

Sociology of Sexuality

Sociology 255

Spring 2005

MW 9:30-10:45, EMS E180

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Office Hours Thursdays 1-3 or by appointment

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About the Course

In this course we will examine sexuality from a sociological perspective. My goals are, first, to challenge you to think deeply and critically about the subject matter of sexuality, and second, to interest you in the sociological perspective and social theorizing. The course will introduce sociological concepts as it addresses sexuality. Sociologists look to social factors to explain sexual phenomena. This distinguishes us from psychologists, who look to individual mental processes, and from biologists, who look to the physical realm.

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 practice. This course carries GER credit because it addresses how ideas relate to social structures and how values infuse both action and inquiry.

Course Texts

The texts assigned for this course include two books and a course reader. The reader will be available at Clark Graphics, located at 2915 N. Oakland Avenue, and also on electronic reserve. The books, available at the UWM and Panther bookstores, are:

John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman. 1988. *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*. Harper & Row.

Pepper Schwartz and Virginia Rutter. 2000. *The Gender of Sexuality*. Rowman & Littlefield.

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. It is my philosophy that while this tendency is understandable, it does students a disservice: it encourages rote memorization but not thinking, and treats students like passive sponges absorbing information rather than active scholars engaged in learning. For this reason, I will instead require you to complete biweekly writing assignments of 2-3 pages. I will employ the teaching assistant's services to aid me in providing meaningful feedback on your writing assignments. It is my hope that this will assist you in sharpening your writing skills, which is an important goal of college education. There will be a total of six writing assignments; you will be required to turn in five of them. The sixth may be handed in for extra credit, if you so desire. If you turn in the extra-credit paper on its due date, it will be worth up to the full 20 points. If you turn it in by the last day of class, it will be worth up to 10 points. (Do bear in mind that extra-credit points cannot bring your grade above the 210-point maximum.)

In addition to the writing assignments, there will be two multiple-choice examinations, one at the midterm and one during the final exam period. Each will cover one-half of the subject matter of the course; the second examination is not a cumulative final, although it will take place during the scheduled final exam period.

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.

The final course requirement is that you meet once during the semester with the T.A. to discuss your writing. Please bring copies of your papers to the meeting.

Your final course grade will be calculated as follows:

6 Papers (you must write 5 of them): 20 points each → 100 points total

Exams: 50 points each → 100 points total

Meeting with T.A: 10 points

Total possible points: 210

Caveat

Please bear in mind that in this class you will be expected to learn and employ the sociological perspective on sexuality. This is neither a "preparation for marriage" course nor a course on sexual techniques; it is not intended to be therapeutic or to instruct you ethically. Please consult your psychological or religious counselor for assistance in these areas.

Sociologists study real life, which is sometimes raw. In so doing, sociologists display a nonjudgmental stance toward the people and phenomena they study. You will

be expected to adopt this professional stance as well. If you feel it will not be possible for you to do so, please do not take the class.

Ground Rules

Many people learn best when they learn together—you may consider this intellectual symbiosis. You are encouraged to discuss the readings, concepts and assignments with other class members. Plagiarism and cheating, however, constitute intellectual parasitism. They damage the academic community and will not be tolerated.

In order to facilitate the creation of academic community in the classroom, I will give you 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.

Finally, please complete your work in a timely manner. Unexcused late papers will be downgraded one point for each day they are late. In cases of illness or emergency, lateness will obviously be excused, but be aware that documentation of the emergency is necessary.

Readings and Assignments

24 January: Introduction

The Social Construction of Sexuality

26 January: Tiefer ch. 2 (“Social Constructionism and the Study of Human Sexuality”) and ch. 7 (“The Kiss”).

1 February: Schwartz and Rutter pp. 1-26 (discussing desire); Tiefer pp. 41-49 (critiquing the “Human Sexual Response Cycle” model).

3 February: Tiefer ch. 3 (on the rhetorical function of the language of “the natural”); Emily Martin. 1991. “The Egg and the Sperm,” *Signs* 16 (3), pp. 485-501.

7 February: Paper I due. View video *The Miracle of Life*, VHS-2209.

Historical Evolution of Contemporary Sexual Arrangements

9 February: Jonathan Ned Katz. 1995. *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, ch. 3 (“Before Heterosexuality”).

14 February: Katz ch. 5 (“The Heterosexual Comes Out”).

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

- 21 February: Paper II due. View video *Out Rage '69*, VHS-3734.
- 23 February: D'Emilio and Freedman ch. 3 and ch. 4 (on Victorian American sexuality).
- 28 February: John Harvey Kellogg. 1888. *Plain Facts for Old and Young, Embracing the Natural History and Hygiene of Organic Life*—"A Chapter for Girls". I.F. Segner & Co.; and Nicholas Francis Cook. 1876. *Satan in Society*—"Education and Training of Boys and Young Men." C.F. Vent.
- 2 March: D'Emilio and Freedman ch. 5 and ch. 9 (on the history of race, sex and "vice" in America).
- 7 March: Paper III due. View video *Classic Sex Hygiene Films* (from professor's private collection).
- 9 March: Nellie M. Smith. 1924. *The Three Gifts of Life: A Girl's Responsibility for Race Progress*. Dodd, Mead & Co. pp. 112-138; also Jon Alfred Mjøen. 1923. "Harmonic and Disharmonic Race Crossings," in *Eugenics in Race and State, Vol. II*. Williams and Wilkins Co., pp. 55-61.

Contemporary (Hetero)sexual Practices

- 14 March: D'Emilio and Freedman ch. 12 and pp. 301-318 (on sexual regulation and deregulation in 20th century America).
- 16 March: First Examination
- 28 March: Schwartz and Rutter pp. 35-65 (on sexual behavior and gender).
- 30 March: Schwartz and Rutter pp. 93-109 and 119-142 (on nonmarital and marital sex).
- 4 April: Paper IV due. View video *A Burning Desire*, VHS-3097.
- 6 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*. Aspen Publishers; Mitchell S. Tepper. "Living with a Disability: A Man's Perspective," pp. 131-146 in *id.*
- 11 April: Joshua Gamson. 1998. ch.1, *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity*. U. Chicago Press.

What's Love Got to Do with It?

- 13 April: Deborah L. Tolman and Tracy E. Higgins. 1996. "How Being a Good Girl Can be Bad for Girls," pp. 205-225 in Nan Bauer Maglin and Donna Perry, eds., *"Bad Girls"/ "Good Girls": Women, Sex and Power in the Nineties*. Rutgers University Press.
- 17 April: Paper V due. View video *You Don't Know Dick*, VHS-4458.
- 20 April: George Alan Rekers. 1982. ch. 4, *Shaping Your Child's Sexual Identity*, pp. 53-76. Baker Book House; and Carrie Yang Costello. 1997. "Conceiving Identity: Bisexual, Lesbian and Gay Parents Consider their Children's Sexual Orientations," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 24(3).
- 25 April: Gary R. Brooks. 1995. ch.1, *The Centerfold Syndrome*. Jossay-Bass Publishers.
- 27 April: Melanie Simmons. 1999. "Theorizing Prostitution: The Question of Agency," pp. 125-146 in Marry M. Dank and Roberto Refinetti, eds., *Sex Work and Sex Workers*. Transaction Publishers.
- 2 May: Paper VI due. TA's give guest lectures.
- 4 May: Stevi Jackson. 1999. Chapter 7, "Even Sociologists Fall in Love: An Exploration in the Sociology of Emotions," pp. 94-112 in *Heterosexuality in Question*. Sage.
- 9 May: Eva Illous. 1997. ch.2, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, pp. 48-78. U.C. Press. (on the origins of dating culture at beginning of the century and ties to consumerism).
- 11 May: Conclusion.
- Second Examination to be administered during the Final Exam Period.**
- 18 May, 10-12, in our regular room.