regularly assign in-class group exercises. I do this because often students find that some of the most important things they learn come from their peers, if given the opportunity to engage sincerely. To ensure students benefit from this course component, attendance and participation in group exercises is mandatory. Attendance and participation account for a quarter of your final grade. You will be asked to sign in as you enter the classroom.

Your final course grade will be calculated as follows:

4 Papers (you must write 3 of them): 50 points each → 150 points total maximum

Exams: 75 points each → 150 points total

Quiz: 10 points

Extra credit opportunity: 10 points

Attendance/participation: 100 points total

Total possible points: 410

The final course grade will be curved on a B, meaning the average (mean) student score will correspond with a B grade.

Caveat

Please bear in mind that in this class you will be expected to learn and employ the sociological perspective on sexuality. Sociologists study real life, which is sometimes raw. In so doing, we display a nonjudgmental stance toward the people and phenomena we study. You will be expected to adopt this professional stance as well.

In relating to sexuality, this course will cover materials that will at times feel quite personal. Please be respectful of this in yourself and others—but do always work to connect any personal feelings you have about the materials to the academic theories raised, as we are engaged in an intellectual rather than therapeutic venture.

Engaging with challenging materials can lead to great intellectual and personal rewards, but is more demanding than studying matters that you can approach with a detached lack of personal investment. Be aware that the materials we will cover involve social inequality related to desire, race/ethnicity, sex and gender, body size, disability, beauty standards, eugenics, and other topics that may feel challenging to consider. In addition, we will view images that will at times be sexually explicit, and at other times relate to disturbing matters such as sexual and racist violence.

Engaging with painful and challenging subjects intellectually is one of the cornerstones of collegiate experience. However, if a topic being addressed in class or discussion section proves very upsetting to you, so that you feel unable to engage intellectually, you may step out of class. Leaving a class meeting in the middle to protect your mental health is just as reasonable as leaving early because you become physically ill—it's not expected that this will happen often, but students are expected to care for their health if it does. If you do leave class due to distress, please send an email to explain why you left, and get the notes from a classmate, just as you would if you left because you suddenly became ill. (No student in this class has ever tried to abuse this courtesy, but such abuse would not be permitted.)

Ground Rules

Many people learn best when they learn together—this is intellectual symbiosis. You are encouraged to discuss the readings, concepts and assignments with other class members, and form study groups if you like. Plagiarism and cheating, however, constitute intellectual parasitism. They damage the academic community and will not be tolerated. Academic misconduct will result in consequences that may include failure of the assignment, or, if sufficiently serious, failure of the class.

In order to facilitate the creation of academic community in the classroom, I will give you regular opportunities to participate in group exercises and class discussions. This means that the success of the course is dependent upon your preparation, participation, and demonstration of respect for your peers. Please follow the golden rule and treat others as you would wish to be treated. You will find that not everyone will agree with you on principles you consider important—this provides an excellent opportunity for learning if you engage with them respectfully.

Another way in which I expect you to demonstrate your respect for your peers is by staying on task in class and not distracting others by surfing YouTube, crunching carrots, or chatting with the person next to you while I am lecturing or a peer is speaking to the class.

Finally, I will expect you to complete your work in a timely manner. Late papers will be docked points. In cases of illness or emergency, late assignments will certainly be excused, but you must send me an email as soon as you are aware that you will miss a paper deadline or exam to explain the circumstances. Documentation may be required.

Credit Hours

As the UW System assumes “that study leading to one semester credit represents an investment of time by the average student of not fewer than 48 hours” (UWS ACPS 4), a 3-credit course such as this one will require a minimum of 144 (3 x 48) hours of your time. You may find it necessary to spend additional time on a course, but this class will require at least 40 hours in classroom, 70 hours for class preparation, and 34 hours for papers and exams.

GER Credit

This course meets the UWM General Education Requirements (GER), as explained in detail below.

Why Sociology of Sexuality carries GER credit:

This course addresses how patterns of sexual behavior and experience are produced by social, cultural, and material forces. It will help students to understand how the patterns of sexual identity and practice with which they are familiar are related to social forces, structures, and institutions—for example, corporate interests, or how families are organized today. The course will address how we are socialized in ways that both give us social identities based in sexuality, and reinscribe patterns of power along dimensions such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. It will examine the relationship between material culture and sexual experience. It will give students basic foundational skills in using sociological methods to address and research sexuality, and introduce them to core social theorists, such as Marx, Foucault, and Durkheim.

Learning Goals

Through assigned readings, discussion, groupwork, and writing assignments, students will learn to be able to recognize and describe patterns of sexual identity and practice, to understand how these have been subject to social change, and to explain how they are reproduced during socialization. Students will learn to recognize how central social institutions shape sexual behavior. Students will learn to apply different sociological theories to explain patterns of sexual conformity, diversity and deviance, and to understand how these produce social solidarity and social stigma. Students will be given an opportunity to apply sociological methods and theories to the world via exercises and written work.

Specific Student Work that will Address a Learning Goal

Students in Sociology of Sexuality will be assigned four short papers to address four learning goals. A sample of an assignment is a course paper giving students an opportunity to apply ideas from the course to analyze how the material world around them produces sexual beliefs and experiences. Students are given an opportunity to analyze the sexual ideologies embodied in consumer products.

Assessment Criteria

The student paper analyzing the ideologies conveyed by sex-related consumer goods will be assigned with the following assessment instructions:

“As usual, you are required to write a paper with a clear introduction and conclusion, to follow the conventions of grammar, and to cite authorities properly. In addition, you should answer the following four questions in your paper:

1. What store/catalog/website did you visit (include URL if appropriate), and what category of product did you select? What made this product sociologically interesting?
2. To whom is the category of products you examined marketed (e.g. men generally, women who wish to become pregnant, androgynous people, a particular religious community)? What does this reveal about sexual norms and expectations?
3. What messages are sent to that population by the products you studied? What is the general sexual ideology implied by the packaging, product descriptions, and illustrations? Give specific examples, and devote the bulk of your paper to this question. Refer to at least one theory raised in class or in course readings in your analysis.
4. Critique the group of products you selected. If you were “in charge,” what changes would you make in the design and marketing of the products?” Explain how this relates to patterns of power and privilege.”

The grading rubric for this assignment is:

Style – 10 points

- __ 2pt. Introduction
- __ 2pt. Conclusion
- __ 2pt. Structural clarity and organization of ideas
- __ 2pt. Spelling and grammar
- __ 2pt. Correct citation (full credit for zero citations if none are needed)

Content – 40 points

- __ 5pts. Topic choice discussion
- __ 5pts. Target audience discussion
- __ 20pts. Analysis of messages sent (including reference to lecture or reading)
- __ 10pts. Critique

Points earned __/50

Readings and Assignments

21 January: Introduction

The Social Construction of Sexuality

23 January: Denise Donnelly et al. 2015. “Sexuality and Social Theorizing,” in Strombler et al. *Sex Matters* 4th Ed. Also, Leonore Tiefer. 2004. *Sex Is Not a Natural Act & Other Essays*, ch. 7 (“The Kiss”).

28 January: Pepper Schwartz and Virginia Rutter, 2012. "Sexual Desire and Gender," in *The Gender of Sexuality*. Also, Tiefer in Michael Kimmel et al., 2014, *Sexualities*, pp. 52-63 (critiquing the "Human Sexual Response Cycle" model).

30 January: Pamela Nettleton. 2015. "Brave Sperm and Demure Eggs: Fallopian Gender Politics on YouTube," *Feminist Formations* 27(1), pp. 25-45. Also Roger Lancaster. 2003. *The Selfish Gene*, pp. 91-99 (on sociobiology).

4 February: Georgiann Davis. 2013. "'Bringing Intersexy Back?' Intersexuals and Sexual Satisfaction." Also alithia zamantakis, 2019, "I Try Not to Push it Too Far": Trans/Nonbinary Individuals Negotiating Race and Gender in Intimate Relationships," pp. 293-308 in Simula et al, *Expanding the Rainbow*. Also, the Terminology Handout written by the professor.

6 February: Paper 1 due (must be uploaded to Canvas by 3 PM). View video *The Miracle of Life*, DVD 2090

Historical Evolution of Contemporary Sexual Arrangements

11 February: Katz, ch. 3 ("Before Heterosexuality").

13 February: Katz, ch. 4 ("Making the Heterosexual Mystique")

18 February: Katz ch. 5 ("The Heterosexual Comes Out").

20 February: D'Emilio and Freedman ch. 1 and ch. 2 (on the regulation of sexuality in colonial America).

25 February: Paper 2 due (must be uploaded to Canvas by 3 PM). View video *Out Rage '69*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuTNXnQA-ww> . No in-class meeting; complete Canvas quiz about the video instead (due by 26 February at midnight).

27 February: D'Emilio and Freedman ch. 3 and ch. 4 (on Victorian American sexuality).

3 March: John Harvey Kellogg. 1888. *Plain Facts for Old and Young, Embracing the Natural History and Hygiene of Organic Life*—"A Chapter for Girls". Also Nicholas Francis Cook. 1876. *Satan in Society*—"Education and Training of Boys and Young Men."

5 March: D'Emilio and Freedman ch. 5 and ch. 9 (on the history of race, sex and "vice" in America).

10 March: Nellie M. Smith. 1924. *The Three Gifts of Life: A Girl's Responsibility for Race Progress*, pp. 112-138. Also Jon Alfred Mj oen. 1923. "Harmonic and Disharmonic Race Crossings," in *Eugenics in Race and State, Vol. II*, pp. 55-61.

12 March: First Examination.

Issues in Contemporary Sexuality

24 March: D’Emilio and Freedman ch. 12 and pp. 301-318 (on sexual regulation and deregulation in 20th century America).

26 March: Kathleen Bogle. 2008. *Hooking Up: Sex, Dating and Relationships on Campus*, pp. 50-71.

31 March: C. J. Pascoe. 2011. *Dude, You’re a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*, pp. 52-83. Also, Melina Meceli, 2013. *Standing Out, Standing Together: The Social and Political Impact of Gay/Straight Alliances*, ch. 2.

2 April: Paper 3 due (must be uploaded to Canvas by 3 PM). View video *Dreamworlds 3*, DVD-2308.

7 April: Ashley Green, 2019. “By Definition They’re Not the Same Thing: Analyzing Methods of Making Meaning for Pansexual Individuals.” Also Ela Przybylo, 2015, “Introducing Asexuality, Unthinking Sex.” Also, Jane Ward. 2013. “Straight Dude Seeks Same: Mapping the Relationship Between Sexual Identities, Practices, and Cultures.”

9 April: Guest lecture, reading to be announced.

14 April: Karen Hwang. 1997. “Living with a Disability: A Woman’s Perspective,” pp. 119-130 in Marca L. Sipski and Craig J. Alexander, eds., *Sexual Function in People With Disability and Chronic Illness*. Also, Mitchell S. Tepper. “Living with a Disability: A Man’s Perspective,” pp. 131-146 in *id.*

16 April: Susan Hickman and Charlene Muehlenhard, 2014. “College Women’s Fears and Precautionary Behaviors Relating to Acquaintance and Stranger Rape. Also, Fred Pelka, 2014. “Raped: A Male Survivor Breaks His Silence,” 424-437. Also, Julia Serano, “2008. Why Nice Guys Finish Last.” In Jaelyn Friedman and Jessica Valenti. *Yes Means Yes*, pp. 227-240.

21 April: Paper 4 due (must be uploaded to Canvas by 3 PM). View video *Intersexions* from professor's personal collection.

What’s Love Got to Do with It?

23 April: Paul Wright. 2012. “Show Me the Data! Empirical Support for the ‘Centerfold Syndrome’.” Also, Lauren Langman, 2016. “Grotesque Degradation: Globalization, Carnivalization, and Cyberporn.”

28 April: Melanie Simmons. 2018. "Theorizing Prostitution: The Question of Agency," in Marry M. Dank and Roberto Refinetti, eds. *Sex Work and Sex Workers*. Also, Lenore Tiefer. 2006. "Sex Therapy as a Humanistic Enterprise."

30 April: Stevi Jackson. 1999. *Heterosexuality in Question*. Chapter 7, "Even Sociologists Fall in Love: An Exploration in the Sociology of Emotions," pp. 94-112.

5 May: Course conclusion, special in-class extra credit opportunity, and evaluations.

7 May: Second examination.

UNIVERSITY AND SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT POLICIES

The Secretary of the University maintains a web page that contains university policies that affect the instructor and the students in this course, as well as essential information specific to conduct of the course. The link to that web page is:

<http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf>

Students with Disabilities. Verification of disability, class standards, the policy on the use of alternate material and test accommodations can be found at the following:

<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/SACltr.pdf>

Religious Observances. Policies regarding accommodations for absences due to religious observance are found at the following:

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S1.5.htm

Students called to active Military Duty. Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty are found at the following:

http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm

Incompletes. You may be given an incomplete if you have carried a course successfully until near the end of the semester but, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond your control, have been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of course work. An incomplete is not given unless you prove to the instructor that you were prevented from completing the course for just cause as indicated above. The conditions for awarding an incomplete to graduate and undergraduate students can be found at the following:

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S31.pdf

Discriminatory Conduct (such as sexual harassment). Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience and well-being of students, faculty and staff. Policies regarding discriminatory conduct can be found at:

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S47.pdf

Academic Misconduct. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Policies for addressing students cheating on exams or plagiarism can be found at the following: <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/DOS/conduct.html>

Complaint Procedures. Students may direct complaints to the Sociology Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences. If the

complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the Sociology Department Chair, the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences, or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. Policies may be found at:

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S49.7.htm

Grade Appeal Procedures. A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College/School. Procedures for student grade appeal can be found at:

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S28.htm

Final Examination Policy. Policies regarding final examinations can be found at the following:

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S22.htm

Book Royalties. In accord with Department of Sociology policy, the royalties from the sale of faculty-authored books to students in their classes are donated to a UWM Foundation/Sociology Account to support future awards and activities for UWM students in Sociology.